

Kurdish activism in Finland: Mobilization and social boundary construction

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Abstract

Increased migration of people and ideas with developed transportation and communication technology across nation state borders creates a transnational space where new forms of political activism are taking place. Diasporas, which are identity groups with political and cultural orientation to their perceived homeland, construct identities and adopt ideologies from their country of origin and mobilize politically to affect events in their perceived homelands. The Kurdish diaspora in Finland is one of the most organized and active diasporas in Finland. Past research on the diaspora has been from the perspective of migration and cultural studies, but the diasporas' political mobilization remains largely under-researched.

This thesis approaches the topic from the perspective of peace and conflict studies and builds on a body of research that deals with conflict diffusion and diaspora mobilization that has focused on interaction between conflicts, diasporas, host and home countries. Based on previous research this thesis looks at *how the Kurdish diaspora in Finland constructs social boundaries as part of their mobilization process*. The data that is used is a series of nine semi-structured interviews with core members of the Kurdish diaspora in Finland. The data was analyzed using discourse analysis to distinguish membership categorization devices and to find in-group and out-group categories.

The thesis suggests that diaspora organizations and core members construct and maintain a pan-Kurdish identity that distinguishing itself from the Finnish majority. The core members construct boundaries based on political ideology within the Kurdish community in Finland. Two broad groups were distinguished in this study based on these categories: *Apoists* who connect themselves to the transnational PKK-movement and *nationalists* who maintain a more pan-Kurdish political outlook and separate themselves from Kurdish political parties. These two groups engage in outbidding where they gather support from Kurdish communities in Finland and from the Finnish civil society and decision makers. Their position to the host state affects the strategy of mobilization they adopted.

The results point to need for researching further on ideological adaptation and Kurdish nationalism among the Kurdish diaspora in Finland as well as nexus between the notion of belonging, conflicts, diasporas and mobilization as well as cyberspaces where political mobilization is taking place.

Key words: Diaspora, mobilization, conflict diffusion, social boundaries, membership categorization device, semi-structured interview

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1. Introduction

On September 13th 2014 the Islamic State of Syria and Levant (ISIL) besieged town of Kobane, predominantly inhabited by Kurds located in northern Syria by the border to Turkey. The offensive was followed by major protests by Kurdish protesters in neighboring countries as well as by Kurdish communities in Europe, as tens of thousands of people marching in the streets in Istanbul, Ankara, Dusseldorf, Paris, Barcelona and Basel. Over 25 people were killed in clashes between protesters and riot police in Turkey, two were stabbed in the Austrian town of Bregenz, where the small protest led into a brawl between the protesters and individuals from local Turkish and Chechen communities.¹ In the Dutch capital hundreds of protesters occupied the houses of parliament to demand the state to support efforts to defend the town from ISIL aggression, while in Stockholm Kurdish protesters occupied the city's airport.² The Kurdish diaspora in Finland was also mobilized, as protests were organized in urban centers with larger Kurdish communities³ along with hunger strikes that were orchestrated by a group of protesters in Turku.⁴

The increased movement of people, wealth and ideas with the development of transportation and communications technology has created a transnational space where politics and conflicts take place. According to UN report on migration the number of migrants has increased globally from 173 million in 2000 to 258 million in 2015.⁵ Migrants and refugees from areas ridden with political conflicts may maintain their allegiances and by moving across borders forming transnational networks.⁶ Conflicts are not however solely "carried" by migratory movements, but can be ignited or utilized by political actors who can build transnational networks to employ use of violence, which makes these spaces potential arenas for conflicts that transcend state borders, blurring the lines between internal and external security of nation states.⁷

¹ BBC, *Syria: Kobane Siege Death Toll Rises to 500*, 11.10.2014.

² Al Jazeera, *Kurdish Protesters Occupy the Dutch Parliament*, 7.10.2014.

³ Matson-Mäkelä, *Huoli Kobanin asukkaista kasvaa-Tampereella osoitetaan mieltä ISISiä vastaan*, Yle, 10.10.2014.

Hjelt, Yrjö, *Suomen kurdit osoittavat mieltään terroristijärjestö ISISiä vastaan*, Yle, 25.8.2014.

Raitio, Riitta, *Kurdien mielenosoitus keräsi Jyväskylässä muutamia kymmeniä*, Yle, 5.10.2014.

⁴ Hjelt, Yrjö, *Turun kurdit syömälakkoon*, Yle, 6.10.2014.

⁵ UN, *International Migration Report 2017*, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2017, 4.

⁶ Salehyan, Idean & Gleditsch, Kristian, *Refugees and Spread of Civil War*, International Organization Vol. 60, 2006, 335.

⁷ Adamson, Fiona, *Globalisation, Transnational Political Mobilisation, and Networks of Violence*, Cambridge Review of International Affairs, Vol. 18, No. 1, 2005, 33.

Although the term "diaspora" has historically referred to the dispersion of Jews from biblical Israel as well other historical groups of people who have been forced to migrate from their perceived home country, scholars started to use the term from late 1980's onwards to describe migrants with a political orientation to their country of origin. It was at this time that Western countries started to receive increasing number of asylum seekers from countries where political violence was taking place. Although the exact definition of the term has been debated in academia, diasporas typically involve a level of organization in the form of associations or organizations formed by migrant communities which sought to maintain their distinct identity: this involves orientation to a perceived "homeland", as well as having a political aspiration to influence their homeland.

Political actors can engage in the construction of identities to form diaspora communities that mobilize to support their cause. The construction of diasporic identity and mobilization process is affected by multiple factors, including political events⁸ and the stage and intensity⁹ of the conflict by international relations through the interests of parties involved in the conflict,¹⁰ by the context in the host country with it's political and legislative environment towards political activities,¹¹ social structures such as the immigration policies of the host state and the degree of discrimination,¹² as well as by social-economic conditions of the diaspora members,¹³ and characteristics of the diaspora including it's size,¹⁴ age,¹⁵ membership composition¹⁶ and level of organization.¹⁷ With such a large number of factors, diaspora mobilization varies from each context to the next, and as such each case

⁸ Kerlin, Janelle and Manikowski, Susan, *Organizational Change in the U.S Afghan Diaspora A response to Homeland events or Heightened Government Scrutiny?*, Nonprofit Management & Leadership Vol 21, no. 4, 2001, 371.

⁹ Skrbis, Zlatko, *The Mobilized Croatian Diaspora: It's Role in Homeland Politics and War*, In Stares, Paul, *Diasporas in Conflict: Peace Makers or Peace Wreckers*, United Nations University Press, 2007, 233-234.

¹⁰ Shain, Yossi and Barth, Aharon, *Diasporas and International Relations Theory*, International Organization Vol. 57, No.3, 2003, 451.

¹¹ Baser, Bahar, *Diasporas and Homeland Conflicts: a Comparative Perspective*, Routledge, 2016,17.

¹² Wahlbeck, Östen, *Kurdish Diasporas: A Comparative Study of Kurdish Refugee Communities*, Palgrave, 1999, 143.

¹³ Pande, Amba, *Role of diasporas in homeland conflicts, conflict resolution, and post-war reconstruction: the case of Tamil diaspora and Sri Lanka*, South Asian Diaspora, Vol. 9, Issue 1, 2017, 55.

¹⁴ Baser, 2016, 180.

¹⁵ Ibid, 25.

¹⁶ Wahlbeck, Östen, *Kurdish Diaspora in Finland*, Diaspora Studies Vol. 5 Issue: 1, 2012, 55.

¹⁷ Griffiths, David, *Fragmentation and Consolidation: the Contrasting Cases of Somali and Kurdish Refugees in London*, Journal of Refugee Studies Vol. 13, Issue: 3, 2000, 281-301.

should be studied independently.

The main focus of research on the relation of diasporas to conflicts has been their relation to their homeland. Examples that could be mentioned are the cases of the Tamil diaspora, which maintained the conflict in Sri Lanka by supporting a conflict party with remittances throughout the 1980's and 1990's and after 2001 became an important actor in the peace process;¹⁸ the Croatian diaspora, which mobilized as a response to the escalation of conflict in the Balkans and supported the Croatian military and police financially after the Croatian nationalists declared independence in 1991,¹⁹ or the Armenian diaspora, which supported Armenian militia in the Karabagh region, contributing to eruption of the conflict.²⁰

However much of the literature regarding the involvement of diasporas with conflicts is descriptive in nature and as Bahar Baser points out, conflict diffusion through diasporas remains a field that is understudied.²¹ "Conflict diffusion" is a term used by scholars to describe process where conflicts and their effects are spread transnationally through a network of actors such as diasporas.²² More recent research has started fill this gap by studying how the conflicts are shaped by host land contexts. Fiona Adamson has theorized how diasporas mobilize as a response to conflicts in their perceived homelands,²³ While Elise Feron introduced term "conflict autonomisation" to explain how diasporas construct conflicts in their host countries, at the same time also opening the discussion on the relationship between the host land context and conflict diffusion.²⁴ For her doctoral dissertation Bahar Baser made a comparative study on how the Turkish-Kurdish conflict is manifested between Turkish and Kurdish diasporas in Sweden and Germany, analyzing how the host country context among other factors affected the conflict autonomisation process.²⁵ Specific aspects in this theoretical framework,

¹⁸ Fair, C.Christine, *The Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora: Sustaining conflict and pushing for peace*, in Stares, Paul, *Diasporas in Conflict: Peace Makers or Peace-Wreckers*, United Nations University Press, 2007, 182, 183.

¹⁹ Skrbis, 2007, 232.

²⁰ Tölöyan, Khaching, *The Armenian Diaspora and the Karabagh Conflict*, In Stares, Paul, *Diasporas in Conflict: Peace Makers or Peace Wreckers*, United Nations University Press, 2007, 116.

²¹ Baser, 2016, 21.

²² Carment, David, James, Patrick, Taydas, Zeynep, *The internationalization of Ethnic Conflict*, *International Studies Review* Vol. 11, 2009, 67.

²³ Adamson, Fiona, *Mechanisms of Diaspora Mobilization*, in Checkel, Jeffery, *Transnational Dynamics of Civil War*, Cambridge University Press, 2013, 67-70.

²⁴ Feron, Elise, *Transporting and Re-Inventing Conflicts: Conflict-Generated Diasporas and Conflict Autonomisation*, *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol. 52, No: 3, 2013, 364-365.

²⁵ Baser, 2016.

such as factors which influence the behavior of the diaspora in relation to host state and society remain largely understudied as does the study of interaction between diaspora groups.²⁶

The case of the Kurdish diaspora in Finland was studied by Östen Wahlbeck in his Ph.D from 1999 *Kurdish Diasporas: A Comparative Study of Kurdish Refugee Communities*, in which he compared the integration and resettlement of Kurdish migrants in Finland and the UK. In his dissertation he focused on social mobilization of the Kurdish communities and found that by maintaining their pre-migratory social network and also by organizing into diaspora organizations, the Kurdish migrants formed transnational networks.²⁷ Wahlbeck noted that the diaspora in Finland, which at the time of the study was already organized into associations and organizations, mobilized according to social and political allegiances.²⁸ He also noticed that events in the country of origin had an impact on the activities of the Kurdish the diasporas both in the UK and Finland as they were brought together in organizing demonstrations or other activities.²⁹ Other scholar who has studied the Kurdish diaspora in Finland is Mari Toivanen, who has researched identity construction of Kurds in Finland using ethnographic and interview data and discovers that the diasporic identity is constructed in contrast to "Finnishness" which is understood as a racial category,³⁰ which results into a feeling of belonging and attachment to Kurdistan that is facilitated by political activities.³¹

However, the research on the Kurdish diaspora in Finland has studied the topic from the perspective of immigration research and cultural studies and has not been approached from the perspective of peace and conflict studies. Additionally there is a research gap with regards to political mobilization of the diaspora as well as the diaspora group dynamics that exist in Finland, although Wahlbeck has noted the presence of different political constituencies in Finland.³² The research however has treated the term "Kurdish diaspora" as constituting the Kurdish migrant population in Finland in an essentialist way, or has only discussed Kurdish culture as a pan-Kurdish entity which has left room

²⁶ Feron, 2013, 363.

²⁷ Wahlbeck, 1999, 163.

²⁸ Ibid, 145.

²⁹ Ibid, 170.

³⁰ Toivanen, Mari, *The Visual Lexica of (National) Belonging and Non-Belonging in the Accounts of Young Kurds in Finland*, Nordic Journal of Migration Studies Vol. 4, No. 4, 2014, 192-200.

³¹ Toivanen, Mari, *Political Transnationalism as a Matter of Belonging: Young Kurds in Finland*, in Ahponen, Pirkkoliisa, Harinen, Päivi, Haverinen, *Dislocations of civic cultural borderlines: methodological nationalism, transnational reality and cosmopolitan dreams*, Springer, 2016.

³² Wahlbeck, 2012, 51-52.

to explore more closer on relation of different groups within the diaspora.

1.1. Mobilization and Social Boundaries

Identification is a process of social categorization where subjects construct social boundaries according to the categorization system which determines inclusion in and exclusion from social groups.³³ Adamson argues that diasporas which mobilize around conflicts in their perceived homelands strengthen the diasporic identity to gain support for their cause,³⁴ resulting to the construction of social boundaries with other parts of the host society. The way diasporas mobilize and adopt conflicts are affected by numerous factors from politics in the homeland, to the legal and political context in the host state and characteristics of the diaspora itself.³⁵ As these dynamics change, also the way social boundaries are constructed change, as does the way the conflict is manifested through the diaspora.

Though Toivanen has studied the topic of social categorization by the Kurdish diaspora in Finland, her perspective came from different theoretical framework as the studies were sociological studies on multiculturalism in Finland, and did not include a perspective on how social boundaries are affected by conflict dynamics, or by the mobilization process. Furthermore, the diffusion of the Kurdish conflict in Finland has not been studied so far, and in light of the Kurdish mobilization in Finland since the siege of Kobane in 2014 and changed dynamics regarding the Kurdish conflict, there is a need to look on how the changed conflict dynamics have affected the way Kurdish diaspora members position themselves in Finnish society.

1.2. Construction of social boundaries by Kurdish diaspora in Finland

The aim of my thesis is to study social boundary construction, which is a part of the mobilization process among diasporas. Thus my research question is "*How does the Kurdish diaspora in Finland construct social boundaries in it's political mobilization?*". I am expecting to find how Kurdish diaspora members position themselves in Finnish society and to what extent do they emphasize ethnicity or Kurdish exceptionalism as well as how they position themselves to different groups in the Finnish society and what kind of differences there are between different diaspora members. I am

³³ Karner, Christian, *Ethnicity and everyday life*, London/New York: Routledge, 2007, 48.

³⁴ Adamson, 2013, 67-70.

³⁵ Ibid, 366-367.

also interested in the diasporas relation to the conflict in their homeland and how the Finnish context affects the way the conflict is autonomised by the diaspora members in Finland.

The data that I will be using are a series of interviews that I have conducted with core diaspora members.³⁶ The data collection method was semi-structured interviews, where I had a series of broad questions about the activities of the Kurdish diaspora and Finnish society with the goal of getting the participants themselves to reflect on their own thoughts. I also had a set of sub-questions, which I used to reflect on specific issues that may arise during the interviews if the participants raise these issues themselves. By having a broad structure, I avoid having questions which are persuasive or which would include research bias and instead let the participants themselves narrate how they see things. With these longer reflective turns they will construct *discourse units*, which are segments of meaning that are constructed by the participant.³⁷ The respondents are all core members of the diaspora as has been Shain and Yossi,³⁸ which limits the perspective only to the most active in the Finnish society. Furthermore, the choice of Finnish as the language used in the interviews limits them to only those diaspora members who have a good command of Finnish a foreign language. Focusing on core members who are the most active group and who are the main facilitators and constructors of diasporic identity gives however a perspective on how the diaspora is formed and how do they position themselves in the host society.

These discourse units can be analyzed using discourse analysis to code the meanings that are generated during the interviews. In the analysis I will be tracing membership categorization devices, which are social categories that indicate inclusion in and exclusion from groups.³⁹ Discourse analysis will thus allow me to identify boundary construction mechanisms and understand the way Kurdish diaspora members in Finland position themselves in relation to different groups and actors in Finnish society, such as other diaspora groups or the Finnish state. By placing my findings in a larger context,

³⁶ Shain, Yossi and Barth, Aharon, 2003, 449-479.

³⁷ Have, Paul Ten, *Understanding Qualitative Research and Ethnomethodology*, Sage Publishing, 2004, 64.

³⁸ Shain, Yossi and Barth, Aharon, *Diasporas and International Relations Theory*, International Organization (2003) Vol. 57, Issue 3: 449-479.

³⁹ Baker, Carolyn, 'Membership categorization and interview accounts'. In: David Silverman, ed. *Qualitative research: theory, method and practice*. London: Sage, 1997, 131.

I am hoping to understand how the host-land context in Finland along with international developments affect how the diaspora constructs social boundaries as part of the mobilization process.

1.3. Structure of the thesis

The thesis will start with the theoretical framework which will provide an overview of definition of the term "diaspora", the mobilization process and diasporas', the behavior of diasporas, their relations to conflicts and the construction of social boundaries. I will also position how this thesis fits within current academic debates by defining the terminology that I will be using. I will then present the methodology used in this study by first going through the semi-structured interviewing method and looking at how this method can be used to produce discourse units while avoiding research bias and the truthfulness of responses. This will be followed by descriptions of the data analysis methods used in this study. Lastly I will present ethical considerations that were taken into account while conducting this study.

Understanding the reasons for mobilization and the current context requires understanding of their history, which is why I'm including a background section in my thesis. In this section I will give an overview about the history of the Kurdish conflict and the Kurdish diaspora in Europe and in Finland, as well as about recent developments in the conflict. It will also help in placing the findings of this study in a wider context. I will then move into the analysis section of this study in which the data is analyzed according to the method described. It will start by presenting how notion of belonging and construction of the pan-Kurdish diasporic identity are manifested among the respondents through social categorization mechanism. The discussion will then move on to the mobilization process along with the political opportunity structures and role of the technology. This will be followed by discussion over conflict diffusion among the Kurdish diaspora in Finland. I will then present how different diaspora groups' position within Finnish society affects the political mobilization of diaspora groups and lastly draw everything together in reflection on the findings on the theoretical framework.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1. Definition of "diaspora"

A universally accepted definition of the term "diaspora" does not exist in academic literature. The word originates from the Greek word of "speirodia", which refers to migration and colonization⁴⁰ and has been used traditionally to refer to Jews living outside the biblical land of Israel as well as historical dispersion of Armenian population from Anatolia during the first world war and Africans by Europeans during the trans-Atlantic Slave trade.⁴¹ The term gained popularity in the academia from 1980's when it was started to be used in social sciences to describe experiences of forced migrants who formed their own communities in Europe.⁴² The term overlaps in literature with concepts such as "transnational community" and "migrant group" and has been used to describe almost any transnational or deterritorialized group,⁴³ which is why it is needed to review how the concept has been used in past research and to determine how the term is defined in this thesis.

During early 1990's the term was associated mostly with migration. Khachig Tölölyan wrote in the first issue of *Diaspora*, the first academic journal that specializes in the subject that "*the term that once described the Jewish and Armenian dispersion now shares meanings with larger semantic domain that includes words like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guest-worker, exile community, overseas community, ethnic community*".⁴⁴ In the same issue, William Safran presented his definition of diaspora as being "*expatriate minority communities that are dispersed from original center to at least two peripheral places, that maintain a memory, vision or myth about their original homeland, that believe that they are not or cannot be fully accepted as part of their host country, see the ancestral home as a place of eventual return, when time is right, that are committed to the maintenance of restoration of this homeland to which the group's consciousness and solidarity are importantly*

⁴⁰ Cohen, Robin, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*, University of Warwick, 1997, ix.

⁴¹ Ember, Melvin, Ember, Carol, Skoggard, Ian, *Encyclopedia of Diasporas: Immigrant and Refugee Cultures around the World Volume 1: Overview and Topics*, Spriger, 2004, XIII.

⁴² Wahlbeck, Östen, The Concept of Diaspora as an analytical tool in the study of refugee communities, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol.28 No: 2, 2002, 221-222.

⁴³ Adamson, Fiona, *Constructing the Diaspora: Diaspora Identity Politics and Transnational Social Movements*, In Mandaville, Peter and Lyons, Terrence, *Politics from Afar: Transnational Diasporas and Networks*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2011, 29.

⁴⁴ Tölölyan, Khachig, *The Nation State and it's Others: In lieu of preface*, *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* Vol:1 No: 1, 1991, 4-5.

defined by this continuing relationship with this homeland".⁴⁵ Bahar Baser pointed out in that the fixture on will to return by diaspora members have been discarded by later research as has the assumption on myth of a home country.⁴⁶ Brubaker broadened the concept beyond migration in his study on Eastern European minorities after the fall of the Soviet Union, as he showed that diasporas can also emerge as a result of movement of borders.⁴⁷

Two opposing ways of using the term can be distinguished from literature which are *essentialist* and *constructivist*. Essentialist usage is based on assumption that migrants carry their national identity with them, and retain their sense of belonging to their homeland. This view holds that diasporas are a result of migratory movements and leads often to ethnicizing the concept of diaspora. Constructivists see that rather than just a result of migration movements, diasporas are social constructions, to which different actors, among them diaspora elite and homeland elite, have a significant role in constructing. The debate over the concept mirrors the debate in international relations literature about collective identities.⁴⁸ Constructivist research on transnational networks, transnationalism and identity has placed diasporas at the center of migration, globalization, exile and boundary crossing from one political system to another, which provide a basis for re-construction of identity.⁴⁹

Robin Cohen was one of the scholars who criticized Safran's original definition of the term and presented his own version by adding four points to Safran's original 6: 1) *"groups disperse for colonial reasons or voluntarist reasons" can also be diasporic groups*, 2) *"there should be more recognition of the positive virtues of retaining diasporic identity"* 3) *"diasporas mobilize their collective identity"* and 4) *"diaspora can be used to describe transnational bonds of co-responsibility even where historically exclusive claims are not strongly articulated"*⁵⁰ While being more inclusive than Safran's definition, Cohen saw the concept as very broad, containing all dispersed migrant communities, as he described diasporas as homogeneous identity groups.

⁴⁵ Safran, William, *Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return*, *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, Vol:1, No:1, 1991, 83-84.

⁴⁶ Baser, 2016, 32.

⁴⁷ Brubaker, Rogers, *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and National Question in the New Europe*, Cambridge University Press, 1997, 6.

⁴⁸ Adamson, 2012, 27.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 33.

⁵⁰ Cohen, Robin, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction Second Edition*, Routledge, 2008, 7-8.

In their 2003 article on conceptualizing diasporas to discipline of international relations, Yossi Shain and Aaron Barth presented a definition which attempted to take into account plurality of diasporas and frame it around constructivist use of the term. They defined diaspora as "*people with a common origin who reside outside of their ethnic or religious homeland, which can be real, symbolic, independent or under foreign control. Diaspora members identify themselves or are identified with other according to this homeland, and are entangled to politics of this homeland.*"⁵¹ They also categorized diaspora members into core, active and passive members according to their activity.⁵² While the definition takes into consideration plurality of diasporas and gives more agency to diaspora members themselves in defining their identity than Cohen's definition does, it suffers from methodological nationalism, as it states that *the diaspora members share a common origin that is rooted in soil*. In his 2005 article, Rogers Brubaker challenged the homogenizing definition of diasporas by claiming that rather than being a group of people, diaspora is a claim or a stance,⁵³ defined by dispersion of space, homeland orientation to real or imagined homeland and boundary maintenance with preservation of distinctive identity from that of host-land identity.⁵⁴ Thus, he saw that diasporas are not pre-determined, but are social constructions of diaspora members themselves.

I see that essentialist view is problematic, as it regards diasporas as static and all-encompassing, resulting into not taking into account plurality of identities and affiliations within them. It assumes that all members of a given group are political actors, which is not necessarily empirical fact, as many do not join diasporic organizations or take part in diasporic activities. There is also a problem of inconsistency between pre-determined definition and how the diaspora members themselves define their identity. Thus, I adopt Brubaker's 2005 definition, in that I see diasporas as an identity that is defined by dispersion of space, orientation to a perceived homeland of the diaspora and boundary maintenance to other identities.

⁵¹ Shain, Yossi & Barth, Aaron, 2003, 452.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Brubaker, Rogers, *The 'diaspora' diaspora*, Ethnic and Racial Studies Vol. 28 No: 1, 2005, 14.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 6.

2.2. Notion of belonging and home

Scholars use term "homeland" and "belonging" to refer to diaspora members cultural and political orientation towards their country of origin or perceived cultural home. They are terms used to explain spatial disparity and blurring of boundaries set up by nation states, as constructivist research considers space not as an unchanging factor that determines cultural behavior, but as a product of social interaction.⁵⁵ Appadurai Arjun coined term *ethnospace* to refer to group identities not as spatially bound because of increased movement of people that leads to reproduction of identities.⁵⁶

Belonging has been described by scholars as way of remembering in cognitive psychological sense where the sense of belonging functions to store and organize information.⁵⁷ This "mental map" is seen as being adopted through socialization from young age through upbringing and education and results into different cultures having their own varying organizing structures.⁵⁸ It has also been noted as psychological state or a need that results from rootedness and rootlessness to a particular locality or group,⁵⁹ as well as a mental health concept.⁶⁰ Social scientists link the term to group membership as a feeling that connects it's members together⁶¹ but it's has also been presented as an alternative to the concept of identity in explaining how individuals position themselves in relation to collectives

⁵⁵ Kläger, Florian and Stierstofer, Klaus, *Diasporic Construction of Home and Belonging*, De Gruyter, 2015, 3.

⁵⁶ Appadurai, Arjun, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Public Worlds, 1994, 33, 48.

⁵⁷ Connerton, Paul, *How Societies Remember*, Cambridge University Press, 1989, 27-29.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Lovell, Nadia, *Locality and Belonging*, Taylor and Francis Group, 1998, 2.

⁶⁰ Hagerty, Bonnie, Lynch-Sauer, Judith, Patusky, Kathleen, Bouwsema, Maria, Collier, Peggy, *Sense of Belonging: A Vital Mental Health Concept*, Archives of Psychiatric Nursing Vol. VI, No. 3, 1992, 172.

⁶¹ Hirsch, Herbert, *Genocide and Politics of Memory: Studying death to Preserve life*, University of North Carolina Press, 1995, 139.

and societies.⁶² Manifestation of belonging by individuals and groups is affected by interaction and environment, so in the case of diasporas their host society.⁶³

”Home” or ”homeland” of diasporas has been associated with experience of dispersion by the diaspora, who are forced to migrate and settle into a new and alien environment. For diasporas it is essentially object for their sense of belonging. Indeed, what distinguishes diasporas from individuals in exile is their organized activity in constructing ”homes” or ”homelands”.⁶⁴ In diaspora context home can be a locality around which historical narratives of identity are constructed, but at the same time it can also stem from lived experience of migrants.⁶⁵ Home in diaspora context does not however only have geographic meaning, but it should also be understood as cultural as well as psychological which means that the concept stems from transnational nature of diasporas.⁶⁶ Notion of home is directly linked to processes of inclusion and exclusion and thus construction of social boundaries, which is determined by interaction with other groups as well as diasporas status in the host society.⁶⁷

Toivanen suggested in her study that notions of belonging and homeland among the second generation Kurdish migrants in Finland is underlined by territoriality,⁶⁸ meaning that they expressed belonging to Kurdistan as a territorial entity as well as Kurdish culture. At the same time Toivanen distinguished civic and ethnic belonging, as she saw that while the respondents did express belonging as Finnish citizens, they were still deemed as outsiders due to ethnized notion of Finnishness.⁶⁹ Territorial nature of belonging among the Kurdish diasporas has been regarded as stemming from of

⁶² Jones, Paul and Krzyzanowski, Michal, *Identity, Belonging and Migration: Beyond Constructing ”others”* in Delanty, Gerard, Wodak, Ruth, Jones, Paul, *Identity, Belonging and Migration*, Liverpool University Press, 2011, 38-39.

⁶³ Stråth, Bo, *Belonging and European Identity* in Delanty, Gerard, Wodak, Ruth, Jones, Paul, *Identity, Belonging and Migration*, Liverpool University Press, 2011, 26-31.

⁶⁴ Alinia, Mino, *Spaces of Diasporas: Kurdish Identities, experiences of otherness and politics of belonging*, Ph.D, Göteborg University, 2004.

⁶⁵ Brah, Avtar, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities*, Routledge, 1996, 190-192.

⁶⁶ Ibid, 194.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 193.

⁶⁸ Toivanen, Mari, Kivisto, Peter, *Homing Desire at the Juncture of Place and Transnational Spaces: The Case of Young Kurds in Finland*, Nordic Journal of Migration Research Vol. 4, Issue 2, 2014, 71.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

status of statelessness,⁷⁰ as their belonging to transnational network,⁷¹ as well as a result political mobilization.⁷²

I refer to the notion of belonging as social-psychological experience of involvement in a group that is defined by socially constructed identity that it is attached to. The notion of "home" or "homeland" is object of belonging in diasporic identities and is a social construct that consists of subjective experiences as well as historical narratives and it is constructed through interactive relationship (processes of exclusion and inclusion) with other social groups.

2.3. Mobilization process

"Mobilization" of diasporas has been used in the literature to refer to the process of diasporas gathering support to conduct their activities. Fiona Adamson's highlighted the role of modern communication and transportation technology in facilitating diasporic identity, but she also stressed the importance of political entrepreneurship in mobilization.⁷³ On a similar vein, Rainer Bauböck argued that even though spatial dispersion is part of diasporization, the phenomena is not an essential result of migration, but of mobilization through construction of such identity. He demonstrated this with the example of Kosovon diaspora, which mobilized as a response to the events in the country of origin.⁷⁴ Scholars use the term *diasporic turn* to describe the moment when the diaspora is being mobilized.⁷⁵ This process is determined by *political opportunity structures*, which are structures that affect how actors are able to use political space.

Political opportunity structures that affect diasporic turn include different legal frameworks set up by states in determining rights of people, policies pursued by host state (the state that hosts the diaspora), home state or homeland elite, international law and politics, relations between host and home

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Wahlbeck, 1999.

⁷² Eliassi, Barzoo, *Contesting Kurdish Identities in Sweden: quest for belonging among Middle-Eastern Youth*, Palgrave Macmillian, 2013, 30.

⁷³ Adamson, Fiona & Demetriou, Madeleine, *Remapping the Boundaries of 'state' and 'National Identity': Incorporating Diasporas into IR theorizing*, European Journal of International Relations, Vol.13, Issue: 4, 2007, 49.

⁷⁴ Bauböck, Rainer, *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods*, Amsterdam University Press, 2010, 214.

⁷⁵ Baser, 2016, 42.

governments.⁷⁶ The system of the host country affects how diasporas mobilize in that systems that are more open to diaspora activities and grant diasporas access to political decision makers and structures, channel their activities inside the states' political system and it's civil society.⁷⁷ Gregory Brown suggested in his doctoral dissertation that political system of the host country greatly affects the form of political participation of diasporas as in more inclusive systems political participation happens within the system, than in more exclusive systems, where political participation might take a extra-judicial, or confrontational form.⁷⁸ Thus, the host states have a major role in determining the political opportunity structures of diasporas. In some instances the host state may have foreign policy objectives where mobilization of the diaspora may be seen as beneficial, such as US's role in mobilizing the Iraqi and Afghan diasporas prior to support it's foreign operations.⁷⁹

Opportunity structures are not static, but can change when host or home states change their policies or if their relations change in a way that would affect the opportunity structures. Attitude of public towards the migrant population in Western Europe worsened from 2001,⁸⁰ which manifested as growing popularity on anti-immigration policies especially after the 2008 economic crisis.⁸¹ According to Bahar Baser minority groups reinforce their identity when politics in the host country becomes directly linked with their identity.⁸² This might be because diaspora organization offers a space to maintain a sense of belonging⁸³ and also as diasporic organizations often work to further

⁷⁶ Smith H and Stares P, *Diasporas in Conflict: Peace Makers or Peace Wreckers?* United Nations University Press 2007, 11.

⁷⁷ Soysal, Yasemin, *Limits of Citizenship: Migrants and Postnational Membership in Europe*, The University of Chicago Press, 1994.

Giugni, Marco, Passy, Florence, *Migrant mobilization between political institutions and citizenship regimes: A comparison between Switzerland and France*, *European Journal of Political Research* Vol. 43, 2004, 51-82.

⁷⁸ Brown, Gregory, *Coping with long-distance Nationalism: Inter-Ethnic Conflict in a Diaspora Context*, University of Texas at Austin, PhD Thesis, 2004, 104.

⁷⁹ Lyons, Terrence & Mandaville, Peter, *Think Locally, Act Globally: Towards a transnational Comparative Politics*, *International Political Sociology* Vol. 4, 2010, 133.

⁸⁰ Minoo, Alinia, Östen Wahlbeck, Eliassi, Barzoo & Khalid Khayati, *The Kurdish Diaspora: Transnational Ties, Home and Politics of Belonging*, *Nordic Journal of Migration Research* Vol.4 no: 2 2014, 54.

⁸¹ Hatton, Timothy, *Immigration, Public Opinion and Recession in Europe*, Economic Policy Sixty- First Panel Meeting 2015, 2.

⁸² Baser, 2016, 40.

⁸³ Shuval, Judith, *Diaspora Migration: Definitional Ambiguities and a Theoretical Paradigm*, *International Migration*, Vol. 38, Issue 5, 2000, 47.

rights and fulfill the needs of it's members.⁸⁴

Diasporas' vested interest in affecting politics or conditions in their home country is part of diasporic claim and identity construction and as such makes relations towards homeland and transnational diaspora located in other host states driver of mobilization. Mobilization can happen as a result of activity of the diaspora elite, but also by homeland elite.⁸⁵ Diasporas with different kinds of relations to homeland mobilize and act accordingly, although diasporas have not been categorized by the academia according to their relations with their homeland.⁸⁶ However it has been noted that stateless diasporas, that is diasporas whose perceived homeland is not bound to an existing nation state, are more likely to be mobilized to support political movements in their home country than other diasporas.⁸⁷

I see that diasporas emerge as a result of active social construction, but are also of historical consequences of the diasporas perceived homeland and experiences in the host land. Political opportunity structures determine how and when the diaspora can mobilize. They are affected by political and legal contexts of the host countries, level of discrimination against the diaspora members and international politics.

2.4. Diasporas as political actors

Political opportunity structures also affect the activities diasporas organize, how they behave and how they position themselves in relation to other actors. Host state, diaspora communities, antagonistic states and international actors such as OSCE or UN form a web of actors which interact in attempts to influence reality on the ground. Transnational relations between diasporas, hosting states and home states is referred in literature as "triadic relationship".⁸⁸ This relationship makes diasporas transnational actors, meaning that their activities and behavior is not bound or defined by national

⁸⁴ Bauböck, 2010, 316.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Sheffer, Gabriel, *A Conceptual Framework for Understanding the Roles of Diasporas in intrastate Conflicts*, in Miodownik, Dan & Barak, Qren, *Nonstate Actors in Intrastate Conflicts*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013, 85-86.

⁸⁷ Sheffer, Gabriel, *The Jewish Diaspora and the Arab-Palestinian-Israeli Conflict*, In Stares, Paul, *Diasporas in Conflict: Peace Makers or Peace Wreckers*, United Nations University Press, 2007, 68.

⁸⁸ Vertovec, Steven, *Conceiving and Researching Transnationalism*, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol: 22, Issue: 2, 1999, 449.

borders. In light of more recent research on diasporas' relations with international institutions and organizations, the concept is not sufficient as it does not include this level of interaction.

Relations between the diaspora and host state greatly affects the diasporas ability to act and it's behavior. Studies by Östen Wahlbeck and Bahar Baser on relationship between diasporas and host states have highlighted the effect of host state's integration policy and context, including level of systematic discrimination, on the mobilization process and ways the diasporas acts. Wahlbeck notes that spatial resettlement of refugee communities affected how the Kurdish diaspora organized in Britain and Finland: While in Finland during the 1990's the Kurdish population was scattered throughout the country, the organization of the diaspora happened on a small scale on a local level, in Britain where there was a great concentration of Kurdish communities in London, the level of organization was higher.⁸⁹ Bahar Basers comparative study between Kurdish diasporas in Sweden and Germany notes that in states with public policies that strongly support minority communities, for example with public support to establishment of associations that support integration, diasporas organize more coherently under one group and practice their activities through public institutions.⁹⁰ Inclusive system also had an effect on the diasporas' discourse, as diasporas in Sweden adopted the Swedish states discourse of multiculturalism.⁹¹ In more closed system, which Bahars study is represented by Germany, which have more strict policy towards political participation of diaspora groups pushes the diasporas instead to work outside of state institutions.⁹² Exclusionary policies results into diasporas to position themselves antagonistic towards the host state, and adopting discourse closer to transnational political groups, than that of the state.⁹³ She concludes that citizenship regimes, openness to political participation and ethnic lobbying, multicultural policies and foreign policies of the host states affected to a large extend the way diasporas mobilize and behave.⁹⁴

Relations between diasporas and home states or homeland elite can affect both the behavior of diasporas and also of the home state or political elite affiliated with the diaspora. In their relation to homeland, diasporas can be passive as declared representatives of a state or a subject of action by a state, active as actors which influence events in the home country or reactive as they react to events

⁸⁹ Wahlbeck, 1999, 143.

⁹⁰ Baser, 2016, 188.

⁹¹ Ibid, 187.

⁹² Ibid, 229.

⁹³ Ibid, 226.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 239.

in their homeland.⁹⁵ Home states might have an interest to affect the behavior of the diaspora to influence policies or conditions in the host state, or attempt to mobilize the diaspora to influence events in the home country.⁹⁶ The relation between the diaspora and homeland can be asymmetric in a way where the homeland is dependent on remittances or support from the diaspora as is the example with the Jewish diaspora and Israel,⁹⁷ or the Armenian diaspora and the Republic of Armenia,⁹⁸ which will result into diaspora having a great influence in affairs of their home state. Home state or homeland elite may, in some instances have an interest to restrict the influence of the diaspora on it's affairs or display it's legitimacy to other states over the diaspora, as has been the case with KRG and the PKK affiliated Kurdish diaspora,⁹⁹ or the Ethiopian state which excluded diaspora organizations in participating to political affairs in the country.¹⁰⁰

Relations between the home and the host states of the diaspora can affect the status and legitimacy of the diaspora. One can take Turkey's policy towards the PKK as an example, where it lobbied the EU to ban the organization, which affected the opportunity structures of the Kurdish diaspora as a whole. Turkey-relations' strategic importance to Germany affects it's policy towards the PKK and the Kurdish diaspora.¹⁰¹

Diasporas also interact with transnational actors, NGO's and international institutions such as the OSCE, the UN or the European council when engaging in homeland politics. Diasporas can reach policymakers otherwise unattainable through these actors, although not many diaspora groups are able to reach these institutions.¹⁰² Interaction between diasporas and international actors can change their discourse and behavior in a fundamental way. This was demonstrated in Ann-Catrin Emmanuelson's study on networks of Kurdish diaspora organizations where this interaction changed

⁹⁵ Shain & Barth, 2003, 453-454.

⁹⁶ Ostergaard-Nielsen, Eva, *The Politics of Migrants' Transnational Political Practices*, The International Migration Review, Vol. 37, Issue: 3, 2003, 766.

⁹⁷ Shain and Barth, 2003, 454.

⁹⁸ Baser, Bahar & Swain, Ashok, *Diaspora Design versus Homeland Realities: Case Study of Armenian Diaspora*, Caucasian Review of International Affairs, Vol. 3, Issue: 1, 2009, 51-54.

⁹⁹ Baser, Demir, *Kurdish interventions in the Iraq War* in Smith, Hazel and Stares, Paul, *Diasporas in Conflict: Peace Makers or Peace Wreckers?* United Nations University Press, 2007, 206-208.

¹⁰⁰ Feyissa, Dereje, *Setting a Social Reform Agenda. The Peacebuilding Dimension of the Rights Movement of the Ethiopian Muslim Diaspora*, Diaspace Working Paper no. 9, 2011, 4-5.

¹⁰¹ Yilmaz, Ömer, *Germany's Kurdish and PKK Policy: Balance and Strategy*, Insight Turkey Vol. 18, Issue: 1, 2016, 98.

¹⁰² Ostergaard-Nielsen, 2003, 773.

the discourse of the diaspora from nationalist based claims to a global perspective that was framed by human rights and advocating for individual rights.¹⁰³ It also affected the way these diaspora groups operated as they adopted institutionalized ways of working, and specialized to certain issues which guaranteed stable funding from international donors.¹⁰⁴

I see diasporas as actors that operate in domestic space of their host state, in transnational space in other and in international space with international institutions and organizations. Their relations and interaction with these actors has a major impact in their behaviour and position. Given the opportunity and capacity, diasporas can also have an impact to their home state or homeland elite, and policies of the host state as well as homeland.

2.5. Long-distance nationalism, Transnational conflicts and diasporas

The term "Transnational Conflict" developed from 1990's to counter nation-state centered discourse, or "methodological nationalism" in social sciences about conflicts. The term came to refer to conflicts that flow through nation states or conflicts which challenge their sovereignty, meaning conflicts that exist within and outside boundaries of nation states and include actors that are not always, or primarily nation states.¹⁰⁵ As has been noted above, diasporas are essentially political actors that operate in the transnational space and many of them have been or are involved also in transnational conflicts. There is a debate in the academia over emergence of conflicts among diasporas: to what extent are conflicts that emerge through diasporas extension of the conflict in the country of origin, or constructed by diasporas?

Benedict Anderson introduced the concept of *long-distance nationalism* in his 1992 lecture in Centre for Asian Studies Amsterdam, where he elaborates on 19th century British historian Lord Acton's observation that many of the contemporary nationalist thinkers established their national movements in exile, or otherwise displaced from their imagined homelands.¹⁰⁶ Anderson saw that while capitalist economy pushed people to migrate from their "indigenous" territories and when nation states

¹⁰³ Emanuelsson, Ann-Catrin, *Diaspora Global Politics: Kurdish transnational networks and accommodation of nationalism*, Göteborg University, 2005, 183.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, 140.

¹⁰⁵ James, Paul & Sharma, R.R, *Transnational Conflict: A Critical Introduction*, Globalization of Violence, Vol. 4, 2006, 6-8.

¹⁰⁶ Anderson, Benedict, *Long-distance Nationalism The World Capitalism and Rise of Identity Politics*, The Wertheim Lecture, University of Amsterdam Centre for Asian Studies, 1992, 2-3.

ethnizes them, they are pushed to retain their "emotional life and political psychology" in their imagined original homeland. They are able to maintain this connection closely with modern technology, which enables them to keep contact to events that become part of their everyday life.¹⁰⁷ He refers to Irish nationalists in Boston who supported the IRA, Jewish Americans who support right-wing extremism in Israel and Canadian Sikhs who support the militant Sikh movements in Punjab as examples of "fanatics" among long-distance nationalists. Although not all long-distance nationalists go into such extreme measures, they all share participation to homeland politics without accountability.¹⁰⁸

Long-distance nationalism has been used by a number of scholars to explain adoption of homeland conflicts by diasporas. Jolle Demmers explained that long-distance nationalism explains how conflicts are de-localized by diasporas, who by engaging with events in their home country through transnational media construct the conflict in the country of settlement.¹⁰⁹ Paul Collier claimed in his report on policies to reduce risk for continuation of conflicts that because of long-distance nationalism, large diasporas increase probability of conflict perpetuation.¹¹⁰ Terrence Lyons argued in his 2009 article on Ethiopian diaspora, that "*diaspora groups created by conflict and sustained by traumatic memories tend to compromise less and therefore reinforce and exacerbate conflicts' protractedness.*"¹¹¹ In his study on the effect of Turkish and Kurdish media on construction of transnational conflict among the Turkish and the Kurdish diasporas, Kels Janroj saw that long-distance nationalism among the diasporas plays a key role in maintenance of the conflict.¹¹² He drew from Benedict Andersons Imagined Communities framework to point into medias role in constructing national identities.¹¹³ He concluded that in the case of Turkish-Kurdish conflict, the media creates a discursive conflict over meanings of nation, national identity and belonging to a particular group,¹¹⁴

107 Ibid, 9.

108 Ibid, 12.

109 Demmers, Jolle, *Diaspora and Conflict: Locality, Long-Distance Nationalism, and De-localisation of conflict Dynamics*, Journal of the European Institute for Communication and Culture, Vol. 9, No: 1, 2002, 94-95.

110 Collier, Paul, *Policy for Post-Conflict Societies: Reducing the Risks for Renewed Conflicts*, The World Bank, 2000, 9.

111 Lyons, Terrence, *The Ethiopian Diaspora and Homeland Conflict*, Proceedings of the 16th International Conference in Ethiopian Studies, Trondheim, 2009, 589.

112 Janroj, Keles Yilmaz, *Media, Diaspora and Conflict: Nationalism and Identity amongst Turkish and Kurdish Migrants in Europe*, I.B. Tauris, 2015, 36.

113 Ibid, 150.

114 Ibid, 207.

which manifests itself in discourses of Turkish and Kurdish diasporas.¹¹⁵

Fixture on the role of long-distance nationalism in explaining diasporas' involvement in conflicts has been criticized in recent studies. Jonathan Hall pointed out that claims about protracted discourses among migrants have not been proven consistently by research, as there is also data that contradicts this argument.¹¹⁶ Devotion to homeland does not necessarily always lead to maintaining homeland conflicts, as activities that diasporas take can take many forms depending on host- and homeland contexts' as well as mobilizing diaspora elites agendas. Diasporas may work both as "peace wreckers", as well as "peace builders", as empirical findings suggests that even diasporas which share the same homeland may take different goals and adopt different activities in relation to conflicts.¹¹⁷

In regards to conflicts that are happening in home countries, diasporas may work as "peace wreckers" by paying remittances in order to support an actor in the conflict,¹¹⁸ lobby public opinion or actors to support certain conflict party,¹¹⁹ or by recruiting people to travel to the home country to participate in fighting.¹²⁰ As "peace builders" diasporas have worked as mediators,¹²¹ sent remittances to support reconstructing of home country¹²² furthered humanitarian efforts during conflicts or in post-conflict situations¹²³ and advocated for promotion human rights or other causes.¹²⁴

As Bahar Baser states,¹²⁵ there has been a great focus in the literature on how diasporas attempt to

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 214.

¹¹⁶ Hall, Jonathan, *Migration and Perceptions of War: Simultaneous Surveys in Countries of Origin and Settlement*, PhD thesis, Uppsala University, 2013, 65-66.

¹¹⁷ Stares and Smith, 2007, 9.

¹¹⁸ Skrbis, 2007, 233-234.

¹¹⁹ Koinova, Maria, *Conditions and Timing of Moderate and Radical Diaspora Mobilization: Evidence from Conflict Generated Diasporas*, Global Migration and Transnational Politics, Working paper No. 9, George Mason University, 2009, 1.

¹²⁰ Orton, Kyle, *The Forgotten Foreign Fighters: The PKK in Syria*, The Henry Jackson Society, 2017, 119

¹²¹ Baser, Bahar and Swain, Ashok, *Diasporas as Mediators: Third Party Mediation in Homeland Conflicts*, International Journal for World Peace, Vol: XXV, No. 3, 2008, 19.

¹²² Koser, Khalid, *African Diasporas and Reconstruction*, In Stares, Paul, *Diasporas in Conflict: Peace Makers or Peace Wreckers*, United Nations University Press, 2007, 245.

¹²³ Ghorashi, Halleh and Boersma, Kees, *The 'Iranian Diaspora' and the New Media: From Political Action to Humanitarian Help*, Development and Change, Vol. 40, No. 4, 2009, 678-679.

¹²⁴ Hepner, Tricia, *Religion, Repression, and Human Rights in Eritrea and the Diaspora*, Journal of Religion in Africa, Vol. 44, 2014, 154-155.

¹²⁵ Baser, 2016, 49.

affect the conditions in their home country, which might undermine the historical reasons for mobilization and the question of why the diasporas mobilize the way they do. A lot of the literature which concentrates on the ways diasporas mobilize and act, does not regard why the diasporas act the way they do. As diasporas' behavior in regards to conflicts in their home countries show, conflicts are not simply "carried" as essentialist oriented views might present, but just like diasporic identity, are a result of both historical factors and a result of active social construction. Fiona Adamson has presented a mechanism how diasporas mobilize in response to conflicts in their home country: The diaspora elite initiate a transnational brokerage which links them directly to the conflict actors, they frame the conflict to appeal to certain audience and use sectarian outbidding to articulate the diasporic identity in line with the conflict.¹²⁶ Elise Feron has categorized three ways how diasporas "transport" conflicts from their home countries: Through discourse, which they advocate to general public and policy makers with demonstrations, lobbying and participating in politics in the host state, societal level with diasporas engaging in spatial and social segregation from people belonging to opposing side of the conflict and physical level, which means violent confrontation.¹²⁷ Factors that influence conflict transportation process by diasporas include process of migration, relation to the country of origin, country of settlement, characteristics of the diaspora itself and external factors such as events in the international arena all affect the way conflicts are constructed by the diaspora.¹²⁸

Conflict generated migrants construct their identity in a way where the conflict of in their homeland becomes a structural element of their identity, especially if the migrants are faced with systematic discrimination.¹²⁹ Different diaspora groups with the same homeland might have different views of the conflict, especially if these groups are affiliated with different political constituencies.¹³⁰ Diasporas react to events in their country or origin, which may result into diasporas to reconstruct the conflict from their home country.¹³¹ Generational differences and size of the diaspora affects the way conflict is constructed by the diaspora. Studies by Andy Curtis¹³² and Nina Glick-Schiller¹³³ suggest

¹²⁶ Adamson, 2013, 67-70.

¹²⁷ Feron, 2013, 364-365.

¹²⁸ Ibid, 366-367.

¹²⁹ Baser, 2016, 40.

¹³⁰ Stares and Smiths, 2007, 5.

¹³¹ Skrbis, 2007, 234-235.

¹³² Curtis, Andy, *Nationalism in the Diaspora: A Study of the Kurdish Movement*, University of Utrecht, 2004.

¹³³ Glick-Schiller, Nina, *Blood and Belonging: Long-Distance Nationalism and the World Beyond*, In S. McKinnon and S. Silverman (eds), *Complexities: Beyond Nature and Nurture*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005, 303– 312.

that the first generation of migrants can socialize the second generation to adopt conflicts, who then reconstruct the conflict according to what they learn from their parents, what they learn from media and how they perceive the conflict according to other life experiences.

Elise Feron highlights the multiple factors that influence emergence of conflicts among diasporas to show inefficiencies of understanding the process as a linear across contexts. She argues that conflicts among diasporas "autonomise" themselves, meaning that the conflicts are re-constructed by diasporas.¹³⁴ As shown in Bahar Baser's comparative study on conflict among Kurdish and Turkish diasporas in Sweden and Germany, the country of settlement has a major impact on how the conflict automises among the diaspora. The study suggests that conflicts tend to be manifested more on discursive and societal levels in more open systems, as diasporas use political opportunity structures available for them and channel their discursive conflict through "official" state channels.¹³⁵ Host states policies that treat minority groups as homogeneous cultural groups allocate diasporas to pan-ethnic blocks, which in Basers study is expressed through the example of Sweden where the diaspora groups segregated themselves socially from each other.¹³⁶ Institutionalized behavior with internalized discourse of non-violence however can be argued to prevent the use of violence.¹³⁷ The study suggests that more closed systems and higher level of discrimination would push the diasporas to a confrontational political behavior,¹³⁸ though the level of segregation was not as high as in Sweden as groups were not organized to pan-ethnic blocks, but behind political movements.¹³⁹

I see that while long-distance nationalism as a phenomena does affect how diasporas behave, it's effect is not linear. Diasporas' mobilization and position within the conflict is dependent on their opportunity structures, state policies, international affairs, events in the homeland, diasporas internal characteristics and it's relation to homeland elite. Conflicts are social constructions, which are not carried by each conflict-generated migrant from one place to another, but are a result of historical factors and active social construction by different actors. Understanding why and how conflicts manifest among diasporas requires understanding historical background of the conflict itself, but also hostland context and characteristics of the diaspora itself.

¹³⁴ Feron, 2013, 368.

¹³⁵ Baser, 2016, 189.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Ibid, 186.

¹³⁸ Ibid, 231.

¹³⁹ Ibid, 198.

2.6. Construction of boundaries

As discussed above, mobilization of diasporas requires constructing a politicized identity. This often takes shape of ethno-nationalistic ideology, which is characterized by construction and maintenance of boundaries to other groups.¹⁴⁰ Fredrik Barth first presented the concept of boundary maintenance in his 1969 book on social organization of ethnic groups, where he showed that identity groups firstly maintain boundaries despite changing members of the groups and secondly that cross-group social interaction is part of identity and boundary maintenance process.¹⁴¹ He sees that identity groups use cultural features to signal difference from other groups in their interaction.¹⁴² Cultural features that signal boundary and cultural characteristics of the members may transform even the organizational form of the groups,¹⁴³ meaning that they are tools for organizational vessels that are used to differentiate self from others and signaling membership and exclusion. Emergence of ethnic distinctions requires construction of categorization system and acceptance of principles to which those categories are judged.¹⁴⁴ These categories are affected by interaction between the groups in specific contexts.¹⁴⁵ Social categories such as boundaries are thus indicators for standards of behavior. Actors codify idioms by selecting signals to represent their identity and asserting values for cultural differences, while historical narratives and traditions are used to revive certain cultural traits.¹⁴⁶ In cases where their security is dependent on communal ties, identification to that community becomes important and thus is explicitly expressed to confirm membership to the group, as weakening identity and membership would be perceived as a threat to groups' security.¹⁴⁷

Barth touched on different types of contexts where ethnic boundaries work in different ways which he divided into poly-ethnic culture systems, where the system is composed of different groups which

¹⁴⁰ Adamson, 2013, 71.

Brubaker, 2005, 14.

¹⁴¹ Barth, Fredrik, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: Social Organization of Culture Difference*, Universitets Forlaget, 1969, 9.

¹⁴² Ibid, 13.

¹⁴³ Ibid, 15.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 17.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 29.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 34.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, 36-37.

maintain a large autonomy of each other¹⁴⁸ and societies with minorities,¹⁴⁹ where interaction is determined by dominant groups framework of statuses and institutions.¹⁵⁰ In these systems the minority elite which determines boundaries of their group may work in different ways by attempting to integrate into the dominant group, accept and accommodate their minority status while participating to the larger system, or to emphasize their identity using it to establish new forms of activities and patterns of interaction not formerly found within the system.¹⁵¹

Alvin Rabushka and Kenneth Shepsle elaborated on political behavior of identity groups in different political systems in their 1972 book *Politics in Plural Societies: A Theory of Democratic Instability*. They saw that existence of established social infrastructure such as organizations and mobilized resources, are well suited for deployment of political entrepreneurship,¹⁵² which is essential in mobilization of support for political goals. In cases of group competition, Rabushka and Shepsle elaborated on Barth's concept of social categorization systems, where political actors engage in "outbidding" of reinforcing communal values of group identity.¹⁵³ They argue that increased salience of ethnicity in politics, which means politicization of ethnicity, leads to ethnic outbidding in politics.¹⁵⁴ This is why many community based political entrepreneurs, such as diaspora elites, seek to increase salience of ethnicity politics.¹⁵⁵

Donald Horowitz brought concepts of ethnicity and boundary construction and maintenance to conflict research in his 1985 book *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Adopting the social psychological framework developed by previous research, he saw that ethnic groups participation to conflict can't systematically be explained with pure analysis of interests, but should be understood to be a defense mechanism that arises from affiliative relations, where a threat to these affiliations are met with anxiety and behavior to express membership to ones identity group.¹⁵⁶ Inter-group conflicts are a

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 16.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 30.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 31.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, 32.

¹⁵² Rabushka, Alvin, Shepsle, Kenneth, *Politics in Plural Societies: A Theory of Democratic Instability*, Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, United States, 1972, 64.

¹⁵³ Ibid, 66.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 82.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Horowitz, Donald, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*, University of California Press, 1985, 181.

result of constructing a comparison system, where juxtapositions, dichotomous aspects of interactions and polarized behavior are adopted to create an antagonistic comparative reference pairing.¹⁵⁷ Claiming of symbols is a tool to create a rituals to which status is determined and gain legitimacy where it is contested.¹⁵⁸ Adopting symbols can distort to wider political morality, to make it difficult to deny political claims.¹⁵⁹ This suggests that in ethnic conflicts, conflicts become competition over group status, where the status is regarded as a security interest. It is in fact, an extreme case of ethnic outbidding described by Rabushka and Shepsle.¹⁶⁰

Boundary construction and maintenance is part of formation of a diaspora, which by definition constructs a distinct identity from that of the dominant culture of the host state, but in cases where diasporas become involved with conflicts, construction of boundaries and engaging in political outbidding becomes a tool for political actors to mobilize support. As a result these boundaries are strengthened and claims are made more extreme. As stated by Adamson, extreme position is not however always the winning strategy, as mobilization strategy and it's evaluation has to be looked in it's context of for who the diaspora is attempting to gain legitimacy from.¹⁶¹ Mobilization process, boundary construction and maintenance thus has to be seen in relation to wider context of political opportunity structures available for the diaspora.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 182.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, 216-217.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 218.

¹⁶⁰ Rabushka and Shepsle, 1972, 96.

¹⁶¹ Adamson, 2013, 81.

3. Methodology and ethical discussion

3.1. Data collection

I conducted 9 interviews with individuals who are or have been active in the diaspora by organizing events, demonstrations or other activities. This follows definition of Shain and Barth's core members of the diaspora.¹⁶² The participants were contacted directly, or through a mutual contact. Some interviews were arranged with a help from Järjestöhauto of the Finnish Refugee Council. 5 of the interviews were conducted with respondents from Helsinki, 3 from Turku and 1 from Tampere. They represent different degrees and forms of activity within the diaspora, but also different backgrounds in terms of age, gender, political background and area of Kurdistan where the participants or their families originate from.

Recent scholarship on diasporas and long-distance nationalism has suggested the importance of transnational media in construction of diasporic identity and homeland conflicts among the diasporas,¹⁶³ which has made cyberspace an important source of data in studying diasporas. However, doing interviews provides advantages in understanding the phenomena that is studied and especially in the case of diasporas which consist of groups and individuals with different affiliations and interests,¹⁶⁴ as understanding the status of each member of the diasporas, their backgrounds and affiliations is crucial. Although the cyberspace is increasingly important platform for mobilization, relying solely on data that is available there has its limitations in that the mentioned information is difficult to recognize in online sources without prior information about the users or websites and their backgrounds. My lack of skills in Kurdish language, in which most of the conversations online are taking place, also limits my ability to use such sources for this study. In interviews however it is easier for me to acknowledge the background and status of the respondent and to recognize their role within the diaspora, which would be much more difficult by relying solely on online sources.

The interviews followed a semi-structured format, where I as a researcher conducted the sessions individually with each respondent. Language in which the interviews were conducted was Finnish. As the study focused on political mobilization process, the questions and topics that were discussed

¹⁶² Shain, Yossi and Barth, Aharon, 2003, 449-479.

¹⁶³ Brinkehoff, Jennifer, *Digital Diasporas: Identity and Transnational Engagement*, Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Keleş, Yılsaz Janroj, *Media, Diaspora and Conflicts Nationalism and Identity Amongst Turkish and Kurdish Migrants in Europe*, I.B.Tauris, 2015.

¹⁶⁴ Baser, Bahar, 2016, 35.

during the interviews were related to political affairs as well as activities of the Kurdish associations in Finland. As my main point of interest were social boundaries constructed by the diaspora, I looked for membership categorization devices, which are social categories to which activities are attached.¹⁶⁵ Tracing these categories show how identities, social relationships and institutions are produced. Studying membership categorization devices enable me to study how and why members of the diaspora construct boundaries between different groups. The interview is an occasion where both the interviewer and the respondent engage in generating meanings.¹⁶⁶ As such, interviews are not "data gathering", but "data generating" occasions. Interviews are a good method for studying membership categorization devices because in this occasion the researcher interviews the respondent as a member of the Kurdish diaspora, which means that the respondent activates the social categorization system when responding to questions by the researcher who in this case represents the Finnish majority.¹⁶⁷ Membership categorization is essentially positioning the self into a wider world view that is orderly and moral.¹⁶⁸

In the interview situation two things have to taken into account: The first is research bias, as the researcher uses pre-conceived ideas (in this case based on theoretical framework that is being referred to in the research) to prepare the interview topics and questions, which can lead to interviews to be persuasive by steering the respondent to certain conclusions.¹⁶⁹ The other problem that needs to taken into account is truthfulness of the responses, as the respondent may want to represent reality in a certain way.¹⁷⁰ In my thesis, research bias is taken to account by giving more space for the respondent to express themselves by conducting the interview with a looser structure, rather than relying on specific questions or a survey which would involve filling in conventional information to specific questions. This will allow the respondents to produce "discourse units", as in these occasions the information is constructed by the subject themselves, involving respondents' own story. In these discourse units one party is the primary speaker, while the other limits him- or herself to limited questions.¹⁷¹ The goal is to give the respondent more space to generate meanings and to reduce the role of the interviewer. This also creates space for reflexivity to recognize tensions between theory

¹⁶⁵ Baker, 1997, 131.

¹⁶⁶ Holstein, James & Gubrium, Jaber, *The Active Interview*, Sage, 1995, 123.

¹⁶⁷ Baker, 1997, 132.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid, 143.

¹⁶⁹ Have, 2004, 58.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 74.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 64.

and the data that is generated.¹⁷²

As for the problem of factuality, I approach the interview from what Pentti Alasuutari has called *specimen perspective*, where also the interview itself is considered as material that is under study.¹⁷³ Goal of the analysis is not to examine absolute truthfulness of claims and statements, but to study their discourse, which means analyzing *why* those claims or statements are made and *what* they indicate about perceived social realities of the respondents. Thus, I consider that as the respondents assume their role as a member of the Kurdish diaspora, they may represent things in a way they ought to be from their perspective, that can be considered as membership categorization devices.¹⁷⁴ Subjectivity of each respondents has to be taken to account in the data analysis process. This is to avoid representing the respondents solely as representatives of the Kurdish diaspora, but as individuals with fluid identity and world view and as subjects with varying roles and positions related to their sense of belonging and position in the society.¹⁷⁵ This multipositionality of the interviewer and the respondents means that they can take different positions in the interview based on the interview situation which is mediated according to interaction between the researcher and the respondent.¹⁷⁶

Despite these measures, I still acknowledge that the structure of the interview and the interview situation itself as interactional occasion does have an impact on the data. Another limitation that my study has is the use of Finnish as the language the interview is being conducted, limits the lexicon and epistemology of the data by firstly to vocabulary that is available to the respondent, and as the data is translated to English, to possible contradictions between the original meaning of the word in one language and it's meaning on the other. This also excludes diaspora members who do not possess good command in Finnish language. The sample of 9 diaspora members is only a small fraction and

¹⁷² Galletta, Anne, *Mastering the Semi-Structured Interview and Beyond: From Research Design to Analysis and Publication*, New York University Press, 2012, 99.

¹⁷³ Alasuutari, Pertti, *Researching Culture: Qualitative Method and Cultural Studies*, Sage, 1995.

¹⁷⁴ Baker, 1997, 137.

¹⁷⁵ Sanders, Jimmy, *Ethnic Boundaries and Identity in Plural Societies*, Annual Review of Sociology Vol. 28, 2002, 327-358.

Girard, Rene, *Belonging*, Contagion: Journal of Violence, Mimesis & Culture, translation: Grayson, Rob, 2016, 1-13.

¹⁷⁶ Fisher, Karen T., *Positionality, subjectivity, and race in transnational and transcultural geographical research*, Gender, Place and Culture Vol. 22, No. 4, 2015, 457.

does not represent the full plurality of the Kurdish diaspora in Finland, but as core members of the diaspora they are the main actors who construct and facilitate diasporic identity and also work to mobilize the Kurdish community which makes them the most interesting group for this study.

3.2. Data analysis

I will be using discourse analysis to study in-group and out-group dynamics and membership categorization devices. In-group and out-group positions are positions that members of identity groups define their membership by comparing their own values, action, aims, norms and resources in comparison to other groups.¹⁷⁷ Discourse analysis is used to code the meanings that are generated in the interviews. These meanings show the in-group and out-group positions which are indicated by choice of topics that are attached to own group ("us", "the diaspora", etc.) and other groups ("them", etc.), modality, rhetoric, use of passive or active tense (to emphasize or de-emphasize agency) and possible use of normalization (making things to seem culturally "normal").¹⁷⁸ In discourse analysis attitudes are determined as discursive evaluations, meaning that they have certain social functions,¹⁷⁹ such as construction and maintenance of social boundaries.

After categorizing data to in-group and out-group categories, activities and social meanings that are attached to these categories can be coded and recognized as part of the categorization system.¹⁸⁰ As described by Baker, this process can be done in the following way: Firstly by locating the central categories that underpin what the respondent is saying, secondly by recognizing attributes and activities that are attached to these categories and thirdly making conclusions on what are the indications of these attachments by placing them on the larger context.¹⁸¹

The process was conducted in a following way: I firstly categorized the data thematically to subjects that the respondents discussed during the interviews. I then moved on to distinguish in-group and out-group categories, where I looked at how the respondents positioned themselves in the interview, how and to what they expressed a sense of belonging to and how did they discuss or describe different social entities. The categories were then coded according to associations that were attached to these

¹⁷⁷ Van Dijk, Teun, *Ideology and Discourse Analysis*, Journal of Political Ideologies, Vol. 11, Issue 2, 2006, 116.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 125.

¹⁷⁹ Gibson, Stephen, "I'm not a Warmonger, but...": *Discourse Analysis and Social Psychological Peace Research*, Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, Vol. 22 Issue 2, 2012, 170.

¹⁸⁰ Baker, 1997, 135.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, 142.

categories. The findings were then reflected on the theoretical framework of diaspora mobilization to recognize social functions of these categories and position. Thus, the aim of this data analysis method in this study is to firstly recognize membership categorization mechanisms and distinguish group positions that emerged from the data.

The main pitfalls of discourse analysis is subjective interpretation of the data,¹⁸² which is why the data should not be analyzed in isolation but in the context of the interview, but also in context of world view that is constructed through meanings.

The method adopted in this study has been chosen from the perspective of the research question as it allows to recognize dynamics of group interaction and boundary construction. Placing it at the center of the research design allows the study to look at the conflict is constructed by the diaspora and also it's effect on diasporas group interaction and position within Finnish society. With this method coupled with the theoretical framework adopted for this thesis, the study aims to add on to existing literature about the Kurdish diaspora in Finland by shedding light on political mobilization process that takes place in Finland. Furthermore, it allows to study diaspora group interaction that is not extensively covered by current literature on diasporas.

3.3. Ethical considerations

The participants were first inquired by asking their willingness to participate to the study with basic information about my thesis and it's aims. They were informed that they will remain anonymous in the study and that the thesis will be open to public after it has been published. The respondents had been informed about the subject of the study. The interview questions avoided possible subjects that could trigger any traumatic reactions, so subjects regarding experiences of violence or displacement were excluded. The data will be transcribed so that the identity of the participant can't be traced through their name or title.

¹⁸² Van Dijk, 1997, 128.

4. Historical context

4.1. Origins of the transnational conflict

Under the Ottoman empire Kurds were not tied to the sultans power by direct rule as most of the territories it ruled, but by making tribal chieftains dependable to the sultan.¹⁸³ This gave the Kurdish territories a level of autonomy from the court of the Sultan. Crumbling of the Ottoman state in the early 20th century created power vacuums in it's peripheries. From late 19th century until the end of the First World War, several nation states separated themselves from the empire and at the same time major European powers with imperialist ambitions, the Great Britain, France and Russia, proceeded to divide it into their spheres of influence. In the Sykes-Picot agreement in 1916 between the Great Britain and France, issues regarding the status of ethnic groups within these territories was not discussed.¹⁸⁴ However, as the war prolonged in the Ottoman front, the British worked to create Armenian and Kurdish buffer states between the forming Turkish state and British mandate state of Iraq.¹⁸⁵ Despite promises to Kurdish notables, the treaty of Lausanne in 1923 between the Allied forces and Mustafa Kemal Ataturk dropped the provisions for Kurdish state¹⁸⁶ and the Kurdish population was divided between Persia and new states of Turkish republic, the State of Syria, Kingdom of Iraq and Armenia.

At the time strong Kurdish national identity did not exist and instead, their political identity was shaped by tribal allegiances. Michael Eppel has argued that nationalism did not develop in Kurdistan in pre-modern times because of it's geographic isolation, as it laid landlocked between pre-modern empires which prevented the spread of modern political thought, technology and economy to the region, because of slow development of modern middle class, because persistence of tribal politics and because of linguistic weakness of the Kurdish language.¹⁸⁷ Indeed, although Kurdish nationalist papers were published by intellectuals in Istanbul and Cairo from late 19th century, their kinsmen in Kurdistan did not possess the same political identity.¹⁸⁸ Rebellions such as that raised by Saykh Said in 1925, Saykh Mahmud in 1929, Saykh Ahmad in 1932 responses to furthering of state influence to Kurdish tribal affairs. Policies of suppression of Kurdish cultural expression was practiced by Turkey

¹⁸³ Eppel, Michael, *A People Without a State : The Kurds From the Rise of Islam to the Dawn of Nationalism*, University of Texas Press 2016, 30.

¹⁸⁴ McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, I.B Tauris, 2004, 117.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid, 130.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid, 142.

¹⁸⁷ Eppel, 2016, 138-139

¹⁸⁸ McDowall, 2004, 142.

in an effort to create a homogeneous Turkish state.¹⁸⁹ Suppression of Kurdish particularism in the newfound Arab and Turkish states during 1920's and 1930's pushed more nationalist thinkers to move to Europe. London and Paris became the new intellectual centers for Kurdish nationalism.¹⁹⁰ Although the scale of migration from the country of origin to other states was small, the arrivals established the first transnational diaspora networks that worked to construct and maintain a Kurdish diasporic identity in the west and also to develop new political identity based on western nationalism.

4.2. Struggle for autonomy

The first Kurdish autonomous constituency was established by a powerful Kurdish chief Qazi Muhammad in Persia who was able to acquire resources and weapons from the Soviet Union¹⁹¹ and support of notable tribes to establish republic of Mahabad around the small town of Mahabad in 1946, where he established governance that adopted Kurdish as its official language.¹⁹² Although short lived (the self-declared republic was suppressed by Persian army within the same year) the political experiment had a lasting impact on development of Kurdish political thought as the activists in the republic would become leaders of Kurdish political movement in Iran and Iraq. One of them was Mustafa Barzani, a head of one of the most influential tribes in Kurdistan, who had the position of "defense minister" in republic of Mahabad. Barzani founded Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) in 1946 as a nationalistic party which would pursue establishment of independent Kurdish state.

Kurds from privileged backgrounds preferred to gain their education in Europe before returning to Kurdistan to become carders of Kurdish politics. Since 1950's Kurdish students started to form their own associations in Europe.¹⁹³ Studying in Europe gave them an opportunity to meet Kurds from other parts of Kurdistan and to exchange and develop ideas with each other. Thus, the diaspora had an impact on further formulating Kurdish nationalistic thinking outside of their country of origin where the Kurdish communities were still divided along tribal allegiances and cultural differences. The idea of common "homeland" among all the Kurds was thus imported¹⁹⁴ by the Kurdish students who returned to their country of origin after studying in Europe and internalizing the nationalistic

189 Ibid.

190 Ibid, 455.

191 Ibid, 239.

192 Ibid, 242.

193 Ibid, 456.

194 Ibid.

discourse that emphasized national identity over tribalism. Through interaction with their host society, the diaspora adopted intellectual influences that it transferred to the country of origin.

After the Second World War a new generation of Arab nationalists behind Gamal Abdel Nasser challenged the pro-western ruling class of their countries. In Iraq the leadership of the Arab nationalist movement headed by Abd al-Karim Qasim allied himself with the Kurdish nationalists headed by Barzani.¹⁹⁵ Barzani's willingness to cooperate with the state and his status as self-declared representative of Kurds in Iraq gathered opposition from tribes loyal to the former Hashemite monarchy which revolted against him in 1959 only to be suppressed with the weapons Barzani had gained from Baghdad.¹⁹⁶ Barzani was becoming too powerful for Baghdad as he prepared to declare Kurdistan independent from Iraq.

Distrust between the new Iraqi political leadership and the Kurdish elite with mounted discontent among the Kurdish population due to large unemployment and continuing underdevelopment of Kurdish areas led to open revolt by KDP-affiliated tribal leaders.¹⁹⁷ The Iraqi air force destroyed entire villages which caused significant civilian casualties.¹⁹⁸ The conflict caused inter-communal violence as the KDP militia would round up and kill captured Kurdish police officers and soldiers unwilling to join their rebellion and collectively punish Assyrians for perceived cooperation with the government.¹⁹⁹ The conflict between the Iraqi state and the Kurdish political leadership over the degree of political autonomy of the Kurds and land ownership started to define the relations between the Kurdish and Arab population, which meant that it started to take form of ethnic violence.

The political instability and the failures of Barzani to secure more autonomy for the Kurds had its toll on the Kurdish political movement. Two Kurdish tribal leaders Jalal Talabani and Ibrahim Ahmad challenged Barzani's dominant position in the Kurdish political movement and held a separate party congress in July 1964.²⁰⁰ This division was reinforced by the new Baath government in Baghdad

¹⁹⁵ Rubin, H. Ashalom, *Abd al-Karim Qasim and the Kurds of Iraq: Centralization, resistance and revolt, 1958-63*, Middle Eastern Studies Vol. 43 Issue 3, 2007, 356.

¹⁹⁶ McDowall, 2004, 307.

¹⁹⁷ O'Ballance, *The Kurdish Revolt in Iraq: 1961-62*, In: *The Kurdish Struggle 1920-94*. Palgrave Macmillan, 1995, 47.

¹⁹⁸ Rubin, 2007, 3.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, 368.

²⁰⁰ McDowall, 2004, 316.

which attempted to split the Kurdish political constituency by supporting the Talabani-Ahmad faction in 1966.²⁰¹ A new conflict between Barzani and Baghdad ensued. Barzani was able to gather support from political enemies of the Baathists, Israel and Iran, and was able to repel the Iraqi state's influence in Iraqi Kurdistan until the parties engaged in peace negotiations in 1969.²⁰² In these accords the Mustafa Barzani was able to gain concessions of autonomy, full recognition of cultural rights as well as representation on a national level in military and civil service. Plans for economic development with infrastructure projects were planned to tackle the economic issues of the region.²⁰³ Despite the concessions political divisions in the Kurdish political movement remained as the opposition faction established Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) in 1975 to serve as an umbrella for growing opposition elements within the KDP.²⁰⁴

Despite the newly found cooperation between Baghdad and the Kurds, question over the oil rich area of Kirkuk lingered and was not addressed in the accords. The Fault line of the accords was that Kurdish autonomy in local governance was based on demographics. The Ba'athist government's plan was to nationalize the oil reserves of Kirkuk which it sought to secure by resettling Arabs to Kirkuk. Plans to nationalize the oil fields brought support from the US to Barzani, who also established good relation with Israel, the main rival of Iraq in the region.²⁰⁵ During the 1970's Iran became the main sponsor of Kurdish opposition movement in Iraq because of the two countries' disputes over territories concerning the use of the Shatt al-Arab river for shipment of oil.²⁰⁶ Iraq's offensive in its northern border was part of continuing territorial conflict between Iraq and Iran their troops clashed in border skirmishes.²⁰⁷ The Iraqi military created "security belt" along its northern border to prevent Kurdish guerrilla troops from moving between the Iranian and Turkish borders and in the process razed villages and deported over 600 000 people from their homes.²⁰⁸

The Kurdish diasporas transnational network in the west that was established by the upper-class Kurdish migrants formed Kurdish Students' Society in Europe (KSSE) which developed into the

201 Ibid, 319.

202 Ibid, 320.

203 Ibid, 327-328.

204 Ibid, 343.

205 Ibid, 331.

206 Karsh, Efraim, *The Iran-Iraq War: 1980-1988*, Osprey Publishing, 2002, 1-8, 12-16, 19-82.

207 Ibid.

208 McDowall, 2004, 339.

main diaspora organization with branches in several countries,²⁰⁹ which ran 16 chapters that had approximately 3000 members by mid 1970's.²¹⁰ The KSSE worked to accommodate Kurdish national identity with cultural activities such as celebration of the Kurdish new year Newroz, producing Kurdish language publications and later organizing Kurdish literature classes to spread Kurdish literacy among the Kurdish migrant population in Europe.²¹¹ Thus, from 1970's the main organizational backbone of the transnational Kurdish diaspora was formed that worked to accommodate and construct Kurdish diasporic identity in Europe. The organizations adopted a transnational outlook in that rather than emphasizing culture of a specific region in Kurdistan they embraced sense of belonging to a single Kurdish culture.

Increasing number of Kurds from less privileged backgrounds arrived to Western Europe, particularly to Germany through guest worker program that the country signed with Turkey in 1961. The guest worker program was a balancing act by several northern European states which had a severe labor shortage and states in southern Europe, Turkey and North Africa with large unemployment following the Second World War. Many of the people arriving from Turkey were from rural background²¹² and, as according to the agreement, worked in positions which required few skills or qualifications such as industrial labor. Many of them decided to leave their homes in Eastern Turkey because of the volatile political situation.²¹³ The guest workers would form communities in businesses and mosques where they met regularly with people from similar backgrounds to discuss about politics and daily events.²¹⁴ As these migrants came into contact with the political Kurdish students associations with nationalist Kurdish ideology, they re-constructed their political identity from localized to broader transnational Kurdish identity.²¹⁵ Sweden had a policy of helping it's migrant population in settling to the country by actively supporting culture of migrants by granting public support for language and

²⁰⁹ Emanuelsson, 2005, 85.

²¹⁰ Melvin Ember, Carol R. Ember, Ian Skoggard, *Encyclopedia of Diasporas: Immigrant and Refugee Cultures Around the World. Volume I: Overviews and Topics; Volume II: Diaspora Communities (v. 1)*, Springer 2004, 1014.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Pasztor, Adel, *The Children of Guest Workers: Comparative Analysis of Scholastic Achievements of pupils of Turkish Origin Throughout Europe*, Intercultural Education Vol. 19 Issue: 5: Immigrant Access to Education: A Comparative Perspective 407-419 2008, 408.

²¹³ McDowall, 2004, 456.

²¹⁴ Yurdakul, Gokce, *From Guest Workers into Muslims : The Transformation of Turkish Immigrant Associations in Germany*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009, 32.

²¹⁵ Baser, Bahar, *Kurdish Diaspora Political Activism in Europe with a Particular Focus on Great Britain*, Berghof Peace Support/Luzern: Centre for Just Peace and Democracy 2011, 8-9.

cultural education. Publicly supported education of Kurdish language started in 1975²¹⁶ while support for Kurdish literature and other cultural forms made Sweden the center for Kurdish intelligentsia in the diaspora.²¹⁷

Like in Iraq during the 1960's and 1970's, in Turkey many dispossessed young Kurds started to look towards leftist ideologies to solve the issues in Kurdistan: lack of development, cultural suppression and above all socioeconomic inequality. Throughout the decade Turkey's domestic politics were in a deadlock. Political parties across the spectrum from leftists to far-right nationalists were unable to win sufficient majority in elections nor form working coalitions. Growing state bureaucracy's partisanship to different political constituencies further radicalized the political movements.²¹⁸ Radical leftist students established paramilitaries to bring about a socialist revolution in Turkey, inspired by Maoism and Leninism.²¹⁹ The radical Turkish left adopted problems of the Kurds as part of their agenda.²²⁰ The extreme Nationalist Action Party's (MHP) youth wing created their own paramilitary to intimidate growing leftist tendencies in campuses and in the streets.²²¹

One of the radicalized youth was Abdullah Öcalan, a law student in Ankara. After released from detention in 1974 for belonging to The Popular Liberation Party of Turkey, one of the radical break-offs of the Turkish Workers Party, he formed a political movement based on Marxist-Leninism. With a small group of radicalized leftist Kurds, Öcalan founded *the Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan* (PKK) to initiate a socialist revolution in Kurdistan. In his original ideology during the founding of the party Öcalan combined the idea of Kurdish national struggle with contemporary leftist framework of struggle against colonialism and class war.²²² The PKK recognized violence as a legitimate form of furthering its aims and recognized the Turkish state, right wing paramilitaries and land owning class in Kurdistan as its enemies.²²³

²¹⁶ Rohat Alakom, *Kurderna, fyrtio år i Sverige*, Serkland, 2007, 98.

²¹⁷ Keles, 2016, 77. McDowall, 2004, 457.

²¹⁸ Gunter, Michael M, *Political Instability in Turkey in 1970's*, Conflict Quarterly Winter 1989, 66.

²¹⁹ Zurcher, Erich Jan, *Turkey: A Modern History*, I.B. Tauris, 2004, 256.

²²⁰ Ibid, 256.

²²¹ Ibid, 257.

²²² Özcan, Kemal Ömer, *Turkey's Kurds : A Theoretical Analysis of the PKK and Abdullah Ocalan*, Taylor & Francis, 2005, 86-87.

²²³ McDowall, 2004, 421.

4.3. Civil war in Kurdistan

The revolution of Iran in 1979 sparked tensions between Saddam Hussein's Iraq and Islamic leadership of Iran, which sought to spread its revolution among Iraq's Shia population.²²⁴ The Ba'athist government was expecting an opportunity to retaliate for the 1975 Algiers agreement and reclaim its influence to the disputed territories.²²⁵ In September 1980 Saddam attacked Iran in an attempt to utilize internal instability in the country. The conflict reflected on to different Kurdish factions. Different states supported different Kurdish militias to weaken their rivals in the region.

As the war between Iraq and Iran intensified, another military coup took place in Turkey in 1980. Suppression of different political groups that the military saw as a threat to sovereignty of the Turkish state or its Kemalist character ensued. Around 122 000 people were detained for their political activities from different political groups, majority of them leftist.²²⁶ The PKK leadership was able to escape to Syria with blessing from al-Assad who saw support to the Kurdish guerrillas as an opportunity to weaken Turkey. Syria's dispute with Turkey was over Ataturk dam project which threatened Syria's self-sufficiency over water.²²⁷ The PKK then entered a guerrilla war against the Turkish state, using bases in Syria and Iraq. Turkish state created a system of voluntary village guards, where villagers and local leaders would get compensation for organizing militias in villages against guerrillas. As the socioeconomic problems of the region had not been addressed, it was a way for many common villagers to earn their living and landowners to accumulate power.²²⁸ This created conditions for violence between the Turkish military and the PKK, where both sides committed atrocities against civilian population.²²⁹ The Turkish military initiated brutal "capture and kill" operations, which terrorized civilian population perceived as sympathetic to the PKK, which increased PKK's popularity as it represented itself as a guardian against the Turkish state.²³⁰

Intensification of conflict in the countries of origin with outbreak of the Iran Iraq war in 1980 and the Turkish coup in the same year led to massive displacement of people in Iraq, Iran and Turkey. By

²²⁴ Holden, Stacey E, *A Documentary History of Modern Iraq*, University Press of Florida, 2012, 229.

²²⁵ Rajee, Farhang, *The Iran-Iraq war: The Politics of Aggression*, University Press of Florida 1993, 20.

²²⁶ Zurcher, 2004, 280.

²²⁷ Tejel, Jordi, *Syria's Kurds: History, Politics and Society*, Routledge, 2008, 75.

²²⁸ McDowall, 2004, 424.

²²⁹ Özcan, 2005, 173

²³⁰ McDowall, 2004, 427.

mid-1980's half-a-million people were resettled to Europe and North America through UN resettlement program, mostly to Britain and Germany.²³¹ Many of the refugees were Kurds who were fleeing political persecution and brought with them a strong sense of injustice. At the same time the PKK reformed itself to an organization capable of rally enough support and resources to wage war against the Turkish state. It was divided into the party which was to work as the main administrative structure, the popular army, which was the militia and the popular front, that worked as the network to mobilize support domestically and abroad through PKK affiliated organizations in Europe and elsewhere.²³² The PKK's reach was stretched to all European countries with considerable Kurdish population by the end of 1989.²³³ PKK politicized cultural traditions, most notably celebration of Newroz, the Kurdish New Year, to construct political identity based on Kurdishness.²³⁴ This was a systematic effort by the political elite in the homeland to influence the diaspora in order to pursue goals in the conflict. It has been estimated that more than seven thousand PKK-affiliated activists went to Europe to facilitate the discourse among the migrant communities.²³⁵ The ideology and with it the conflict was transported by the political elite of the party to the diasporas.

The arrival of refugees and extension of the PKK's and other Kurdish parties' activities to Europe communities in Europe politicized the diaspora communities. The activities of diaspora organizations started to involve public demonstrations to raise awareness about the Kurdish issues in their country of settlement.²³⁶ Political revival among second generation Kurds in particular Germany was a reaction to racism that the Kurds experienced from late 1980's as economic crisis hit the re-unified Germany.²³⁷ Apart from Sweden, Kurds now strived to gain recognition as Kurds rather than Turks in their host countries.²³⁸ Taking part in diasporic activities filled a sense of belonging and purpose among many Kurdish youth, who had hard time integrating to the societies in Europe.²³⁹ The PKK was able to use socioeconomic problems faced by migrant communities in Europe in their mobilization for support.

²³¹ McDowall, 2004, 457.

²³² Özcan, 2005, 173.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Yilmaz, 2016, 47-48.

²³⁵ White, Paul J, *The PKK: Coming Down From the Mountains*, Zed Books London 2015, 91.

²³⁶ Emmanuelsson, 2005, 111.

²³⁷ Wahlbeck, 1999, 174.

²³⁸ Baser, 2011, 10.

²³⁹ Marcus, Aliza, *Blood and Belief: The PKK and the Kurdish Fight for Independence*, NYU Press 2007, 232.

The Kurdish diaspora groups have engaged in boundary construction and maintenance in their political activities, as well as outbidding as well. By politicizing cultural symbols and practices, the PKK claimed cultural symbols to affect wider political morality among Kurdish diaspora and during the 1990's it went to extreme measures in political outbidding with use of violence against Turkish community and diaspora,²⁴⁰ which it regarded as antagonistic. The PKK-affiliated groups demonstrated power by adopting a hostile stance towards host states²⁴¹ and by the use of violence against other Kurdish diaspora groups.²⁴² The German authorities took a hard line against the PKK from 1987 as the organization was labeled as a criminal organization.²⁴³ The use of violence at the time has to be understood in it's context where not only did the conflict in Kurdistan had an effect on the diaspora, but also in the host-land context where the diaspora was pushed to fringes of the German society and the Kurds were faced with systematic discrimination from the German public, which affected the strategy of mobilization.²⁴⁴ The closed system did not provide official channels for the political activism of the diaspora which pushed them to fringes of the society and contributed to manifestation of the conflict in violent form.

The PKK was the most successful Kurdish political constituency in mobilizing support from diasporas as it used framework of cultural traditions, which were actively practiced by the diasporas, to mobilize for political support as well as not relying on regional tribal relations as other Kurdish political parties such as the KDP and the PUK. From 1980's the PKK was able to raise around 50 million dollars annually from activities in the diasporas.²⁴⁵ The refugees who arrived during the 1980's and second-generation Kurdish migrants tend to be more politically active, than the generation who arrived as guest workers during the 1960's and 1970's as a result of diasporic activities in 1980's.²⁴⁶ The political conflict in homeland was effectively constructed by the politicized diaspora in Europe from 1980's onward.

²⁴⁰ Adamson, 2013, 80.

²⁴¹ Ibid, 79.

²⁴² Baser, Bahar, *Komkar: The unheard voice in the Kurdish Diaspora*, in Christou, Anastasia and Mavroudi, Elizabeth, *Dismantling Diasporas: Rethinking the Geographies of Diasporic identities*, Ashgate Publishing, 2015.

²⁴³ Alynna J. Lyon & Emek M. Usarer, 2001, 398.

²⁴⁴ Adamson, 2013.
Baser, 2016, 231.

²⁴⁵ Marcus, 2007, 230.

²⁴⁶ Baser, 2011, 12.

Kurdish unity was seen as a grave threat by the Iraqi regime, as the militias had capacity to cause inflict even greater casualties with support from Iran.²⁴⁷ Kurds became not only traitors, but also enemies of the state. Saddam Hussein started repressive and more violent operations against the Kurdish population which could be described as an attempt for ethnic cleansing. The regime would raze entire villages to create free-fire zones to eliminate entire population from those territories, soldiers would round up youth and children in villages for detention and resorted into systematic use of torture.²⁴⁸ The army also used chemical weapons the first time against civilian population in April 1987 when it retaliated PUK's advancement by using gas in Balisan valley.²⁴⁹ As Iranian and Kurdish forces continued to claim positions In Iraq, the army initiated operation *Anfal* where the army used chemical weapons and heavy bombardment to assault Kurdish held areas. In March 15th 1988 Iraqi army assaulted town of Halabja with chemical weapons, killing 5000 civilians in the process.²⁵⁰ Iraqi forces continued their attacks against villages where civilians would be rounded up and males would be detained and executed.²⁵¹ At the end of the Iran-Iraq war over 4000 villages had been razed and 1,5 million people resettled by force.²⁵² Chemical attacks became focal point of international community as pictures and stories were spread to international media over the deed that in it's brutality seemed to fall under crimes against humanity.

4.4. Globalization of the Kurdish conflict

Halabja bombings of 1988 was a tragedy which brought major international attention to the conflict in Kurdistan and also had a profound effect on the Kurdish diaspora organizations. After the incident a major conference was held with participation from KR, KCC, Kurdish institute of Brussels as well as French Human rights groups.²⁵³ Kurdish groups were able to find each other as well as international partners to address specific issues related to the situation in Kurdistan.²⁵⁴ This started the process of institutionalization the Kurdish diasporic organizations in that they had to develop global human rights based perspective as well as adapt to operational models of international community. The Gulf

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid, 353.

²⁵⁰ Ibid, 358.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid, 360.

²⁵³ Emmanuelsson, 2005, 126.

²⁵⁴ Ibid, 140.

War of 1990 internationalized the Kurdish conflict in a new way as the status of Kurds in Iraq became one of the central issues regarding Iraq that the international community had a vested interest in. Part of US policy in Iraq was strengthening opposition to Saddam Husseins regime by including the Kurdish political elite in Iraq and abroad as official representatives to international forums. Kurdish parties formed lobbies in Washington to further their interests in Iraq.²⁵⁵ This was an instance where the host state cooperated with the diaspora to pursue foreign policy interests and thus, opened up new opportunities for the diaspora to actively influence events in their homeland.

Iraqi Kurdistan held self-declared elections in 1992 with KDP and PUK being the only parties which surpassed the 7 % threshold needed to gain seats in the parliament.²⁵⁶ With both economic siege by Baghdad on KRG and the international community's embargo on Iraq, the alliance between Barzanis KDP and Talabani's PUK broke down to disputes over resources, land and power.²⁵⁷

International community's involvement in Iraq intensified in humanitarian efforts that were initiated by the UN. The United States was the main sponsor of these efforts and in addition to funding aid, it organized confidence building measures for the elites of Northern Iraq and facilitated meetings between Massoud Barzanis KDP and Jelial Talabani's PUK to strengthen opposition against Saddam Hussein in Northern Iraq.²⁵⁸ After several failed negotiations hosted by France and the US, the parties were able to reach agreement in 1998.²⁵⁹ Oil for food program and development of economic and social infrastructure in KRG normalized the relations between the two parties.²⁶⁰

Despite Baghdad's stance that the elections were illegal, the Kurdish Regional Government that was formed assured that it was not against International Community's consensus on need for Iraq's territorial sovereignty. At this time KDP and PUK representatives abroad formed relations with states, working as embassies for the KRG.²⁶¹ With access to international forums and most importantly to Washington, the KRG leadership cooperated with maintenance of no-fly-zone in northern Iraq and

²⁵⁵ Baser, 2007, 203.

²⁵⁶ Yildiz, 2007, 46.

²⁵⁷ Ibid, 48.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Ibid, 50.

²⁶⁰ Aziz, Mahir, *The Kurds of Iraq: Ethnonationalism and National Identity in Iraqi Kurdistan*, I.B.Tauris 2011, 124.

²⁶¹ Emmanuelsson, 2005 147-148.

lobbied for toppling of Saddam Hussein and establishing federal Iraq.²⁶² Influx of refugees into Turkey pushed the country to prevent further violence in Iraqi Kurdistan and furthered an initiative in the UN to establish "safe zones" in Iraq to enable secure return for the refugees,²⁶³ while Turkey established working relations with both the PUK and the KDP.²⁶⁴ The PUK and the KDP affiliated diasporas utilized new political opportunity structures to influence their host states policy in Iraq in furthering Kurdish autonomy but also mediating tensions among the political elite in their homeland.

Turkey's involvement in multilateral resolution to the refugee crisis and conflict on northern Iraq and international community's new interest in the Kurdish conflict and human rights issues in the region pushed the Turkish Prime Minister Turgut Özal to start a dialogue process with the PKK in 1992. He offered his open hand to them and promised amnesty for guerillas and recognition of PKK as a legitimate political party in Turkey.²⁶⁵ Although Özal recognized²⁶⁶ the underlying issues of socioeconomic problems and constant warfare and violence which plagued the people in the east, commitment to a peaceful solution was denied by the Turkish nationalist constituency that insisted on suppressing the PKK by military means.²⁶⁷ A new wave of violence between the state and the PKK militias ensued and led to destruction Sirnak, a town of twenty five thousand people in the same year.²⁶⁸ The overall death toll of the offensive in 1992 reached over two thousand.²⁶⁹

After resurgence of violence in Turkey between the state and the PKK, Kurdish members of the Turkish social democratic party were expelled in 1994 who then formed Kurdish parliament in Exile in Brussels as a forum for Kurds to discuss contemporary issues. The institution did however become a vehicle for the PKK, which used it to establish information centers to different locations in Europe.²⁷⁰ It established Confederation of Kurdish Associations in Europe (KON-KURD) in Brussels the same year, which became the head of pro-PKK diaspora organizations in Europe, North America,

²⁶² Baser, 2007, 203.

²⁶³ Yildiz, 2007, 38.

²⁶⁴ McDowall, 2004, 433.

²⁶⁵ McDowall, 2004, 433.

²⁶⁶ Özcan, 2005, 177.

²⁶⁷ McDowall, 2004, 433.

²⁶⁸ Özcan, 2005, 178.

²⁶⁹ McDowall, 2004, 435.

²⁷⁰ Ibid, 458-459.

Australia and Asia.²⁷¹ The conflict in the country of origin was being transported in discursive level through diaspora organizations in Europe.

With the conflict continuing in Turkey and Iraq, increasing number of Kurds sought asylum in Europe.²⁷² The quota refugees were selected from persons who were under the protection of UNHCR and who did not have the possibility to continue their flight on their own to Europe.²⁷³ This program also moved Kurds to Finland for the first time in a considerable number.²⁷⁴

The diaspora organizations that had adopted the PKK ideology continued to extend their discourse among the diasporas in Europe and used every opportunity to bring the Turkish-Kurdish conflict to the public with mobilization of protests, organizing road blocks and making hunger strikes.²⁷⁵ The diasporas organized demonstrations during Newroz and when new developments took place in Turkey. Protests and hunger strikes were held in places with high visibility and The PKK affiliated activists also made coordinated attacks against Turkish owned businesses and Turkish associations in Germany, Switzerland and France, one of them ending to death of a Turkish business owner in November of 1993.²⁷⁶

PKK resorted into terror tactics, targeting tourist sites in Turkey's south and also operations abroad in Europe. On 24.6.1993 Turkish Embassy in Berne was attacked after which Germany and the rest of the Western countries declared PKK as a terrorist organization.²⁷⁷ Even though Abdullah Öcalan himself denounced the violence committed by his supporters in a 1996 Med-Tv interview,²⁷⁸ the more moderate stance towards violence was not adopted by the more radical elements of the party in Turkey or the diaspora members in Europe. As with the violence committed by the Kurdish diaspora members in the 1980's, the resurgence of violence in the early 1990's by the PKK-affiliated diaspora should be understood as a result of both of events in homeland and host land: resurgence of political violence in Turkey with the breakdown of negotiations between the state and the PKK, the PKK's use of

²⁷¹ White, 2015, 93.

²⁷² Wahlbeck, 1999, 104.

²⁷³ Ibid.

²⁷⁴ Toivanen, 2015, 89.

²⁷⁵ Marcus, 2007, 233.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

²⁷⁷ McDowall, 2004, 448-449

²⁷⁸ Lyon&Usarer, 2001, 941.

specific tactics as well as continuing marginalization of Kurds in Europe and radicalization of the discourse in the diaspora organizations all influenced the diaspora to mobilize in a violent way at this time.

With international denouncement of the PKK, the organizations' space of maneuver depleted and Öcalan was captured in a joint operation of Turkish National Intelligence Operation, Mossad and CIA on 15th of February 1999 in Kenya. His capture led to massive protests by Kurds in Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria and Armenia as well as by the diaspora communities across Europe. Over 8000 people were arrested in Turkey with two protesters killed in suppression of the protests and in Berlin 4 protesters were killed by the Israeli security of the Israeli embassy, which the protesters were attempting to occupy.²⁷⁹ Capturing of the PKK leader did not reduce the tensions between the conflict parties in the homeland of the diaspora, but on the contrary increased antagonism.

4.5. Efforts for peace

During a fragmented political period in Turkey from late 1990's to 2002 when the country experienced a financial crisis in 2001 and there was 3 separate governments from 1999 to 2002, the government and the PKK signed a peace treaty in 1999. After November 2002 general elections a new political party, Justice and Development party (AKP), came into power and placed solution to the Kurdish question as one of it's main goals. By eliminating ban on Kurdish language publications, decreasing detention times and abolishing state security courts and engaging in a reconciliation talks with the PKK leadership, the state and the PKK sought for a peaceful solution to the conflict²⁸⁰ despite attacks and kidnappings committed by the PKK through the 2000's.

As Turkey's relations with the EU states was improved with the membership process, it used the opportunity to cramp down PKK's network in Europe. The PKK supporters positioned themselves as antagonistic against Turkish and foreign governments as well as more moderate Kurdish political constituencies, taking a critical stance to US invasion. Inclusion of the Iraqi Kurds but excluding the PKK and the Turkish Kurds from the western agenda along with categorization contributed to radicalization of it's supporters in Europe, who raised funds for military activity both against Turkey and against Iraqi Kurdish parties.²⁸¹ Tensions rose after the war as the KRG declared the PKK as

²⁷⁹ Keles, 2016, 148.

²⁸⁰ Esnaroglu, Yilmaz, *Turkey's Kurdish Question and Peace Process*, Insight Turkey Vol. 2 Issue 2, 2013, 12.

²⁸¹ Demir, 2007, 205.

terrorist organization in 2004 as part of concessions to the Turkish government.²⁸²

The Iraq war of 2003 made KRG representatives in Washington heavily involved with administration of the war with the US government. Though the KDP and the PUK elite acted pragmatically by adjusting their nationalist claims to federalism in Iraq, the diasporas took more separatist agenda.²⁸³ The diaspora organizations in Europe lobbied both the KRG elite and Western governments when they saw that Kurdish interests were threatened, as the US administration was planning to give the Turkish troops access to northern Iraq.²⁸⁴ The PKK-affiliated diaspora joined the anti-war movement with leftist parties in Europe, utilizing the institutional framework acquired during the 1990's to cooperate with organizations such as Greenpeace as well as political parties in mobilizing rallies and gathering support for their cause.²⁸⁵ When the war ceased members of the Kurdish diaspora who originated from Iraq cooperated with the KRG, international NGO's and foreign governments in rebuilding of Iraqi Kurdistan.²⁸⁶ The reaction of diaspora members should be understood again in the changing political opportunity structures and context in home and host land: Turkey's new political leaderships took a more inclusive stance towards the Kurds which reduced the tensions and at the same time the PKK leaderships ideology and strategy became more moderate, which reduced legitimacy of violence as a political tool. The PKK-affiliated diaspora moved closer to civil society actors in Europe and adopted strategies of mobilization that gathered them legitimacy to utilize political opportunities available from cooperating with the civil society, although their discourse remained detached from the PKK leaderships more moderate stance.

The PKK and the Kurdish diaspora from Turkey had a clear interest in Turkey's EU candidacy at the period as it was directly related to the Kurdish issue in Turkey. It gave them internationally legitimate forum where they could meet politicians and NGO's. In 2011 Turkey and France made an agreement against terrorism, which was used to capture PKK leaders originating in Turkey.²⁸⁷ Resurgence of violence from 2010 between the PKK and Turkey reflected in the diaspora community in France where PKK affiliated activists clashed with the French police after some individuals were detained

282 Ibid, 210.

283 Ibid, 204.

284 Ibid.

285 Ibid, 206.

286 Ibid, 207-208.

287 White, 2017, 94.

with allegations of belonging to a terrorist organization.²⁸⁸

Official peace accords between the Turkish state and the PKK commenced from 2013, as the AKP government and the PKK leadership attempted to end the conflict despite ongoing acts of violence.²⁸⁹ Abdullah Öcalan made a press release in March 2013 where he called his party members to restrain from violence and declared that "democratic struggle" had commenced.²⁹⁰

In January 2013 one of the founding members of the PKK and an important figure in the administration of civil affairs in Europe Sakine Cansiz was found murdered along with two other Kurdish activists in Kurdish information center in Paris.²⁹¹ The slaughter was committed at the same time as the Solution process between the PKK leadership and Turkish state was being initiated. Cansiz was known to be a hard-line figure within the PKK who was initially against Abdullah Öcalan's pro-peace stance.²⁹² Although the sole suspect by the French anti-terror unit was Ömer Güney, a member of the Turkish intelligence service MIT,²⁹³ the murder was however condemned by both the PKK leadership and the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.²⁹⁴ Estimated 15,000 Kurds protested in Paris where some of the demonstrators clashed with the police, while security of the Turkish embassy was strengthened by Parisian police.²⁹⁵ The protests continued in February as new demonstrations were held in Strasbourg against European Court of Human Rights' silence over killing of 155 civilians in Cizre by Turkish troops earlier that month.²⁹⁶ Like Germany during 1990's, France was seen as a partial host country in the conflict by PKK supporting diaspora. It was also going through a recession which reflected also on public prejudice²⁹⁷ towards immigrant population which was a contributing factor to radicalization of the diaspora. The events in France demonstrated

²⁸⁸ Ibid, 95-97.

²⁸⁹ Esnaroglu, Yilmaz, *Turkey's Kurdish Question and Peace Process*, Insight Turkey Vol. 2 Issue 2, 2013, 12.

²⁹⁰ Krajewski, Jenna, *Peace Comes to Turkey*, New York Times, 24.3.2013.

²⁹¹ Vinocur, Nicholas & Butler, Daren, *Founder of Kurdish PKK among three women slain in Paris*, Reuters 10.1.2013.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ ANF, *Culprit of the murder in Paris of Sakine, Fidan and Leyla dies – UPDATE*, 17.12.2013.

²⁹⁴ Yildiz, Güney, *Police hunt killers of PKK co-founder Sakine Cansiz*, BBC 11.1.2013.

²⁹⁵ Watson, Ivan & Tuysuz, Gul & Smith-Spark, Laura, *Kurds rally in Paris over murder of 3 women activists*, CNN 12.1.2013.

²⁹⁶ TeleSur, *Kurdish Activists Protest European Silence on Turkish Massacres*, 25.2.2016.

²⁹⁷ Hatton, Timothy, *Immigration, Public Opinion and Recession in Europe*, Economic Policy Sixty-First Panel Meeting 2015, 27.

that the gap between the PKK-leadership and the events in France during the time when peace accords were taking place had a more significant impact on the diaspora's way of mobilizing than the events in the homeland did.

4.6. Resurgence of violence in Kurdistan and political claims

Kurds joined the protests in Syria that took place in 2011.²⁹⁸ As Kurdish militias took control of Kobane, Amuda and Afrin in 2012 with little resistance from the Syrian government forces,²⁹⁹ Kurdish political parties formed Kurdish Supreme Committee to govern these territories.³⁰⁰ As fighting intensified between the Syrian government forces and the rebel militias in 2012, the Kurdish Democratic Unionist party (PYD), the Syrian branch of the PKK, took control of the major cities with Kurdish majority and established a de-facto autonomous region.³⁰¹ The region is governed according to ideological principles of "democratic confederalism" which is based on Abdullah Öcalans ideological writings since 1990's. The region has representative offices in Moscow, Stockholm, Berlin Paris, Prague, Oslo and Washington.³⁰²

The Syrian civil war and escalation of the conflict to in the region gave a new opening for the Kurdish political movements to establish an independent Kurdish state. In May 2014 the KRG started to export oil to Turkey despite opposition from Baghdad.³⁰³ The expansion of militia group ISIL in Syria and Iraq from 2014 pushed the Syrian and Iraqi army from their positions in the Kurdish areas, which gave space for the Kurdish troops to fill the power vacuum³⁰⁴ and on first of July in 2014 Mahmoud Barzani, the head of the KDP and president of the KRG announced that an independence referendum

²⁹⁸ Shadid, Anthony, *Killing of Opposition Leader in Syria Provokes Kurds*, The New York Times 8.10.2011 & Blomfield, Adrian, *Thousands of Kurds Could Awaken against the Syrian regime*, The Telegraph, 9.10.2011

²⁹⁹ Butler, Daren, *Syrian Kurdish moves rings alarm bells in Turkey*, Reuters 24.7.2012.

³⁰⁰ Ates Hazel, *Barzani unites Syrian Kurds against Assad*, The Guardian, 16.7.2012.

³⁰¹ Abdulmajid, Adib, *Armed Kurds Surround Syrian Security forces in Qamishli*, Rudaw news 22.7.2012.

³⁰² Arafar, Hisham, *Rojava Diplomatic Missions Open in Rojava*, Kurdistan 25 8.2.2016 & Evran, Seyit, *Rojava's Mohamad: We will open more representative offices in Europe*, ANF News 28.1.2017, Ekurd Daily, *Syrian Kurdistan's representative office opened in Oslo*, 27.11.2016.

³⁰³ Hurriyet Daily News, *Iraq Denounces Kurdish Oil Exports to Turkey*, 10.1.2014.

³⁰⁴ Chulov, Martin & Hawramy, Dohuk, *Peshmerga Forces enter Sinjar in Fight Against ISIS*, The Guardian 13.11.2015.

Goudsouzian, Tanya & Fatah, Lara, *Analysis: The Turks take Kirkuk. Now What?*, Al Jazeera, 16.7.2014.

would be held "within months",³⁰⁵ although it was later postponed due to continuing fight against ISIL.³⁰⁶ The KRG leadership acted to mobilize the diaspora in Europe and elsewhere³⁰⁷ as well as America.³⁰⁸ 58 Kurdish associations including KOMKAR signed a petition for European governments to support the independence referendum.³⁰⁹ The referendum was an example of the homeland elite mobilizing the diaspora to pursue their interest in their homeland.

ISIL militias attack into PYD held town of Kobane resulted into fighting between Kurdish and Islamist groups in south eastern Turkey and sparked major protests with anti-Turkey sentiment across Turkey and Europe.³¹⁰ Hundreds of Kurdish protesters occupied the Dutch parliament demanding more action from European countries in battling ISIL group.³¹¹ In Brussels several protesters got into the European Parliament.³¹² The Dutch hastened their participation in the war efforts against ISIL by sending six fighter jets to bomb ISIL targets without applying for UN mandate³¹³ and in Brussels Martich Schulch promised to bring the Kurds' concerns to negotiations with EU and NATO leaders.³¹⁴

There was still suspicion by the PKK-affiliated Kurdish diaspora towards France as Fidan Ulubayar, representative of the Kurdish Associations of France, expressed his frustration with France which he

305 BBC, *Iraq Kurdistan Referendum Planned*, 1.7.2014.

306 Gutman, Roy, *Kurds agree to postpone independence referendum*, The Star, 5.9.2014.

307 Rudaw, *Kurdish diaspora and friends rally for referendum in Germany*, 26.8.2017.

Kurdistan Regional Government Representation in Poland, *Ziyad Raoof about independence referendum at the meeting with Kurdish diaspora*, 9.12.2017.

Benedek, Jonathan, *Hope for Kurdish independence lingers in Israel, despite Iraq nixing referendum*, I24 30.11.2017.

Sangar, Ali, *WATCH: Kurds in Stockholm, Hamburg rally in support of Kurdistan referendum*, Kurdistan24 16.9.2017.

Sputnik, *Swedish Kurdish Diaspora Supports Iraqi Kurdistan Independence Referendum*, 10.8.2017.

308 Vohra, Part, *Diaspora Kurds Rally in Support of Iraqi Kurdistan's Independence Vote*, VOA News 21.9.2017.

309 Evsen, Kahraman, *Brussels: 58 Kurdish organizations in Europe demand a Kurdish state*, Kurdish-European Society 5.9.2017.

310 BBC, *Turkey: Kobane Protests leave 19 dead*, 8.10.2014.

311 Al Jazeera, *Kurdish protesters occupy Dutch parliament*, 7.3.2014.

312 Fraser, Suzan & Charlton, Angela, *Kurds protest across Europe, seeking more help to stop Islamic State extremists*, The Star 7.3.2014.

313 Al Jazeera, *Kurdish protesters occupy Dutch parliament*, 7.3.2014.

314 Fraser, Suzan & Charlton, Angela, *Kurds protest across Europe, seeking more help to stop Islamic State extremists*, The Star 7.3.2014.

said was helping Kurds in Iraq but not in Syria,³¹⁵ indicating competition between the local diaspora groups. In Hamburg group of Kurdish demonstrators and Salafist Muslims brawled forcing the German police to dispersing the demonstration with water cannons.³¹⁶ The protests of 2014 were sparked by developments in the country of origin as Kurdish diaspora in Europe rallied to gain support from their host countries against an enemy that was considered common which threatened European countries with terrorist attacks. Sympathy towards the Kurds was not limited to the state level, as many westerners have joined the ranks of Kurdish militias as volunteers.³¹⁷ The diaspora across Europe mobilized transnationally to the escalation of the conflict and opening of opportunity to establish a Kurdish state as Syrian Iraqi states collapsed. The diaspora autonomised the conflict in a way to not only gain legitimacy, but also direct support from host states towards the war efforts as the conflict was framed against a common enemy. In France and Germany with more radical diaspora group and more closed system the conflict manifested a as violence between the PKK-affiliated and the Turkish diaspora groups as well as antagonism towards the host states.³¹⁸

The AKP suffered a defeat in the elections in June 2015, losing votes both to Kurdish Halk Demokrat Partisi (HDP) and far nationalist Milliyet Halk Partisi (MHP), which hampered the ruling party's incentive to continue the peace process.³¹⁹ In July 2015 an ISIL affiliate terrorist cell made a suicide bomb attack killed 34 people in the Town of Suruc in North East where a major rally for the HDP was taking place.³²⁰ Following the attack a group affiliated with the PKK killed two Turkish police offices in the town of Cylanpinar following the Suruc attack.³²¹ The Turkish military initiated a military campaign against the PKK on 24.7.2015 by attacking targets in Syria and Iraq as well as making a crackdown on PKK affiliate targets in Turkey and engaging in urban warfare in towns and cities of Eastern Turkey, ending the peace accords that started in 2013.³²² In August 2016 Turkish

315 Ibid.

316 Buchanan, Rose Troup, *Isis riots spreading across Europe as Islamists clash with Kurdish supporters in Germany*, The Independent 8.3.2014.

317 Sinjar, Norma Costello, *War on Isis: Western fighters joining Kurds to fight terror group in Iraq and Syria*, The Independent 21.5.2016.

Saner, Emine, *Brits abroad: is it against the law to fight Isis?*, The Guardian 25.2.2015.

318 Baser, 2016, 231.

319 MacAskill, Ewen, *Turkey says Kurdish peace process impossible as Nato meets*, The Guardian 28.7.2015.

320 Hurriyet daily News, *At least 32 dead in suspected ISIL suicide bombing in Turkey's border with Syria*, 20.7.2015.

321 Al Jazeera, *Kurdish group claims 'revenge murder' on Turkish Police*, 22.7.2015.

322 Yeginsu, Ceylan, *Turkey's Campaign Against Kurdish militants takes a toll on militants*, The New York Times 30.12.2015.

troops entered Syria to border town of Jarablus to push back ISIL militas but also to contain movements of the Kurdish PYD militias in the region.³²³

As ISIL held Mosul was being besieged by Kurdish and Iraqi troops in early 2017, Masoud Barzani, the president of the KRG and head of KDP announced that the referendum was to be held within the same year.³²⁴ The referendum did not however receive widespread legitimacy across all Kurdish political constituencies as it was seen by the PUK other parties as a tool of Barzanis and KDP as a tool to legitimize their ruling status of the KRG.³²⁵ The rift between the KDP and the PKK which have competing political projects in the region,³²⁶ was manifested as lack of support by the PKK or the YPG towards the referendum. The incidence shows how the Kurdish national identity was being not only contested by the nation states in the region, but also by different Kurdish political constituencies that had competing political claims based on Kurdish national identity.

In January 2018 Turkey launched an military operation in Afrin district of North-Western Syria controlled by PYD which Turkish regime regards as a branch of the PKK. The Turkish president declared that the goal of the operation was to "cleanse the area step-by-step from terrorist influence", referring to PYD's presence in the district and also stated that the operation would be followed by an operation in Manbij further east from Afrin.³²⁷ On 18th of March Turkish backed Syrian militia captured Afrin and looted shops and apartments in the process.³²⁸ UN estimated that the operation has displaced thousands of people.³²⁹ Turkish regime has indicated that it has plans to resettle Syrian refugees that it hosts to Northern Syria, which the president has claimed to aim "ensuring stability

³²³ Shaheem, Kareem, *Turkey sends Tanks into Syria in operation aimed at Isis and Kurds*, The Guardian, 24.8.2016.

³²⁴ Rudaw, *Kurdistan will hold independence referendum in 2017, senior official*, 2.4.2017.

³²⁵ Chulov, Martin, *Iraqi Kurds Polarised as region holds historic referendum on independence*, The Guardian, 25.9.2017. Rudaw, *PUK: Kurdistan should take US, UK, UN alternative to referendum 'very seriously'*, 16.9.2017.

³²⁶ Connely, Megan & Jasim, Dastan, *Not all Kurds are on board with Referendum*, Middle East Institute 21.9.2017.

³²⁷ Al Jazeera News, *Erdogan: Operation in Syrian Afrin has Begun*, 21.1.2018.

³²⁸ AFP-News, *Pro-Turkish Forces Pillage Afrin after taking the Syrian city*, 18.3.2018.

³²⁹ Sulayvani, Karzan, *UN says Turkey's operation in Afrin has displaced at least 15,000*, Kurdistan24, 31.1.2018.

Al Jazeera, *Turkey resumes Afrin operation in northern Syria*, 9.2.2018.

Reuter, Thomson, *Turkey's Afrin Operation has Displaced 150,000 Kurdish Official Say*, CBC News.

and safety in the area”.³³⁰

The Turkish offensive to Afrin was followed by mobilization of protests among the Kurdish diasporas around Europe, as thousands took part in protests in major cities in Germany, in Paris where a group of protestors organized a sit-in front of the Elysee Palace, in London and Brighton, in Amsterdams Schipol airport, in major Swiss cities and in Austria’s Vienna and Graz.³³¹ The protesters carried flags and banners with symbols related to the PKK and YPG as well as images of Abdullah Öcalan, which are banned in Germany. In Cologne where one of the biggest protests in Europe, the German police detained individuals distributing flags and gave fines for several others for carrying pictures of Öcalan in the protests.³³² Some of the protests resulted into violence, as in Dusseldorf several people were injured in clashes between Kurdish protesters and Turkish counter-demonstrators³³³ and two Turkish mosques were attacked by protestors in Lauffen and Berlin.³³⁴ In the same way as the Siege of Kobane, the Turkish offensive to Afrin was an event in the homeland that was met with mobilization of the diaspora organizations and sparked violence in Germany where tensions between the Turkish and Kurdish communities are high and where the political opportunity structures prevent the mobilization in being channeled through official channels.³³⁵

4.7. Kurds in Finland

As a country that modernized its economy relatively late to Western European and other Nordic states, Finland remained immigrant sending, rather than receiving country until the 1980’s³³⁶ and it did not make guest worker agreements with Southern European countries like Germany, France, Britain, Holland or Sweden. The first Kurdish immigrants to Finland arrived as students in the 1970’s and more arrived in the 1980’s as asylum seekers, some of them traveling through The Soviet Union to apply for an asylum status in Finland.³³⁷ Most however, arrived as refugees from Iraq, Iran and

³³⁰ Dogan News Agency, *500,000 expected to go back to Syria after Afrin operation: Turkey’s first lady*, 16.2.2018.

Uras, Umut, *Turkish Agency Sais Tonnes of Aid sent to Afrin During Operation*, Al Jazeera, 18.3.2018.

³³¹ ANF News, *Thousands of Kurds protest invasion of Afrin in European cities*, 11.3.2018.

³³² DW, *German Kurds protest Turkey’s Afrin assault in Cologne*, 27.1.2018.

³³³ DW, *Pro-Kurdish and Turkish protesters clash at a German Airport*, 11.3.2018.

³³⁴ The New Arab, *Mosques in Germany attacked as Pro-Kurdish Protests held across Europe*, 11.3.2018.

³³⁵ Baser, 2016, 231.

³³⁶ Wahlbeck, 1999, 90.

³³⁷ Ibid, 82.

Turkey during the 1990's as part of UNHCR resettlement program.³³⁸

Civil rights of foreigners in Finland were furthered from 1980's onward as they were provided with freedom of association, which made it possible for immigrants to establish their own associations.³³⁹ Although during 1990's Finnish resettlement policy was egalitarian where the expectation was quick integration with publicly funded language courses and other activities that the immigration officials thought were useful in this process.³⁴⁰ In 1997 the Finnish government approved a resolution regarding tolerance and racism, which gave minorities right to choose their own methods of maintaining their cultural identity.³⁴¹ The multicultural policy was solidified with act on the integration of immigrants and reception of asylum seekers, where integration was defined as a two-dimensional process involving "the personal development of immigrants, aimed at participation in work life and the functioning of society while preserving their language and culture".³⁴² It indicated individual integration plan, financial support for individuals participating in integrative activities such as participation to language courses and local integration programs as the main instruments in implementation of the policy.³⁴³

Similar to multicultural policy of Sweden,³⁴⁴ teaching native language and adopting it's culture part of the multiculturalism and integration policy, which is seen as helping immigrants in adapting to a multicultural society and as such, associations that are set up to preserve migrants' "native culture" are eligible to apply public funding from the Ministry of Culture and education.³⁴⁵ This means that migrant associations have a major role in the implementation of multicultural and integration policies in Finland, and as such associations that are interested to get funding from the state have to cooperate with municipalities and other state institutions. Finnish education system provides language education for minorities and Kurdish has been one of the most studied foreign language in Finland already from

338 Ibid, 104.

339 Saukkonen, Pasi, *Multiculturalism and Nationalism: the Politics of Diversity in Finland*, in Kivisto, Peter & Östen, Wahlbeck, *Debating Multiculturalism in the Nordic Welfare State*, Palgrave, 2013, 281.

340 Wahlbeck, 1997, 100-101.

341 Saukkonen, 2013, 274.

342 Ibid.

343 Ibid, 277.

344 Baser, 2016, 94.

345 Saukkonen, 2013, 278-279.

2007 in primary schools.³⁴⁶ Even though Finland has a reputation of having a successful multicultural policy,³⁴⁷ there are gaps between policy and implementation in terms of resources allocated to multicultural activities and institutional coherence.³⁴⁸ In comparison to other systems though, Finland can be considered as open as there is a low threshold for the diaspora organizations to cooperate with the civil society or reach political leadership.

According to official statistics from 2017, there are 13 327 people with Kurdish as their mother tongue living in Finland. The community is concentrated in the capital area as well as in Turku and Jyväskylä, although Kurdish speakers can be found across the country.³⁴⁹ There is a discrepancy between genders as 8 084 of these people are men and 5 243 are women. Age-wise, the Kurdish speaking population in Finland is relatively young, as around 67 % are under the age of 35. The number of Kurdish speakers in Finland have been increasing sharply from mere 179 in 1990 to 3115 in 2000 and reaching over 10 000 in 2013. It should be noted that there are also people who identify themselves culturally or otherwise as Kurds, although their native language is not Kurdish.³⁵⁰

As many Kurds don't have a strong affiliation with their state of origin, and because having a Finnish citizenship has a lot of practical advantages, many of the Kurds in Finland apply for Finnish citizenship and in 2010 number of Kurdish speaking Finnish citizens was 3 337,³⁵¹ which was over a third of the whole Kurdish speaking population in the country. Majority of first generation Kurds in Finland originate from Iraq, although there are also Kurds from Turkey, Iran and Syria.³⁵² The first generation of Kurds are heterogeneous in terms of educational background and class, as the availability of public education varies greatly in the countries of origin.³⁵³ Differences in the level of education and language skills among the first generation correlates with gender, as women have proportionally lower level of education and language skills than men.³⁵⁴ Wahlbecks' study made in

³⁴⁶ Ibid, 279.

³⁴⁷ I.E: Queens University, *Multiculturalism in contemporary democracies*.

³⁴⁸ Saukkonen, 2013, 290.

³⁴⁹ Tilastokeskus, 2017.

³⁵⁰ Toivanen, Mari, *Language and Negotiation of Identities Among Young Kurds in Finland*, Nordic Journal of Migration Research, Vol. 3, issue 1, 2, 2013.

³⁵¹ Wahlbeck, 2012, 51.

³⁵² Ibid, 45.

³⁵³ Ibid, 53.

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

1990's suggests that Kurds in Finland have suffered from systematic prejudice and racism discrimination at the time,³⁵⁵ but there is a lack of data from recent years if the situation has changed.

During the 1990's politically oriented Kurds organized according to their country of origin or political affiliations.³⁵⁶ the Kurdish Association in Finland (Suomen kurdien yhdistys) was firstly established in 1992 and was reformed in 2014 as the Kurdish federation (Kurdiliitto) an umbrella for Kurdish associations in Finland. Kurdish Information Centre was established in 1993,³⁵⁷ which worked as a gathering place for the PKK-supporting Kurds and works today with the name of Finland's Kurds Culture Center (Suomen kurdien kulttuurikeskus). Other associations that were established in Finland during the initial decade were Ekgerin, a nationwide cultural organization, The Kurdish National Peace and Solidarity Committee, an intellectual association with international reach and the Kurdish-Finnish solidarity committee, a Finnish organization.³⁵⁸

Transnational ties to Sweden and elsewhere were important during the 1990's in organizing and establishing associations in Finland.³⁵⁹ Kurdistan Information center that was later replaced by Information Centre of the National Liberation Front of Kurdistan was established already in 1995.³⁶⁰ The Kurds have traditionally organized according to their countries of origin, due to differences in the dialect of Kurdish language, but also according to different political affiliations.³⁶¹ Activities of these associations has ranged from organizing cultural and social activities to political activism.³⁶² According to data from 2011 Kurdish parties working actively in Finland were KOMALAH and KDPI.³⁶³ The PKK support has been presented with party symbols and pictures of Abdullah Öcalan³⁶⁴ during demonstrations and the party possessed an office space in Helsinki by late 1990's.³⁶⁵ In 2009

355 Wahlbeck, 1999, 128-133.

356 Ibid, 157-160.

357 Ibid, 153.

358 Ibid.

359 Ibid, 154.

360 Wahlbeck, 2012, 51-52.

361 Wahlbeck, 1999, 155 & Wahlbeck, 2012, 52.

362 Wahlbeck, 2012, 51.

363 Toivanen, 2015, 91.

364 Yrjänä-Rantioja, Tellervo, "*Koko Eurooppa Suomessa-Tahdomme heiltä apua!*" *Kurdijoukko marssi oikeuksiensa puolesta*, Helsingin sanomat, 26.3.1992.

365 Niinivaara, Susanna, *Öcalanin ja PKK:n kannatus jakaa Suomessa asuvat kurdit*, Helsingin sanomat, 17.2.1999.

the PKK links in Finland raised the attention of the authorities as two persons were arrested as suspects of supporting the organization, which is labeled as a terrorist organization by the EU.³⁶⁶ As Finland does not register data according to peoples ethnicity, according to Finnish Patent and registration office, there are around 50 registered associations which include the name "Kurd", that are located all over the country with an emphasis in the capital area, as well as in Turku and Jyväskylä.³⁶⁷ The high level of organization around Kurdish identity entails that there is an active effort by the diaspora in Finland to maintain Kurdish identity, which means that the active members work to construct the diasporic identity in Finland.

The Kurdish diaspora in Finland has organized demonstrations related to their homeland conflicts already from early 1990's³⁶⁸. In 1999 when Abdullah Öcalan was captured, there was a demonstration attended by around 500 people in Helsinki,³⁶⁹ and in recent years the diaspora has mobilized in response to intensifying conflict in Kurdish areas as a result of the major conflicts in Syria and Iraq. As a response to the siege of Kobane during the autumn of 2014, the Kurds in Finland mobilized demonstrations in Helsinki,³⁷⁰ Tampere,³⁷¹ Turku³⁷² and Jyväskylä³⁷³. A group of activists in Turku demonstrated with a hunger strike.³⁷⁴ The demonstrators demanded efforts from the international community to support people in Kobane in their struggle against Isis.

In June 2015 Turkey broke the peace process that it had with the PKK and started attacking PKK targets in South-Eastern Turkey. There was a demonstration in Helsinki in October where a group of protesters threw eggs at the Turkish Embassy and threw rocks at the police.³⁷⁵ Another major protest was during the major "Peli poikki"-demonstration in Helsinki against racism, which was a support

³⁶⁶ YLE, *KRP Tutkii kurdien rahaliikennettä*, Yle News, 24.9.2009.

³⁶⁷ Yhdistysnet, Finnish Patent and Registration Office, 12.12.2017.

³⁶⁸ Hakala, Pekka, *Kurdit osoittivat mieltä Turkin suurlähetystön edessä, Poliiseja oli enemmän kuin osallistujia*, Helsingin sanomat, 18.3.1992.

³⁶⁹ Lähteenmäki, Paavo, *500 kurdia protestoi Helsingissä*, Helsingin sanomat, 23.2.1999.

³⁷⁰ Yle, *Sadat marssivat kurdien puolesta Helsingissä*, Yle News, 24.9.2009.

³⁷¹ Matson-Mäkelä, *Huoli Kobanin asukkaista kasvaa-Tampereella osoitetaan mieltä ISISiä vastaan*, Yle, 10.10.2014.

³⁷² Hjelt, Yrjö, *Suomen kurdit osoittavat mieltään terroristijärjestö ISISiä vastaan*, Yle, 25.8.2014.

³⁷³ Raitio, Riitta, *Kurdien mielenosoitus keräsi Jyväskylässä muutamia kymmeniä*, Yle, 5.10.2014.

³⁷⁴ Hjelt, Yrjö, *Turun kurdit syömälakkoon*, Yle, 6.10.2014.

³⁷⁵ Salokorpi, Jussi, *Turkin suurlähetystöä heiteltiin kananmunilla – Poliisi sai kivistä*, Yle, 10.10.2015.

demonstration for the autonomy of the Rojava region in northern Syria.³⁷⁶ Numerous protests were held in response to Turkish offensive to Afrin from January 2018 in Helsinki, Tampere and Turku.³⁷⁷ From Finnish political parties, the Leftist Union (Vasemmistoliitto) has condemned Turkey's assault to Afrin.³⁷⁸ The Kurdish diaspora members in Finland seem to react to events in Kurdistan in a similar way as the diaspora in other parts of Europe indicating transnational linkages. Support towards the PKK's and YPG's ideology can be seen during d as party emblems and pictures of Öcalan are displayed and political songs affiliated with the movement are played.

376 Bäckgren, Noora, *Lauantaina Helsingissä järjestetään viisi mielenosoitusta – Pääministeri Sipilä osallistuu rasismiin vastaiseen tapahtumaan Kuopiossa*, Helsingin sanomat, 23.9.2016.

377 Jaulimo, Juulia, *Noin 200 osoitti mieltään Helsingissä – Aiheutti ruuhkaa Venäjän suurlähetystön edessä*, MTV uutiset, 24.1.2018.

Turun Sanomat, *Turussa tänään mielenosoitus Turkin toimia vastaan*, 27.1.2018.

Jämsen, Elina, Vesalainen, Suvi, *Teltat palasivat Helsingin keskustaan – Poliisi lupaa puuttua häiriöihin*, Yle, 9.2.2018.

Virtanen, Jarno, *Satakunta kurdia osoitti mieltään Tampereen keskustassa*, Yle, 14.3.2018.

Yle, *Helsingin Keskustassa kurdien Mielenosoitus - ”paikalla 20-30 poliisiautoa”*, 12.3.2018.

378 Vasemmisto, *Puoluevaltuuston kannanotto: Suomen on keskeytettävä asevientit Pohjois-Syriassa sotivalle Turkille*, 24.3.2018.

5. Analysis

5.1. Introduction

This chapter's aim is to shed light on mobilization process of the Kurdish diaspora in Finland by examining what kind of discourses of mobilization there are among the core diaspora members and how are boundaries of membership constructed by them. The analysis is based on theoretical framework on conflict diffusion and diasporas' relation to conflicts. It follows on Feron's concept of conflict autonomisation³⁷⁹ in that it looks at how the diasporas' core members construct the conflict in the Finnish context and on Fiona Adamson's mechanism of diaspora mobilization³⁸⁰ by looking at specifically how boundaries are drawn as part of the mobilization process. The chapter also follows on discussion over outbidding between different diaspora groups that has been presented by Baser³⁸¹ and Adamson³⁸² and elaborates how the Finnish context affects these processes.

Diasporas are not homogeneous entities but consist of different groups, communities and individuals which have their own backgrounds, ideologies and interests.³⁸³ This means that diasporas do not always mobilize in a unified way, but different groups unite under different circumstances and can also act in different ways than other groups. As diasporas and conflicts are in the process of constant reconfiguration that are subject to changes by homeland and host-land contexts, the boundaries that are constructed by diaspora groups also change according to changing environment.³⁸⁴ In this study "Kurdish Diaspora" as a singular refers to those who identify themselves according to the definition that is used in this study of diaspora which is an *identity that is defined by dispersion of space, orientation to a perceived homeland of the diaspora and boundary maintenance to other identity groups*. At the same time each diaspora member is also an individual subject who have diverse identities and can take multiple positions in accordingly. As such, the respondents should not

³⁷⁹ Feron, 2013, 368.

³⁸⁰ Adamson, 2013. 71.

³⁸¹ Baser, *Komkar: The unheard voice in the Kurdish Diaspora*, in Christou, Anastasia and Mavroudi, Elizabeth, *Dismantling Diasporas: Rethinking the Geographies of Diasporic identities*, Ashgate Publishing, 2015.

³⁸² Adamson, 2013.

³⁸³ Smith, 2007, 5.
Lyons, 2010, 137.
Baser, 2016, 35.

³⁸⁴ Baser, Bahar, *The Awakening of Lantern Diaspora: The Political Mobilization of First and Second Generation Turkish Migrants in Sweden*, *Ethnopolitics* Vol. 13, Issue: 4, 2014, 365-372.

be understood solely as representatives of one group, but as subjects belonging to different entities who can take multiple positions.³⁸⁵

The analysis section of the thesis will exhibit the findings by moving from discussion of the notion of belonging and construction of pan-Kurdish discourse through social categorization and boundary maintenance by the core members. This is followed by chapter on how diaspora groups are formed through political categorization as well as how diaspora activities are politicized because of the social boundaries that are constructed. I will then move on to discuss the mobilization process where I will first cover how the respondents expressed their view about their political opportunity structures after which I will discuss on role of technology in the mobilization process. This is followed by a section on conflict diffusion regarding how the conflict is autonomised by the Kurdish diaspora in Finland. The last section then looks into how these social boundaries are manifested in ways these diaspora groups mobilize and how their position in relation to Finnish society affects their strategies. The structure of the findings chapter is to move firstly from broader society wide in-group and out-group position towards looking more specifically on how social boundaries are constructed by the Kurdish diaspora groups which helps to understand how and why these groups are formed. The aim of the analysis is to examine what kind of categories of membership are constructed by the diaspora and how the Kurdish diaspora members position themselves in the Finnish society with these categories. Lastly the findings are brought to a broader contextual and theoretical framework.

5.2. Belonging and mobilization

All of the respondents in this study represented interest in Kurdistan, as well as having a desire to have an impact in the development of the region. As Toivanen found in her study, participating in political activities is part of identity construction and maintenance for the second generation Kurdish diaspora members.³⁸⁶ Indeed, all of the respondents to this study also demonstrated a sense of belonging to Kurdistan or specific region in Kurdistan as territorial entity, which corresponds to Toivanen's and Kivistö's previous finding.³⁸⁷ A in-group category that I found among all of the respondents was strong attachment to Kurdistan as a region which was attached with attributes of interest in the occurring events in the region and relating to people in the region.³⁸⁸ Placing this to

³⁸⁵ Toivanen, Kivistö, 2014, 71.

³⁸⁶ Toivanen, 2016, 102.

³⁸⁷ Toivanen, Kivistö, 2014, 71.

³⁸⁸ Baker, 1997, 142.

the theoretical framework of this study, this observation suggests that the respondents expressed a territorial belonging to Kurdistan.

In this extract when asked about what Kurds in Finland think about what is happening in Kurdistan, he expresses his sense of belonging to the region:

Interviewer: *"Um.. What do Kurds in Finland think of what is happening in Kurdistan?"*

Respondent: *"Our hearts are always there and we always hope that everything will go well there and we try to politically encourage the Finnish government to help Kurds and by this we want to work in legitimate ways"*

The respondent expresses his sense of belonging to Kurdistan and links it to political lobbying activities. Another respondent talked about her connection to people in Afrin, where major fighting between Turkish army and YPG troops was taking place:

"And of course, probably people in Afrin don't know me at all, but I am here and I am sending pictures for them (about the demonstration)... Of course it brings some kind of good feeling, like even though we are not in a middle of war, I still want them to know that we are in Europe, on the streets, knowing about their suffering."

Here the respondents wanted to emphasize that even though she did necessarily have direct social relations with any individuals in Afrin, she still felt a sense of solidarity with them, indicating a connection between political activism and belonging with Kurds in Afrin. In both of these extracts Kurdish belonging is entangled with a degree of political orientation towards the perceived homeland, which was prevalent among all respondents to this study. Belonging is thus political in nature, which would suggest that political mobilization has an effect on sense of belonging among the Kurdish diaspora in Finland.³⁸⁹ The interviews confirm what has been stated in previous research about the Kurdish diasporas' belonging that the diaspora have an interest and a level of responsiveness to events happening in Kurdistan,³⁹⁰ and forms of *Politico-cultural essentialism*, meaning politicized forms of expressing culture and identity on a transnational sphere.³⁹¹ The respondents used historical

389 CR: Eliassi, 2013, 30.

390 Wahlbeck, 2012. 54.

391 Toivanen, 2016, 99.

narratives and references to reflect their belonging to Kurdish people, which indicates a sense of shared history and a degree of Kurdish nationalist identity. Belonging to a pan-Kurdish identity will be elaborated on the second section of this chapter. With their activism in Finland the respondents positioned themselves as active participants in Finnish society. In her study which is based on interview and ethnographic data from 2011, Mari Toivanen argued that young Kurds in Finland who were part of her study expressed their identity through political participation,³⁹² meaning that for them political participation with demonstrations and advocacy was part of the reference categories to which they demonstrated their membership to the diaspora. Among the respondents for this study this other in-group category of Finnish citizenship is associated with organizing associations and activities as well as cooperating with other civil society actors and participating in the political system in Finland. As such, this finding compliments Toivanen's finding that second-generation politically active Kurds expressed belonging to Finnish citizenship in addition to Kurdishness.³⁹³

Events in Kurdistan were described as having a direct impact on Kurdish diaspora members by some of the respondents because of families or relatives living in the area where events are taking place. In the following extract the respondent discusses the impact of the conflict on Kurds in Finland:

Respondent: *"What happens in Kurdistan shows and certainly affects very heavily on the Kurdish community in Finland. It can even affect as badly as resulting into mental health problems for different people, especially today when information is available so easily, as when a person opens their phone, laptop, television or any channel, then suddenly there are those struggles, war and death and bomb attacks, terrorism, everything in the Kurdish area or the Middle-East at large comes... It certainly affects and has an negative impact on the community"*

In this extract another respondent discusses difficulties of Kurdish families or individuals living in more remote areas in Finland:

Respondent: *"If a family or a relative live in Oulu for example and their family or someone they know has died in Syria for example it is very hard. We should support these families because for example if there is a demonstration in Helsinki and many would like to attend, they can't. And it's not possible to arrange a demonstration in each town and this affects the family's life as many families are*

³⁹² Toivanen, 2016.

³⁹³ Toivanen, *Homing Desire at the Juncture of Place and Transnational Spaces: The Case of Young Kurds in Finland*, 71.

depressed since they can't participate.

The topic of mental health issues was raised by 3 of the 9 respondents. It was associated with stress of worrying about family members who are living in unstable parts of Kurdistan and inability to take part in demonstrations or other activities organized by the diaspora. This nexus of belonging, mental health and conflicts is not well understood in academic research. Sense of belonging has been categorized as a mental health concept that "is defined as the sense of experience of personal involvement in a system or environment so that person feel themselves as integral part of system or environment".³⁹⁴ Cajax and Gill who studied connection between belonging and mental health among rural Indian diaspora in Canada, argued that sense of belonging to their community and opportunities to practice and express one's culture were associated with wellbeing of the Punjabi community living in rural Canada.³⁹⁵ In the interviews In my study the respondents associated participation in demonstrations as an activity that eases stress and other negative effects of the events in Kurdistan have on the diaspora members. Family relations but also sense of belonging make the events in Kurdistan meaningful and personal for the Kurdish diaspora members. This would suggest that the conflict in Kurdistan has a direct psychological effect on Kurdish diaspora members in Finland, and also contribute into mobilization of the diaspora.

5.3. Pan-Kurdish discourse

All of the respondents expressed membership to a "pan-Kurdish" identity. Construction of pan-Kurdish identity is typical of transnational diasporas, as it reflects the Kurdish diasporas transnational character,³⁹⁶ and also their status as an ethnic minority in the host country. Even though Kurds in Finland do maintain identities that are bound to certain location in Kurdistan and establish associations around certain dialects of Kurdish they also interact with Kurds from different parts of Kurdistan and form associations which maintain pan-Kurdish identity in Finland. Similar to Sweden,³⁹⁷ the Finnish environment offers opportunities for the Kurdish migrants to interact with

³⁹⁴ Hagerty, Lynch-Sauer, Patusky, Bouwsema, Collier, 1992, 172.

³⁹⁵ Caxaj, Susana & Gill, Navjot, *Belonging and Mental Wellbeing among a Rural Indian-Canadian Diaspora: Navigating Tensions in "Finding a Space of our Own"*, *Qualitative Health Research*, Vol. 27, Issue: 8, 2017, 1123-1124.

³⁹⁶ Schiller, Nina-Gick, *Transborder Citizenship: an Outcome of Legal Pluralism within Transnational Social Fields*, in Bender Beckman, Franz and Bender Beckman, Keebit, *Mobile People, Mobile Law: Expanding Legal Relations in a Contracting World*, Ashgate, 2005, 65-66.

³⁹⁷ Baser, 2016. 185.

Kurds with varying backgrounds. Belonging to this pan-Kurdish cultural group was determined by interaction to Finnish society, which is a feature in societies with dominant identity group and minority groups.³⁹⁸

The determinant categorization devices that distinguished the Kurdish minority from the Finnish majority³⁹⁹ were language and culture. Thus, in a similar way as in Sweden,⁴⁰⁰ the Finnish multicultural system also allocates minority groups to different ethnicized groups that form pan-ethnic identities. Cultural features were described in contrast to the dominant "Finnish" culture to distinguish from the majority group. This compliments Toivanen's finding where belonging to Kurdish minority was determined by interaction with the Finnish majority,⁴⁰¹ as the respondents positioned themselves as representatives of the Kurdish minority during the interviews to the Finnish majority, which was represented by the interviewer.⁴⁰²

The interview situation where I as a representative of the Finnish majority interviewed a member of the Kurdish minority resulted the respondents to position themselves as the representative of the minority group. When answering question on what kind of people are Kurds in Finland, the respondents presented characteristics of Kurdish culture in reflection to the majority Finnish culture. In this extract the respondent describes Kurdish cultural characteristics:

Interviewer: *"Okay then so my second question, this is quite a broad as well, so what kind of people are Kurds in Finland?"*

Respondent: *"Well Kurds in general, if compared to Finns, are pretty social, very hospitable, umm... then they are a bit temperamental mmm... they like a lot of like... they like a lot of social situations and visit each other a lot, although less than before. Umm... Kurds are the kind of people who at the first hand seem like they are hotheads, but when they soften a bit, they have a lot of potential. This is how I would see it, if I would generalize all of the Kurds."*

³⁹⁸ Barth, 1969, 30.

³⁹⁹ Baker, 1997, 131.

⁴⁰⁰ Baser, 2016, 189.

⁴⁰¹ Toivanen, Mari, *The Visual Lexica of (National) Belonging and Nonbelonging in the Accounts of Young Kurds in Finland*, Nordic Journal of Migration Research Vol. 4, Issue 4, 2014, 196.

⁴⁰² Alasuutari, Pertti, *Researching Culture: Qualitative Method and Cultural Studies*, Sage, 1995.

”Social” and ”communal” were used by seven of the respondents to describe Kurds in Finland. They can thus be regarded as attributes that are attached to the in-group category of “Kurdishness” or pan-Kurdish cultural identity.⁴⁰³ Other three chose another topic instead, which did not describe Kurds’ cultural characteristics. As these features emerged in the interviews as comparisons to the Finnish culture, they are social categories that indicate standards of behavior.⁴⁰⁴ This would suggest that communalism is a way of maintaining the minority cultural status in the Finnish system. The respondents mentioned keeping frequent contact with the local Kurdish community with visits as well as through associations and activities as part of communalism, which function to maintain cultural traits.⁴⁰⁵ Associations set up by the active members of the diaspora accommodate and maintain sense of belonging⁴⁰⁶ and are the main channel where framing of the diasporic identity, articulation of social boundaries and transnational brokerage takes place.⁴⁰⁷

In the following extract, the respondent discusses about his identity and what it means to be a Kurd for him, when asked what do Kurds in Finland think about the events in Kurdistan:

Respondent: *”Of course, every Kurd wants to maintain their identity and it's the truth that if you hide or erase your identity, you don't have anything else (referring to belonging) towards other states and I think it's always good to think about the perspective that every Kurd sees themselves as Kurd, now and ever because all that we have sought on this Earth- we are such a large population without it's own nation, has been that small right, which is to live in peace in our own country...”*

Another respondent expressed her thoughts about Kurdish identity and citizenship:

Respondent: *”I think, or in my opinion, all the Kurds, they should have a right to their own language, even though we live in different countries like Syria, Turkey, but all should understand, that we are firstly Kurds and then citizens otherwise.”*

Here the respondent expresses his pan-Kurdish identity with a sense of shared history and belonging to homeland that consists of whole Kurdistan. The Pan-Kurdish identity is connected to Kurds’ consciousness as a stateless diaspora in a world of nation states, which was seen as the unifying factor

⁴⁰³ Baker, 1997, 142.

⁴⁰⁴ Barth, 1969, 17.

⁴⁰⁵ Ibid, 34.

⁴⁰⁶ Bauböck, 2010, 316.

⁴⁰⁷ Adamson, 2013, 67-70.

for all the Kurds. The shared sense of history that was expressed throughout the interviews consisted of oppression of Kurds by states where Kurdistan is located, forced dispersion and struggle for Kurdish state. As the historical narratives were built around political struggle, they serve the function of constructing a common political identity around Kurdishness.⁴⁰⁸ Social boundary is drawn between Kurdish minority and the Finnish majority culture. There is a fluidity in determining one's membership as can be seen from the extract above and as has been argued by Toivanen in that Finnish citizenship and Kurdishness are not mutually exclusive, as the respondent also expresses belonging to Finnish citizenship.⁴⁰⁹ In the following extract the respondent discusses her sense identity as Kurd and as a Finn, reflecting fluidity of identity with referencing to localized belonging as a person who grew up in Vaasa, while also referring to what Toivanen called ethnicization of Finnishness⁴¹⁰:

Respondent: *“But I fell myself as being from Vaasa, because even though one can say that they are Finn, they cannot say that they are from Vaasa”... ..”but this Finnishness is difficult because I differ in terms of appearance and culture from the Finns...”*

The categorization between Kurdish minority and Finnish majority reflects on how Kurdishness as ethno-cultural entity is distinguished from cultural Finnishness that was seen by the respondents as exclusive category in cultural terms, similarly to what Toivanen had argued about ethnized notion of Finnishness.⁴¹¹ Reflecting on Barth's theoretical framework on societies with majority and minority culture, the social boundaries reflect those that are determined by the majority group in the society.⁴¹² This means that interaction between the Finnish group category and the Kurdish group category places the Kurdish group as a minority within the Finnish society.

In this extract the respondent discusses Kurdish identity in Finland drawing comparison to the Finnish interviewer:

Respondent: *”...but every Kurd see themselves as Kurd and if not, then I question that because, I mean, you as a Finn can't say after fifteen years that ”okay, now I'm not a Finn anymore”, it's*

⁴⁰⁸ Barth, 1969, 34.

⁴⁰⁹ Toivanen, *Homing Desire at the Juncture of Place and Transnational Spaces: The Case of Young Kurds in Finland*, 71.

⁴¹⁰ Toivanen, *The Visual Lexica of (National) Belonging and Non-Belonging in the Accounts of Young Kurds in Finland*, 192-200.

⁴¹¹ Ibid.

⁴¹² Barth, 1969, 31.

unnatural, that... and it shows in practical activities in a concrete way when going to support Afrin, Kobane, Northern-Iraq and so on.”

The respondent uses the interviewer to express his group membership being determined by interaction between the cultural groups. Activism in Kurdish affairs was associated with the category of Kurdishness by all of the respondents, which reflects on the importance of political activities for the Kurdish diaspora. Mobilization is seen as means of maintaining Kurdish identity. In this pan-Kurdish discourse he frames all of the recent major events in Kurdistan, Turkish offensive in Afrin, siege of Kobane in 2014 and the independence referendum of September 2017 as part of the common Kurdish struggle. The minority status of Kurdish group in the Finnish society pushes the diaspora to strategic essentialism,⁴¹³ which is a way of emphasizing the minority status along the lines of the “Kurdish” category to obtain recognition.⁴¹⁴ In the interviews it happened as framing the events in Kurdistan as unifying occasions, as can be seen in the extract above.

Experience of being a refugee and a member of a cultural minority were in-group position that were used to determine relation to the society. Refugee experience was an association to the in-group category of Kurdishness that was used to reflect status in Finnish society, as hardships related to forced migration and adaptation to a new environment were factors that differentiated the respondents from the Finnish majority.

In this extract the respondent takes the interviewer as a reference point as he represents the Finnish majority in the interview situation:

Respondent: *”Being a refugee has an impact immediately when we are in Finland, thoughts of the parents are in Kurdistan and children try to learn and support their parents, but it's out of question since they are in a different world, business world here in Finland and they are so confused, like if you would live in an environment like that for a month you would... lose your sanity. it's really- it's a fact that it's so messed up and here Kurds are trying survive from one day to another to get the basic ends meet, because it is close to impossible to train one's own children, support own children so that they would become big decision makers and important people like doctors on so on, engineers and so on, because that livelihood is what it is, the childrens' status is what it is, all affect*

⁴¹³ Barzoo, Eliassi, *Contesting Kurdish identities in Sweden: quest for belonging among Middle Eastern Youth*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, 62.

⁴¹⁴ Eide, Elisabeth, *Strategic Essentialism and Ethnification: A hand in Glove?*, *Nordicom Review* Vol. 31, 2010, 63-78.

it.”

The refugee background as a categorization tool is linked to Kurdish identity and the historical narratives of Kurdish identity. In the extract above the respondent engages in data generating occasion,⁴¹⁵ referring directly to the interviewer in locating himself within the Finnish society as a son from a refugee family with a different status than “native” Finns have. In addition to being related to the historical narrative of dispersion, the refugee status categorization also functions to place the group within Finland as foreigners and as socioeconomically disadvantaged group.

To conclude, construction of pan-Kurdish diasporic identity is accommodated by the active diaspora members with frequent cultural and political associations and is shaped by interaction with the Finnish society. Categorizing is determined by the majority-minority relationship within Finnish society and has ethno-cultural tendency. The minority status of the Kurdish group affects the diaspora members to essentializing the Kurdish identity to obtain recognition which can be seen in emphasizing relevance and impact of events in different parts of Kurdistan in being a pan-Kurdish issue. By emphasizing activity as Kurds in Finnish society the respondents also expressed their belonging to Finnish citizenship, which highlights their multipositionality. The next section will move on to discuss how politicized nature of diasporic Kurdish identity and its effects on social boundary construction and diaspora group formation.

5.4. Ideologies and social boundaries

The respondents referred to belonging to a stateless entity as the source of politicization of the Kurdish affairs in Finland. The stateless status means that Kurds have unrecognized status as an entity in the international system, but it is also a social question in that they have subordinated cultural, political and economic status within the host society.⁴¹⁶ This lack of recognition and citizenship is at the heart of the Kurdish conflict, in that the core conflict has been unwillingness by the nation states that divide Kurdistan to recognize a sovereign Kurdish state, or historically even the existence of Kurdish identity. The Kurdish identity is thus politicized through claims for recognition that is contested by the nation states in the Middle-East.⁴¹⁷ Different diaspora groups can have differing relation and interests to the

⁴¹⁵ Baker, 1997, 132.

⁴¹⁶ Barzoo, 2013, 53-54.

⁴¹⁷ Eliassi, 2013, 30.

conflict depending on their political affiliations.⁴¹⁸

The political nature of the Kurdish identity was reflected by respondents during the interviews:

Respondent: *"And all those people who have even small interest towards the Kurdish issue. And the Kurdish issue itself is somehow politicized."*

Interviewer: *"In what way?"*

Respondent: *"In a way, it's because Kurdistan is not ready, it's incomplete and because it is that way, it's easy to attack against as we have seen. And like if you look that during 90's the news broadcasted that Turkey attacked to Kurdistan, today we see that Turkey is attacking Kurdistan. So it is still incomplete, people suffer, so it is a necessity for people to reach it, to build a state through politics, to create a nation with symbols, and it shows here as well."*

Among the respondents to this study seven out of the nine respondents described the Kurdish community in Finland as "divided" in terms of political orientation and politicization of associations. The divisions were drawn according to ideological affiliations as well as according to linguistic and geographic basis of communities. Based on the analysis on membership categorization devices two diaspora groups could be distinguished: *Apoists* who followed the PKK-founders Abdullah Öcalan's ideology and *Kurdish nationalists* who expressed a pan-Kurdish nationalistic discourse. Political ideologies thus represented main out-group categories,⁴¹⁹ making it a social categorization device.⁴²⁰ The events in Kurdistan and political activities in Finland were framed by most of the respondents as pan-Kurdish occasions which makes them spaces for contest for different groups.⁴²¹

A respondent from the Apoist group defined his community through ideology:

Interviewer: *"So the first question is: Describe in your own words how is the Kurdish community in Finland?"*

Respondent: *"Kurdish community is... An ideological community, that's basic pillars are communalism and at the same time analysis of relations between people, development and activity within the society, to always be in a role to have an impact in that society wherever we are based in the world."*

⁴¹⁸ Stares and Smiths, 2007, 5.

⁴¹⁹ Baker, 142.

⁴²⁰ Ibid, 139.

⁴²¹ Horowitz, 1985, 216-217.

In the following extract the respondent is responding to a question to describe the Kurdish community in Finland:

Respondent: *"Well for them the society is... associated more with political activities, party politics, and well... it's affected by friends and environment a bit. And now that we were in the demonstration, there were no Iraqi Kurds there, although there has been from everywhere, mostly maybe PKK-supporters or supporters of the Rojava regime, and also ordinary people, but mostly the community is dispersed, if political parties have connections, then ordinary people also have, if not, then they don't."*

Political ideology and localized identity ("Iraqi Kurd") are discussed as a common feature by the respondent when he is describing the group of people who did not take part in the demonstration.⁴²² Ideology and localized identity were categorization device among five of the nine interviews. Localized identities are associated with support for a political constituency that has large support in that area of Kurdistan, so Kurds from north and west Kurdistan (Turkey and Syria) were associated with the PKK and YPG while Kurds from east and south Kurdistan (Iraq and Iran) were associated with KDP and PUK. In the second extract the respondent mentions the importance of social networks in determining political orientation among Kurds. This confirms that Wahlbecks observation from 1999 on mobilization of Kurds in Finland follows social and political constituencies is still relevant.⁴²³ Multipositionality of the respondents can be seen in their expressions of belonging to a pan-Kurdish identity as well as territorialized sub-groups of Kurdishness. Strong communalism and tight social network and it's localized nature was mentioned by another respondent:

Respondent: *"But... Yeah they are also from the same areas as well, like where I come from, I'm a Turkish Kurd and majority of Turkish Kurds in Finland are from same town as I am. Like... a lot of them. It's like a really large amount and they know each other and they have a connection, a family or... at least some friend of a friend who have some kind of relation to each other."*

The Apoist respondents associated other ideological groups with "right wing", "Barzani-affiliated", "nationalistic", "conservative" and "passive" which were contrast to the groups in-group position defined by Apoist ideology. These are the main attributes that the Apoist respondents

⁴²² Baker, 1997, 132.

⁴²³ Wahlbeck, 1999, 163.

attached to the out-group category of ideological diaspora groups.⁴²⁴ The Apoist respondents saw the PKK and YPG as the most legitimate representatives and made categorizations according to the ideology. The ideology is left-wing in that it is rooted in radical Marxism of the 1970's⁴²⁵ critique of international nation state-system,⁴²⁶ the categories reflect members' political aspirations in Kurdistan, which indicates sectarian outbidding that is part of mobilization of the Kurdish diaspora in Finland.

The members of the nationalist group associated those affiliated with Kurdish party politics as "not well integrated" and "sectarian". This out-group category was defined by the type of political activity practiced by supporters of Kurdish parties in Finland, some of which were seen as illegitimate in the Finnish context. The Kurdish nationalist group used strategic essentialism in mobilizing and representing the Kurdish diaspora through nationalist perspective despite political differences among the Kurds.⁴²⁷ The political parties were associated with Kurdish sectarianism, which is in contrast to pan-Kurdish diasporic identity, as they contest representation Kurdish community within the majority-minority system.

Because of politicized nature of Kurdish diasporic identity, different associations not necessarily focusing solely political activities, were associated with different diaspora groups that represented different Kurdish political constituencies. Four of the respondents stated that there exists a degree of social segregation between diaspora groups because of political reasons, but also due to language barriers.

In the following extract the respondent talks about political nature of Kurdish associations in Finland:

Respondent: *"Well for example when representatives of Kurdish political parties establish their own party association, they include the party's interests. They are not open to everyone. And the biggest challenge that we have in Finland is that, like since I came to Finland as seven to eight years old and seen this for my whole life, I've seen that Kurds don't have nonaligned associations. It's always somehow political. If not officially, then unofficially and it has been very frustrating to*

⁴²⁴ Baker, 1997, 142.

⁴²⁵ Özcan, 2005, 86-87.

⁴²⁶ Ali B., *Erdoding the State in Rojava*, Theory & Event, Supplement Baltimore Vol. 19, Issue 1, 2016, 1.

⁴²⁷ Barzoo, 2013, 62.

see. I have tried to effect the situation, but a million times I have been labelled as political.”

In this extract the respondent who identifies himself as a Turkish Kurd, making a distinction by using first and third person:

Interviewer: *”Then I would like to ask about community or association activities, so what kind of associations do Kurds have in Finland?”*

Respondent: *”Well quite many. In my understanding there are at least 70 official registered associations...” “...but most of them- those associations are either established by Iranian or Iraqi Kurds. We only- or Turkish Kurds- only have two associations.”*

The respondent described social stigma associated with being involved with Kurds from other political constituencies:

Respondent: *”...so if for example I go and do something with him, as an individual, I would be blamed as a traitor ^laughs^ it’s not easy to work here you know, it’s not easy. Straight away I am stigmatized ^laughs^.*

Interviewer: *”So is there among the communities some kind of barrier to co-operate?”*

Respondent: *”Yes there are. For example those who we have good relations are towards supporters of leftist political parties, even though they would be Iranian Kurd, Syrian Kurd or Iraqi Kurd.”*

Although Kurdish political parties are associated with certain parts of Kurdistan, social division is framed by the respondent as a political and ideological issue. The categorization device of geographic and cultural background of other Kurds is thus entangled with political connotations. Social stigma that was associated with cooperation with members of other groups indicates process of outbidding and group competition which will be discussed in the following section.

5.5. Outbidding

Stateless status of Kurds and lack of unifying political constituency in Kurdistan leads to competing political visions, which all have a claim on the Kurdish identity. This leads to politicization of the Kurdish diaspora groups and a process of outbidding, where communal values and group identity are reinforced⁴²⁸ and comparison system where juxtapositions between the diaspora groups is constructed

⁴²⁸ Rabushka, Kenneth, 1972, 31-32.

that results into the two groups having an antagonistic position to each other.⁴²⁹ The outbidding among the Kurdish diaspora in Finland takes place mainly between the two diaspora groups (“Apoists” and “nationalists”) centered around two associations: the Kurdish Federation (Kurdiliitto), which attempts to work as an umbrella for Kurdish associations in Finland that is not politically affiliated, and the Kurdish Cultural Centre of Finland (Suomen kurdien kulttuurikeskus) which leans ideologically towards the PKK.

In this extract a Kurd from northern Kurdistan shares his thoughts about the Kurdish Federation:

Respondent: *”When over 70 associations in this country are officially registered and 23 or 24 are involved in this (Kurdish Federation), then how can we call it a union? I think it is not ethical to go and establish a union and register it when most are not involved. And precisely because of alleged political impartiality many don’t want to get involved. There’s no Turkish Kurdish associations involved, or there are two, but no Turkish Kurds.*

Interviewer: *”So there is this political question-”*

Respondent :*”Yes it is and all of these unions are supported by Barzani in Europe. And that, at least here in Finland for example Turkish Kurdish associations are not going to be involved.*

The respondent juxtaposes Iraqi Kurds and supporters of Barzani as he continues to discuss about the Kurdish political parties in Finland, expressing dichotomous aspects of the ideologies and creating a antagonistic comparative pairing, indicating a competitive setting between the diaspora groups.⁴³⁰ Salience of Kurdish identity makes political activities as sites of outbidding for the diaspora groups.⁴³¹ Demonstrations against Turkish operations in Afrin during the time of this study were organized by the the Apoist group, which express their ideological orientation with symbols and emblems related to the movement such as flags that carry pictures of Abdullah Öcalan, the YPG party symbols, by playing PKK-related anthems and songs during demonstrations and chanting slogans of the movement. This is a way of claiming the political space and presenting the political movement as the representative of the Kurdish movement for the Finnish public.⁴³² It is also an example how the core members of the diaspora groups use strategic essentialism to gain recognition for their group as the

429 Horowitz, 1985, 216-217.

430 Ibid.

431 Rabushka, Kenneth, 1972, 82.

432 Horowitz, 1985, 216-217.

representative of the Kurdish minority within the Finnish society.⁴³³ As in Sweden,⁴³⁴ the Finnish system allocates minority groups to ethnic categories, for example with policies that support teaching of Kurdish language and maintenance of Kurdish culture. The outbidding setting is indicated by how the respondents frame their own group as containing Kurds from different locations, while associating the other with certain territorialized sub-group of Kurds. Lobbying requires being more involved within the Finnish political system and there the diaspora members who are involved also represent the minority community in Finland for the decision makers, which makes it a site of outbidding.

Here the respondent expresses raising awareness among the Finnish public and decision makers as one of the goals for their mobilization:

Respondent: *"For us our most important task is to bring awareness. So information is our main priority and what we mean by that is that we announce what is happening in the area and who are participating. Then we leave the decision for citizens to make the conclusions and also to offer solutions to influence the issue, everyone on their own part, but of course so that we can wake the state from it's sleep and that we have since the beginning of this war, so since Turkey attacked, from the early days been in contact with politicians, the parliament, the parties on this matter."*

Another respondent discussed about Kurdish diasporas political activities in Finland overall:

Respondent: *"The demonstrations for example in squares and organizing seminars are a way of showing that the will among the Kurds is strong and that we want to influence. Although having an impact is very challenging, especially through dialogue, but here it is possible for example that we have people in the political field who can bring the Kurdish issues to the political decision makers, like I myself met with ___ this autumn and we talked about the Kurdish question and there is this dialogue where we are having this conversation that he knows what it is about and at the same time they ask from the people involved, that it's not from like a book that is telling this, but this is face-to-face real thing how we Kurds operate in Europe."*

The conflict in Kurdistan was framed as a pan-Kurdish issue, which unites Kurds from all constituencies, highlighting the pan-Kurdish identity. Outbidding takes place in political activities between the diaspora groups that attempt to claim the events with their activities. In the following extract the respondent who can be described as an active member, answers a question about Kurdish

⁴³³ Eliassi, 2013, 30.

⁴³⁴ Baser, 2016, 189.

political parties' activities in Finland, indicating the pan-Kurdish discourse constructed by the core diaspora:

Respondent: *"We don't have any bigger differences, but we are together in different groups, but during protests we go all together when something happens in some area in Kurdistan, everyone participates. And we think that if something difficult happens, we disagree, but we still maintain our will to further Kurdish rights, so we are not so divided, but all together."*

Another site of outbidding is the Kurdish community itself in Finland, as diaspora groups attempt to gain support and mobilize them. Celebration of Newroz, or "the Kurdish New Year" has been an important way of maintaining the Kurdish culture in Finland, but it has also become an important political event as different Kurdish political constituencies organize their own Newroz celebrations.⁴³⁵ As a major communal gathering, Newroz celebrations are occasions to maintain group identity, but it is also a stage for outbidding for the diaspora groups and a way of gathering support from the Kurdish community.

In the following extract the respondent talks how the Kurdish Federation attempts to appeal to Kurds from Turkey:

Interviewer: *"So what about these Newroz-celebrations? Do all the Kurds, including Iraqi Kurds gather during them?"*

Respondent: *"Yeah well... If Iraqi Kurd would organize it, one would see a lot of Iraqi Kurds, but if it would be organized by Turkish Kurds there would be people from elsewhere as well. The Kurdish Federation has attempted to organize Newroz in a way to bring the kind of artists who also Turkish Kurds know and like ^laughs^."*

Interviewer: *"So there is an attempt to bring all the communities together?"*

Respondent: *"There's certainly an endeavor!"*

Apoist respondent discussed about reaching out to Kurdish communities in Finland, indicating efforts to gather support from whole Kurdish community in Finland:

Interviewer: *"So you described these associations more as communities, so are all Kurds part of this community?"*

Respondent: *"Well if you mean by "all" like each Kurd who is in this soil, then this is not the case. And of course our activities are also limited, we can't reach all locations, all the people. Of course*

⁴³⁵ Wahlbeck, 2012, 52.

we still aim to reach all the people and tell them about us...”

I would argue that outbidding happens because of salience of Kurdish identity,⁴³⁶ which is a result of statelessness and politicization of Kurdish identity in the country of origin and also majority-minority group interaction that defines mobilization process in Finland as diaspora groups bid to represent Kurdish interests to the state and public. Contrary to Sweden where the Kurdish diaspora have formed a single body that consists of networks and organizations that work to lobby the Swedish decision makers and works as representative of the Kurdish communities,⁴³⁷ the Kurdish community in Finland remains politically divided to competing groups. The Kurdish diasporic identity in Sweden has been constructed around language and culture with the support from the state from 1970's onwards, which has decreased the impact of transnational movements that have constructed diasporas around political ideologies in Germany.⁴³⁸ Finland falls between these two cases in that while the Finnish policy does allocate diasporas to pan-ethnic entities with public education of Kurdish language and support for cultural practices, the Kurdish political parties have had a strong presence since the 1990's. There has thus emerged competing diasporas that mobilize around Kurdishness in ethnicized form and around ideology and there exists no consensus between these groups on how the Kurdish community should be represented in Finnish society and what are its common interests.

5.6. Political opportunity structures

As part of categorizing the data, a thematic category that emerged were political opportunity structures. It was undermined by what has been discussed above on fluid identity, where the respondents expressed inclusion to a Kurdish group while at the same time being part of the Finnish society as Finnish citizens. As actors, they react to events in Kurdistan with political activities and sought to further their interest as active.⁴³⁹ The discussion reflects on social boundaries that are drawn by the diaspora as it indicates how the diaspora interacts with the host society. All of the participants saw that the Finnish legislative environment, which allows freedom of assembly, freedom of speech and freedom of association, as enabling the Kurdish community to organize activities and allow political participation in different ways. The Finnish legal environment was associated with attributes

⁴³⁶ Rabushka, Shepsle, 1972, 82.

⁴³⁷ Baser, 2016, 185.

⁴³⁸ Ibid, 202.

⁴³⁹ Shain & Barth, 2003, 453-454.

of "openness", "freedom of expression", "freedom of assembly" and "basic rights". Norms of the Finnish society were identified as to be rooted in "human rights", as well as "the rights of women".

In a similar way as in Sweden,⁴⁴⁰ the boundaries that were constructed did not exclude belonging to Kurdishness and Finnish citizenship. Finnish citizenship allowed the respondents to be also active in diasporic activities such as organizing demonstrations or spreading information about the Kurdish issue in their homeland among the Finnish public. In these cases the in-group position of Kurdish and Finnish citizen complement each other, as the respondents' use of strategic essentialism ties them to the Finnish multicultural system because they utilize their membership to Finnish citizenship and membership to of the Kurdish minority group in participating in Finnish society as actors. All of the participants expressed their willingness to organize political activities in accordance to laws and norms that they saw as related to Finland. As such, the Kurdish diaspora in Finland seems to have internalized perception of Finnish values in a similar way as the Kurdish diaspora in Sweden,⁴⁴¹ where internalization of such concepts were seen also as contributing into Kurdish culture in general. This also means that compliance within these norms and regulations were seen the legitimate way of mobilization.

In regards to political and other activities and Finnish political environment, the response was more varied and mixed. On the other hand Finnish society was associated with "inclusion" in that the political system was seen as allowing and even in some cases, encouraging participation in the society, "supportive" in that Finland was seen as supporting Kurds to maintain their culture and language and "diverse" in that the Finnish society is seen as open to different kinds of people and groups. At the same time respondents associated Finland with "remoteness" as of meaning that Finland is geographically, which separates the Kurds in Finland from other communities in Europe. Finnish foreign relations with Turkey and Iran in particular "restrained" in that the decision makers in Finland do not condemn what the respondents saw as violations against Kurdish rights in their homeland. A core member of the diaspora who has been involved with discussions about the Kurdish situation in the Middle-East with Finnish decision makers:

Respondent: *"... I have also been involved with politics and have contacts to many directions, I observe that sometimes it's even raised up that foreign policy is wanted to... er... it's something that*

⁴⁴⁰ Baser, 2016, 170.

⁴⁴¹ Ibid, 187.

is not commented. That even though there is solidarity, people want peace, support human rights, stark statements, or even soft statements are not made and this has certainly been noted.”

Finnish foreign policy was seen as hard-to reach through lobbying and was surrounded by restriction even by core diaspora members who were active inside Finnish politics. As such, it can be regarded as a limiting factor for political opportunity structures for the Kurdish diaspora in Finland. Turkey's attack to Afrin and some associated it as being "treacherous", as those participants part of the Apoist diaspora group in Finland raised the issues of Finnish arms deals with Turkey⁴⁴² which made Finnish state close to being a conflict party, especially among the Apoist respondents. Reflecting on Vetrovec's triadic relationship,⁴⁴³ it can be said Finnish states relations with Turkey and Iran affects how some of the diaspora members position themselves with regards to the Finnish state.

Furthermore Turkey's relation with the EU and Finland was seen by the same constituency as a factor that gave Turkey more space to influence in Finland and was also seen as having an effect on demonstrations in Turkey. After discussing about Finland and other countries opportunities to restrict Turkish influence in their countries, the respondent raises the fear of Turkish influence in Finland during protests:

"...to say about Kurds in Finland... many have family there in the homeland and they want to visit them from time to time, but if they are active... and the state will anyway know who are active, who are doing things here, who are part of the movement... There are a lot of these Turkish agents who take pictures of us in demonstrations, on the streets and in some occasions and they are sent forward continuously so many have a fear that the Turkish state sees them somewhere. I wouldn't say that it would be most of us, but it's been growing lately. Even before there was a concern about Turkey threatening people that "if you go to demonstrations, we will detain you". Of course it brings sort of... panic. And at the same time Turkey is threatening Europe, and even Finland among other countries."

This fear of Turkish influence was coupled by concern over EU's and Finland's labeling of the PKK as a terrorist organization and it's implications on the politically active Kurds who support the ideology in Finland. This "terrorist frame" has been discussed by Toivanen in her study on political

⁴⁴² Saferglobe, Finnish Arms Control Report, 2016. <https://saferglobe.fi/armsreport/> Last Visited: 5.4.2018.

⁴⁴³ Vetrovec, 1999, 449.

activism among Kurdish youth where she observed that the young Kurdish activists saw that EU's and Finland's policy was guided by their relations with Turkey, which led the Kurdish activists position themselves to politics between states.⁴⁴⁴ In the same way the respondents in my study saw that the relations between Finland and Turkey emerged as a factor which was perceived influencing diasporas' capability to act in Finland, especially among the Apoist respondents. One of the Apoist respondents discussed about Finnish authorities restrictions during demonstrations:

Respondent: "... then refer to some treaty blah blah and the police officer should know that no treaty can go above the law, but the law has to first realize within the frame of the law... like today as well there's the demonstration, we can't use any PA-system so that none of the Embassies will be disrupted. Well too bad, why aren't our rights taken to account, here our rights are being trampled!"

When comparing Apoist and nationalist respondents' position to the Finnish state, the Apoists expressed a more antagonistic attributes to the Finnish state as they emphasized it's relations with Turkey and role in the conflict, while the nationalist respondents took either a neutral stance or emphasized Finnish states limited capacity in international affairs. This difference in position reflected on standards of behavior,⁴⁴⁵ which will be discussed below on chapter about ways of mobilization. The respondent saw that relations between states guided the behavior of the Finnish authorities, which then restricted how the demonstrators could act during the demonstration. Other respondents referred to weakness of Finland in the international sphere as well as EU's refugee deal with Turkey when they raised up Finland's international status. As such international relations as well as Finnish states international interests with states involved in the Kurdish conflict can be considered as a factor that limits the diasporas political opportunities. I will now move on to discuss the role of media in the mobilization process.

5.7. Media and mobilization

Modern communication technology plays a major role in mobilization of the Kurdish diaspora in Finland. Following on what was happening in Kurdistan through media as well as other means such as through social networks was mentioned in most interviews as a way of maintaining Kurdish identity. One of the respondents described how his community follows the Kurdish media intensely:

⁴⁴⁴ Toivanen, 2016, 96-97.

⁴⁴⁵ Barth, 1969, 34.

”In Finland the Kurdish community is very informed and is constantly following (The media). If you would go to any home of members this school of thought (Referring to Apoists) you couldn’t see anything else from their televisions than what is happening there (in Afrin) and what are they communicating with us. Luckily we get instant information through technology, which is not distorted, someone’s opinion, but direct transmission by people who are living there who are telling about what is the situation, what they need and so on. And peoples hearts beat to the rhythm of events that are happening there.”

The respondent links following the events directly to the sense of belonging as well as ideological affiliation. The respondents’ description of his community’s relation to media represents an example of Long-Distance identification, where the media connects people from different geographic areas and works as a platform for construction of shared identity through narratives that are perceived as common and shared experiences.⁴⁴⁶ Media and communications technology was also mentioned as a platform that brings together different parts of the Kurdish community in Finland as social media, particularly Facebook, provides a forum for Kurds from different parts of Finland to engage in discussions and for organizing events and other activities. In this way technology and social media plays a key role as a tool and platform for the Kurdish diaspora to construct and maintain their identity and also to mobilize support.

In Keles’ study on media consumption and it's effect of Kurdish and Turkish diasporas, he found that the Internet plays a crucial role in diaspora members lives as it brings not only the relatives and family members of diaspora members closer to them, but it also connects them directly to organizations working there and acts as an important source of information.⁴⁴⁷ This means that technology brings the events and relations closer the individual and enables constant observation and interaction with the homeland. In the case of diasporas, this means that technology can connect the diaspora members to the conflict in the country of origin.

Social media was mentioned by respondents being the main way of reaching out to the Kurdish community in Finland:

Respondent: *”Well today social media is the regular channel, especially Facebook, so there for example the Kurdish Federation has it's own page which has around 6000 followers and we have a*

⁴⁴⁶ Keles, 2016, 150.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid, 122.

group called "Kurds of Finland" that is also under Kurdish Federation's administration, there are around 3000 members, both Kurds and Finns and there they discuss about topics, if there is an event, we comment, speak, share, spread, it spreads quite quickly from there..."

Another respondent discussed about convenience of modern communications technology:

Interviewer: *"So you mentioned technology in your communications, is it the primary tool for reaching out to people and getting them involved in the activities?"*

Respondent: *"Well partly, but as I said this technology gets us information for example about the situation in Afrin, we don't have any other methods, that's fine, but we have other tools as well which can be anything. A fast way is to gather together and if we want to transmit a message then we will use technology to send it and distances here are not that we can go to each door so yeah technology has a central role, but it's not the only way."*

Social media is an important space for outbidding between different diaspora groups, which is central for mobilizing the Kurdish diaspora, as it is a space where diaspora groups are able to reach and interact with Kurds from different parts of Finland while also having a connection to transnational Kurdish communities present in the cyberspace as well as in Kurdistan. The first extract where the respondent claims that certain pages and groups are considered to be "under the Kurdish Federation" would suggest that Kurdish diaspora groups in Finland create cyber communities,⁴⁴⁸ but studying how outbidding takes place there would require further research.

5.8. Conflict diffusion

All of the respondents discussed how the events and the conflict in Kurdistan has direct effects to the Kurdish community in Finland. Conflict diffusion can be said to be taking place within the Kurdish diaspora in Finland in discursive level, but as there are frequent contacts between Turks and Kurds, the conflict is not transported in social level as social segregation.⁴⁴⁹ This could be partly as a result of non-existent opposition group, which would construct inter-group antagonism.⁴⁵⁰ One of the respondents discussed how Finland as a conflict party:

"...Of course now with the situation regarding Afrin, Finland as a state is also a conflict party on the

⁴⁴⁸ Brinkerhoff, Jennifer, *Digital Diasporas: Identity and Transnational engagement*, Cambridge University press, 2009, 90-93.

⁴⁴⁹ Feron, 2013, 364-365.

⁴⁵⁰ Baser, 2014.

side of Turkey, according to us because they stay silent over this issue and as a big statement for Turkey, they sell arms and know that these arms are used in Northern-Syria, and then of course they bear the responsibility as a state in the war in Afrin.”

At the same time however, the respondent emphasized his belonging to Finnish citizenship when he was discussing about the Finnish states relations with states that are involved in the Kurdish conflict: Respondent: *”Think about if there would be a better deal to be made, what else could we do? If we don’t hold on to human values, human lives are neither going to be appreciated and also the refugee policies here in Finland tell something about how these things go hand-in-hand, individual cases but these are all connected together and form this environment where human rights have no place in and which I think personally as a Finnish citizen, that human rights should be the number one thing on which we should start to think on how to build relationships with other states.*

Even though the respondent showed resentment towards the Finnish foreign policy and actions of the Finnish state, he also emphasized that he is committed to what he perceived as norms within the Finnish society in attempting to affect the situation in Afrin. This indicates that the open opportunity structure as a system that is open to lobbying along with other forms of political activities channels this resentment to the civil society.⁴⁵¹

In this extract the respondent discusses about relations of the Kurdish community to other minority groups in Finland:

Interviewer: *”With what kind of different organizations and institutions can Kurds cooperate in Finland?”*

Respondent: *”It depends of which Kurds you mean. For example PKK would under no circumstances cooperate with Turks, which I think is wrong since there are a lot of Turks who are also anti-Erdogan.” ... ”Our relations with other minorities are improving, except with the Arabs because of current political situation, although the Iraqi Kurds do like to suck up to the Arabs sometimes ^laughs^.”*

In the following extract the respondent expressed a degree of antagonism towards the Turks in Finland:

Respondent: *”... well we don’t have any relations to Turks at all, at least personally I don’t have any relations with the Turks and... of course there are those leftist Turks, but even them are in a way that*

⁴⁵¹ Baser, 2016, 186.

they are leftist only for themselves. For example raising the topic of Kurds, they are nationalistic in a way... not bluntly, but by keeping a distance to Kurds and other ethnic groups, but especially Kurds and that's why their leftism is questionable, like what kind of leftism is it that you only want rights, democracy, equality for yourself and not for others? In Finland there are a couple of persons who sometimes come to our events, but there aren't many."

Two of the respondents, both of who represent the Apoist diaspora group, constructed a juxtaposition between the Kurds and the Finnish state indicating conflict diffusion on a discursive level.⁴⁵² The respondents who expressed antagonism towards the Finnish state identified themselves belonging to the Apoist group, but contrary to diaspora groups associated with the same ideology in Germany,⁴⁵³ the respondents did not express hostility towards integration to the Finnish society. At the same time, contrary to the case of Sweden,⁴⁵⁴ there is no active social segregation towards Turks in Finland. Thus, while the conflict discourse is constructed against the Finnish states' policies, it is channeled through the civil society and political system because of opportunity structures available for the diaspora to cooperate with civil society and political actors. As the diaspora members have internalized their perception of how to operate in Finland, which includes non-violence and respecting human rights, they act accordingly to gain legitimacy from the public. Integration to the Finnish system makes public legitimacy important for the diaspora groups. In addition, Kurds in Finland do not have vulnerable status in the same way as the PKK-affiliated diaspora members have for example in Germany in terms of cultural and political rights,⁴⁵⁵ which also reduces hostility towards the host state.

5.9. Ways of mobilization

Contrary to what Wahlbeck has stated,⁴⁵⁶ the respondents stated helping arriving Kurdish refugees as a task for the diaspora in addition to their cultural and political activities. This might be because of increasing number of refugees, especially in 2015, arriving to Finland and public sectors inability to

⁴⁵² Horowitz, 1985, 216-217.

Feron, 2013, 364-365.

⁴⁵³ Ibid, 206.

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid, 185.

⁴⁵⁵ Ibid, 230.

⁴⁵⁶ Wahlbeck, 2012, 51.

properly handle the needs of the arrivals,⁴⁵⁷ to which the civil society, including diaspora organizations reacted. In the following extract the respondent who is a Kurdish migrant from Syria who has her own organization that supports asylum seekers and refugees in Finland describes connections between refugee status and mobilization in Finland:

Respondent: *”So for example these families which arrived in 2015, half of their families are from Syria, half here in Finland, but even if the whole family would be here, other contacts would still be Syria like neighbors, relatives and everyone, so if something would happen there, it would be certain that it would have an impact on their lives here and because of that they want to take part in demonstrations because their family is there. And our organization that support immigrants, we might need to help them to know about these events where they can show their solidarity and support them.”*

The in-group position as a refugee is thus directly linked by the respondent to belonging, which is one of the factors for mobilization, as was established above. Respondents mentioned supporting arriving Kurdish asylum seekers and refugees to settle in Finland by forming a support network for them as part of their communal activities. The status as refugees in the way the Kurdish diaspora in Finland mobilize as a response to the refugee issue and can be argued to affect their position as advocates of refugee rights. The diaspora networks thus work as interest groups⁴⁵⁸ for Kurdish refugees in furthering refugee rights in the society as well as helping them in settling in the country.

Ways of political mobilization that were mentioned in the interviews were remittances, demonstrations, advocacy, lobbying, participating in Finnish politics, helping with integration of Kurdish asylum seekers and refugees, assisting with meetings between homeland Kurdish notables and Finnish decision makers, and volunteering in Kurdistan. The Apoist and nationalist groups adopted different strategies of mobilization. Respondents from both of these groups positioned themselves within the Finnish society and transnational Kurdish movement, but in different ways.

A respondent active in the Apoist diaspora group explains how decision about organizing demonstrations:

⁴⁵⁷ Nyrhinen, Marja, Räsänen, Sirpa, Juurakko-Vesikko, Nina, Väyrynen, Valtteri, *52 Safety and health security of asylum seekers in emergency housing, case Finland and Tampere*, Injury Prevention Vol. 22, Issue A20-A21, 2016.

⁴⁵⁸ Bauböck, 2010, 316.

Respondent: *"We know a lot about each other. We might know someone from every country and... We do a lot of cooperation and plus if there is a decision about a demonstration, like "now fourth day of March there's a demonstration in everywhere" we react to that, because it is a shared decision."*

In this extract the respondent describes how the Apoists organize synchronized communication to have demonstrations in different countries. As was established above, modern communications technology and social networks were used to spread information to mobilize communities in different localities. The final decisions on participation and how the demonstrations or other activities were to be made by the community in Finland. The process follows Adamsons' mechanism of transnational mobilization,⁴⁵⁹ as the diaspora community in Finland is linked to the transnational movement and configure the communications according to the local context. The Apoist diaspora group in Finland engages in the Finnish civil society by cooperating with different actors including politicians and establish solidarity networks to help in advocacy work. The Apoist respondents, however, presented a reluctance in participating party politics. An extract of an interview with a respondent:

Respondent: *"But now I'm not talking about other parties, because other- what we call "classic party politics", they are just that they probably have some kind of member cards and an organization, but we are a thing of our own, we don't have that kind of way of doing things."*

Another respondent talked about disinterest in the Finnish party politics among her community:

Respondent: *"Well... There aren't many Kurds who are in politics, which tells just about that some things don't attract them to it. Erm... It's not maybe an interesting place to be as an activist in a political party, because the subjects they discuss about and work on are kind of simple things. I mean for us! Of course for Finland they are probably big things, but at least for me.... I don't want to be in these parties because it would be so boring to be there and talk about something like where to throw the trash."*

The Apoist diaspora group thus positions itself within the Finnish society, but at the same time outside the conventional political participation. In the extracts, exclusion from Finnish party politics was described in terms of ideology and relevance by the respondents. The Finnish politics outside of issues concerning Kurds, is positioned outside to interests and goals of the diaspora community. Thus, in terms of membership boundary construction, the Apoist group constructs a boundary in it's

⁴⁵⁹ Adamson, 2013, 67-70.

mobilization activities in that participating to the Finnish political system by becoming a member of a political party in Finland is not an activity that is considered as part of it's membership, although at the same time it's members still emphasize the importance of cooperating with different Finnish civil society actors and one, as mentioned above, also expressed the importance of Finnish citizenship in public advocacy work. This is another indication of multipositionality that the Kurdish diaspora members have with regards to belonging to Finnish citizenship and to the diaspora. The group adopts a strategy of participating in the larger system as minority, but also attempt to create new ways of acting⁴⁶⁰ by working as part of a transnational movement. The forms of mobilization that the Apoist group members mentioned during the interviews in addition to demonstrations were lobbying Finnish politicians, arranging meetings between Finnish decision makers and visiting notables from the Rojava or PKK movement, such as Salih Muslim,⁴⁶¹ advocacy, remittances and volunteering in Rojava.

This boundary construction mechanism reflects on a distinction of what is considered "Kurdish politics" and "Finnish politics", which emerged in 4 of the 9 interviews. This distinction concerns content of politics, but also mobilization. The nationalist respondents discussed how Kurdish political parties operated in a distinct way:

Interviewer: *"Well umm... about these different political communities in Finland: What kind of differences are there in way of operation?"*

Respondent: *"They work in Finland as they would in their home country, so there are differences and they are considerable differences because they work in the same mentality here as they have worked there, which does not really fit into this society and environment. So yeah, there are differences."*

Another respondent discussed about his frustration over Kurdish party politics in Finland:

Respondent: *"...Well it means that we begin to focus on our history, you know, more in the Kurdish political world and that internal politics, which has it's finger here among us in Finland. I think its a bad thing, we don't concentrate on the Finnish society, but use our capacity to that political- you know, lingering."*

⁴⁶⁰ Barth, 1969, 32.

⁴⁶¹ Haikala, Topias, *Syyrialainen kurdijohtaja Salih Muslim: Radikaali Islam katoaa Lähi-idästä*, Kirkko ja Kaupunki, 17.5.2017.

Later the same respondent expressed his disapproval about a protest which took place in a public hearing of the Finnish parliament, where a group of protesters waved a flag of captured PKK-leader Abdullah Öcalan and YPG's party symbol and shouted slogans of the movement⁴⁶²:

Respondent: *"I mean in general: Why the do you to the Finnish parliament and shout with a Kurdish flag in your hand, it's a holy place first of all! What can Orpo or Niinisalo or whatever, what can they do about it for you to go shouting there?"*

In this discourse, the respondents saw that Kurdish political parties were positioned as actors that are not legitimate part of the Finnish society and were considered as an import from Kurdistan to Finland. In this discourse on mobilization, instead of emphasizing transnational networks, the participants instead emphasized working through the Finnish society, including through political parties, to further their interests towards their homeland. The other ways of mobilization included lobbying of Finnish decision makers, demonstrations, assisting Kurdish refugees and advocacy. It has been established in prior research that political opportunity structures in the host state shape the diasporas way of mobilization, where states that more open to participation and access to political participation channels the activities into the political system.⁴⁶³

The fact that the discourse that was presented by the respondents involved in political system in Finland would suggest that diaspora members who are involved within the political system of the host country prefer different strategies of mobilization compared to diaspora members more involved with transnational political movements contrary to Sheffers claim that stateless diasporas are prone to mobilize through channels from the host state.⁴⁶⁴ In the case of Kurdish diaspora in Finland, in both discourses on mobilization the activities that are implemented are similar, though strategies and preferences differ, in both discourses the aim is to work as part of the Finnish civil society. This could be explained with diasporas' tendency to adopt models of operation when they cooperate with different actors.⁴⁶⁵ Compared to Sweden where the Kurdish diaspora groups are more unified

⁴⁶² Kohelmainen, Tommi, Heima, Timo-Pekka, *Harvinainen tilanne eduskunnassa, mielenilmaus keskeytti kyselytunnin hetkeksi*, Yle, 8.2.2018.

⁴⁶³ Soysal, Yasemin, *Limits of Citizenship: Migrants and Postnational Membership in Europe*, The University of Chicago Press, 1994.
Giugni and Passy, 2004, 104.

⁴⁶⁴ Sheffer, 2013, 85-86.

⁴⁶⁵ Emmanuelsson, 2005.

regarding representation of the Kurdish community for the state and the public,⁴⁶⁶ it is contested in Finland because of competition between diaspora groups.

Respondents who were not members or affiliates of Kurdish political parties, but involved in Finnish parties expressed a specific discourse on characteristics of the Kurdish community in Finland:

Respondent: *"I can say that when we speak about integration, none of the other immigrant groups from the Middle-East beats the Kurds! We are involved in the society, I can get a hold of your culture and what should be noted is that we are the people who establishes the most businesses in Finland."*

Another respondent on answering a question on "what kind of people are Kurds in Finland":

Respondent: *"But I think in general if you take a look at Kurds, they have managed quite well in this country, they have integrated quite well mostly. There are efforts to learn the language, to adapt to this society... Many have studied in Universities and higher education, in vocational school, built their lives here established a family"... "And then entrepreneurship is very strong among the Kurds, especially in the restaurant business..." "but there are businesses in other sectors as well..." "...around 80% are under forty years old, so when we look a bit on statistics, we can see that around 5% are in retirement age, or even less."*

The respondents chose to discuss about the Kurdish population in Finland in economic terms. The respondents' rhetoric aims to argue that Kurds are economically contributing immigrant group, comparing them to other immigrants groups, as a well-integrated immigrant population in Finland. In the second extract the respondents uses statistics to demonstrate Kurds' contribution and potential to Finnish economy and society. The extracts follow a public discourse on immigration policy, where successful immigration to Finnish society means employment as well as social inclusion of migrants.⁴⁶⁷ This could be as a result of internalizing the discourse as them involved in public affairs and it could also be directed by the interview setting, where a Finnish student interviews a member of the Kurdish community, who then takes the position as a public representatives of the Kurdish community as they sought to gain legitimacy from the majority Finnish public. These core members adopted the role of representative within the system with majority-minority interaction to participate

⁴⁶⁶ Baser, 2016,

⁴⁶⁷ Keskinen, Suvi, *From Welfare Nationalism to Welfare Chauvinism: Economic Rhetoric, the economic rhetoric the welfare state and changing asylum policies in Finland*, Critical Social Policy Vol. 36, Issue 3, 2016, 359.

within this system.⁴⁶⁸ These respondents have different positions: as “official” representatives of the Kurdish community in Finland but also as members of Finnish political parties as well as being representatives of other public positions, which draws them to express what is considered as public interests and expectations from migrant communities in Finland. Public discourse on immigration was also used as a categorization device to compare Kurds to other migrant groups:

Interviewer: *”How does Finland as an environment affect Kurds in Finland?”*

Respondent: *”Positively. In a good way, I mean in a really healthy way we need like a change of mentality and... to get rid of the role of religion in regards to women’s position and patriarchal society. So particularly for example how girls and boys are raised, even though it has not been as patriarchal, like for example in Arab or Somali communities as we have seen, Kurdish women are much more liberal...”*

Another respondent described Kurds as the best integrated migrant group from the Middle-East:

Respondent: *”I can say that when we speak... about integration, none of the other immigrant groups from the Middle-East beats the Kurds! We are involved in the society, I can get a hold of your culture and what should be noted is that we are the people who establishes the most businesses in Finland.”*

When discussing about cooperation with other groups, organizations, or institutions there was also a difference between the diaspora groups as the Apoists referred to their ideology as a categorization device for determining their partners, while the respondents from the nationalistic group used minority status of the Kurds or refugee background as refugees as a categorization tool.

In this extract the respondent takes the ideology as the categorization tool for cooperation:

Interviewer: *”Yeah and so you mentioned these actors such as the parliament, MP’s and the state, so with what kind of actors can Kurds cooperate with?”*

Respondent: *”There’s no limit per se, but of course we have some principles on what we want to hold on to, we don’t want to compromise on human rights under any circumstances and... things that we do must not affect peoples lives... cost human lives and also we don’t want to commit acts against ecology...”* *”...as I said, democratic confederalism, which is our paradigm for the future of the Middle-East, which has partly been practiced in Rojava, in Northern-Syria, has three main pillars which we take very seriously: The first is liberty of women, the second direct democracy and the third*

⁴⁶⁸ Barth, 1969, 32.

ecology and these are taken into account in all of our decisions.”

In this extract the respondent who belongs to the nationalistic group answers the question on cooperation with different actors:

Respondent: *”In Finland maybe these different political parties are one channel through which it is possible to be involved and have an influence, when Kurds are active in different parties, it’s maybe possible to influence and then there are also different kinds of associations and organization that work both here in Finland and internationally, so through them. For example the Peace Union (Rauhanliitto), The Finnish church aid, the Red Cross, it depends on the context. We have contacts to ten different associations that work and have an impact here in Finland.”*

The difference in these position shows the difference in group discourse where the Apoists position themselves in the transnational sphere, which is reflected on their way of mobilization and categorization device for determining partners, while the nationalist group position themselves more as an actor within the Finnish society. The different positions leads to different mobilization strategies, as the Apoists work as part of a transnational movement that cooperates with local actors and the nationalistic group base themselves within the Finnish civil society.

The respondents accommodate their minority status through the lens of Finnish public discourse on immigration while participating the political system.⁴⁶⁹ These core members of the nationalist diaspora group represent themselves a public face for their community as they participate in the Finnish political system to further their interests both in Finland while also maintaining their commitment to Kurdistan.⁴⁷⁰ Adopting this position reflects on their strategy of mobilization, which is participating in the Finnish political system, as the respondents have adopted the public discourse in order to negotiate demands of their community.⁴⁷¹ Multipositionality of the diaspora members is manifested in different ways according to their group membership and discourse: the members who are positioned closer to the Finnish political system also adopt position also as public representatives who frame their actions and position through public discourse on immigration and multiculturalism, while the members involved in transnational movement emphasize their action as furthering what

⁴⁶⁹ Barth, 1969, 32.

⁴⁷⁰ Baser, 2016, 37.

⁴⁷¹ Ostegaard-Nielsen, Eva, *The Politics of Migrants’ Transnational Political Practices*, Transnational Migration: Comparative Perspectives, Princeton University, 30 June-1 July 2001, 14.

they associate as values of the Finnish state. The Finnish immigration policy supports cultural associations which further social and economic integration of immigrants to Finland,⁴⁷² which creates incentives for the Kurdish diaspora to follow the public discourse on immigration. Extreme positions are thus avoided to utilize political opportunities available in the Finnish political system.

5.9.1. Findings

As has been established by Wahlbeck⁴⁷³ and Toivanen,⁴⁷⁴ the Kurdish diaspora in Finland has organized around an identity based in experience of belonging to Kurdistan, shared sense of history as well as shared experience as refugees. While it has been noted by both researchers that the diaspora in Finland has been politically active,⁴⁷⁵ the topic of diaspora mobilization has not received its own research so far and is not well understood in the Finnish context. Furthermore, the previous research on the Kurdish diaspora in Finland has been made from the perspective of immigration studies where "diaspora" as a term has been used in singular identity group and has not delved beyond the Pan-Kurdish discourse or looked into formation of diaspora groups, or conflict diffusion among the Kurdish diaspora in Finland.

Adding on to Toivanen's finding that political activism is a way of maintaining identity for the diaspora members,⁴⁷⁶ it is also a result of psychological need to fulfill the sense of belonging and it is also a result political mobilization that is taking place in the transnational sphere. Political mobilization of Kurds in diasporas should be understood in the historical context where the Kurdish identity is highly politicized in the region of origin and where the Kurds' political agency is contested not only by nation states, but also by different Kurdish political constituencies. This background has an effect how expression of belonging takes place as politico-cultural transnationalism, as political

⁴⁷² Saukkonen, 2013, 278-279.

⁴⁷³ Wahlbeck, 1999, 109.

⁴⁷⁴ Toivanen, *The Visual Lexica of (National) Belonging and Non-Belonging in the Accounts of Young Kurds in Finland*, 192.

⁴⁷⁵ Wahlbeck, 2012, 52.

Toivanen, 2016, 90.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid, 99.

activism. Sense of belonging is heightened by media which brings events, ideologies and groups in Kurdistan closer to individual Kurds in Finland.

The respondents expressed belonging to pan-Kurdish culture, as being a Kurd distinguished them from the Finnish majority in a system that is defined by majority-minority relationship. As has been established by Toivanen and Wahlbeck, the diaspora organizations work to maintain the Kurdish culture,⁴⁷⁷ but in addition this role means that the core members of the diaspora also construct Kurdishness in Finland and are the main agents of mobilization and as part of mobilization process, constructors of social boundaries. Through organizations such as associations or regular activities, these core members are able to build diasporic communities around their activities. The respondents have hybrid identities in that they see themselves as Kurds and also as Finnish citizens. There is no single diasporic identity among all Kurds, although the importance of culture, language, communalism and public activity was expressed by all the respondents, with Kurdishness being constructed around different aspects by different diaspora groups. In the interview data that I used two broad diaspora groups can be distinguished to be constructed around language and culture and political ideology. This does not mean however, that the whole Kurdish diaspora in Finland could be categorized to these two groups, but it represents the plurality and dynamics that take place among the Kurdish communities in Finland.

The stateless status of Kurds, the Kurdish state projects' contested nature emerges as strategic essentialism practiced by the Kurdish political constituencies as they attempt to claim the Kurdish identity for political purposes. This study suggests that core diaspora members who actively work to maintain the Kurdish identity also construct social boundaries based on ideology and geographic and cultural origin. The study thus confirms that Wahlbecks observation from 1999 that Kurds in Finland mobilize politically along social and political constituencies is still relevant.⁴⁷⁸ From the data that was used two main groups could be distinguished the Apoists who are connected to the transnational PKK movement and the Kurdish Federation which is based in Finland and has Kurdish nationalism as it's base ideology. These two groups engage in an outbidding process, where they both attempt to gain support from the Kurdish community in Finland while having a claim to represent the Kurdish

⁴⁷⁷ Wahlbeck, 2012, 51-52.

⁴⁷⁸ Wahlbeck, 1999, 163.

identity. While both utilize the open Finnish political opportunity structures and acted through the Finnish civil society, they adopt different position to the Finnish state and political system. The members of the nationalistic group see participation through Finnish political parties as the preferred way of acting. The Apoists emphasized their role in a transnational movement while the nationalists adopted strategy of working through “official” channels. This would suggest addition to Sheffers claim that stateless diasporas are prone to mobilize through channels from the host state,⁴⁷⁹ that stateless diaspora groups’ strategy is determined by it's affiliation with transnational movements and the host states interaction with these movements.

In light of this thesis it can be argued that statelessness of a diaspora can be a contributing factor in formation of outbidding between diaspora groups, as the political project in the country of origin is contested by diaspora groups from the same identity group. Group position within the host country factors into mobilization strategy that is adopted by the groups. Groups that position themselves closer to the host state adopt discourse and strategies that help them to further their interests through the host country’s system and groups that position themselves further from the official state system work more in the transnational sphere. Adding to Fiona Adamsons concept of strategic framing and outbidding,⁴⁸⁰ I would argue that diasporas’ interaction with the host state and political opportunity structures available for the diaspora affect these processes in that in more open systems where the diaspora has incentives to position themselves closer to the host state may employ strategies to not only gather support from the diaspora itself, but also from the host state.

⁴⁷⁹ Sheffer, 2013, 85-86.

⁴⁸⁰ Adamson, 2013, 77-81.

6. Conclusion

The research question for this thesis has been *How does the Kurdish diaspora in Finland construct social boundaries in its political mobilization*. The study was conducted by using a set of nine interviews with core members of Kurdish diaspora in Finland which were gathered from 1.3 to 19.3. in Helsinki, Turku and Tampere. The data was collected using semi-structured interviews based on an ethno-methodological approach where the questions were broad in order to give the respondents as much space as possible to express themselves which would lead them to producing discourse units. The data was analyzed using a form of discourse analysis that looked to trace *membership categorization devices* to recognize what kind of social boundaries are being constructed by the respondents and coding in-group and out-group categories to recognize social functions of these mechanisms. The findings were then reflected on broader theoretical and empirical context.

Limitations to the study were constituted by the number of interviews I was able to conduct, as larger number and larger geographic and demographic variety would have brought a more comprehensive and representative data of the Kurdish diaspora in Finland. Usage of Finnish as the interview language, which for the respondents was not their first language, meant that they had to express themselves with more limited vocabulary and were bounded to the epistemological constraints of the Finnish language. Another limit was exclusion of online data, which would constitute important knowledge about the subject as social media was identified as a space where the diaspora groups establish cyber-communities and engage in discussion with different actors. There is thus gap in research on studying how the Kurdish diaspora groups act in this space and how does their outbidding, boundary construction and mobilization take place there. As the respondents were consisted only from core members of the diaspora, the perspective on how the social boundaries affect the passive members could not be distinguished.

The Kurdish diaspora in Finland constructs a boundary between the Kurdish and the Finnish culture as their interaction was determined by the majority-minority interaction of the Finnish society. This compliments Mari Toivanen's previous research on Kurdish youth in Finland, where she found that the Kurdish youths belonging to Kurdish culture was determined by their relationship with the categorization determined by the majority Finnish ethnicized form of Finnishness. The Kurdish diaspora members distinguished themselves culturally from the Finnish majority and expressed belonging to a pan-Kurdish culture. This pan-Kurdish discourse is facilitated, constructed and

maintained by diaspora associations and active core members by organizing political and cultural activities, which means that these actors have a major role in construction of social boundaries, as has been established by Fiona Adamsons mechanism on diaspora mobilization. The thesis adds to Adamsons concept of outbidding among diasporas that in addition to the diaspora, host states are also a stage for outbidding in that different diaspora groups attempt to represent the minority's interests to the state and can employ different strategies to do so.

Kurdish identity is politicized by claims of Kurdish political constituencies in Kurdistan region located between the border regions of Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran. Historically Kurdish political movements have sought to establish a degree of autonomy from the nation states that were found there in the aftermath of the First World War, or have attempted to establish a sovereign nation state based on Kurdish nationalism. The Kurdish identity has thus been contested by nation states in the region, but it has also been a vessel for competing Kurdish political constituencies for their political claims. The politicized nature of Kurdish identity manifested also in the diaspora in Finland where the diaspora groups are formed according to political constituencies.

Claims for representing the Kurdish people in the host land and in home land leads the groups to form membership categorization mechanism based on ideology and geographic background which politicizes activities of the diaspora. The groups that could be distinguished from the data were Apoists, who are connected to the transnational PKK-movement, and nationalists who relished a more pan-Kurdish ideology but were not linked to any particular Kurdish political constituency, though were associated with KDP and PUK by the Apoists. The study suggests that there is a degree of social segregation based on political differences between Kurdish diaspora groups in Finland, as the respondents expressed social stigma related to cooperating with the other group. These groups engage in outbidding where they attempt to gain support from the Kurdish population in Finland and gather political support from the host state. The core members who were interviewed for this study expressed belonging to Kurdishness as a culture based on language and culture, towards territorial identity based on family relations in homeland as well as diasporic identity based on cultural practices and activism

in Finland. They also expressed belonging to Finnish citizenship and with it positioned themselves as part of Finnish society. Thus, the respondents had variety of hybrid identities and multipositionalities.

A poorly researched and understood subject that emerged from the data was connection between belonging, conflicts, mental health and diaspora which would seem to be one of the factors for mobilization. This would however require further research. Other possible points of departure for future research are adaptation of ideologies and construction of Kurdish nationalism by the Kurdish diaspora in Finland. Different diaspora groups' transnational activity should also be further studied.

Following Feron's concept of conflict autonomisation, the members of diaspora in Finland that are part of the transnational PKK-affiliated movement does construct the conflict on a discursive level in Finland as some of the respondents expressed antagonism towards the Turkish state as well as the Finnish foreign policy. This resentment was channeled through the Finnish civil society and political system through public demonstrations and frequent contact with decision makers. There was however indication of frequent contacts with Turks in Finland, which would suggest that the conflict does not manifest itself in Finland as social segregation. This might be partly because of lack of organized groups that would oppose the Kurdish diaspora in Finland.

The findings suggest that the Kurdish diaspora has internalized a perception of Finnish values that they want to follow and further by their activities. The legal and social environment in Finland was seen as open in a way that the diaspora can organize activities and allowed or even encouraged participating to the civil society and the political system. Limiting factors that were recognized from the data were the Finnish State's cautious foreign policy which is hard to influence through civil society, the Finnish state's relations with states involved in the conflict, particularly Turkey which was a source of antagonism and a source of insecurity for the politically active Kurds in Finland. Finland's geographic remoteness was also recognized as a limiting factor as it separates the diaspora from Kurdish communities in Europe. Acting through the Finnish civil society and political system was seen as the legitimate way of mobilization by the respondents, which compliments prior claims by Soysal, Brown and Baser that systems more open to cooperation and lobbying by minority groups channel diaspora activism through the official system. The diaspora groups however preferred different strategies based on their position towards the Finnish state and the political system, as the

Apoists who had a more antagonistic position towards the state preferred to work through transnational and civil society networks while restraining from participating in Finnish party politics and the nationalists endorsed activity in the political system. This adds to Sheffer's claim that stateless diasporas are more prone to cooperate through the political system of the host state than the cooperation depends on diaspora groups affiliation with transnational movements, which might prefer strategy that excludes political participation, and their position to the host states.

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