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**KURDISH REFUGEE COMMUNITIES:
THE DIASPORA IN FINLAND AND ENGLAND**

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DECLARATION

Some preliminary findings from my fieldwork have briefly been discussed in two articles: Wahlbeck, Ö. 1996. "Diasporic Relations and Social Exclusion: The Case of Kurdish Refugees in Finland." *Siirtolaisuus - Migration* 23, no. 4, 7-15; and Wahlbeck, Ö. 1997. "The Kurdish Diaspora and Refugee Associations in Finland and England." In *Exclusion and Inclusion of Refugees in Contemporary Europe*, ed. P. Muus, 171-186. Utrecht: ERCOMER.

The style of reference used in this thesis is based on the fourteenth edition of *Chicago Manual of Style* (1993) and its application in the sixth edition of *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses and Dissertations* (Turabian 1996).

SUMMARY

This thesis describes the social organisation of Kurdish refugee communities and is a contribution to the theoretical discussion of the concept of diaspora. Field research methods were used in this comparative sociological study among Kurdish refugees from Turkey, Iraq and Iran, who live in exile in Finland and England.

The writer uses rich ethnographic material to describe the social organisation of the Kurdish refugee communities. The thesis introduces new arguments about, and suggests a rethinking of, the process of integration among refugees. In many different ways refugees living in exile have a continuous relation to their societies of origin. The thesis describes various transnational social relations and networks among the Kurdish refugees. It is argued that the Kurds in exile can be regarded as a diaspora.

The concept of diaspora highlights the refugees' continuous relation to their countries of origin. However, the transnational social networks and associations can also be important resources for the refugees in their new country of settlement. There is also reason to remember the importance of social structures and exclusionary policies in the country of settlement. The comparison of the two different countries of settlement shows that these structures and policies have a great impact on how the refugees will be integrated into the receiving society.

It is argued that a study of refugee communities needs to take into account refugees' relations to both the society of origin and the society of settlement. The writer emphasises that a diaspora can be understood as a transnational social organisation relating both to the country of origin and the country of settlement. Thus, it is argued that the concept of diaspora is a useful analytical tool for an understanding of the transnational social reality in which refugees live.

ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|----------|--|
| DSS | Department of Social Security |
| ELR | Exceptional Leave to Remain |
| ERNK | Enîya Rizgarîya Netewa Kurdistan, National Liberation Front of Kurdistan |
| KCC | Kurdish Cultural Centre |
| KDP | Kurdish Democratic Party (Iraq) |
| KDP-Iran | Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran |
| KWA | Kurdistan Workers Association |
| PKK | Partîya Karkerên Kurdistan, Kurdistan Workers Party |
| PUK | Patriotic Union of Kurdistan |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |

GLOSSARY

Newroz: Kurdish New Year (21 March).

Peshmerga: Kurdish guerrilla soldier. The term is used mainly in southern Kurdistan (i.e. Iraq and Iran).

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

According to the United Nations (UNHCR 1997), there were fourteen million refugees world-wide in 1995. In addition, a further thirty million persons were displaced within the borders of their own countries. Most refugees stay in neighbouring countries, but a small number is forced to seek safety far away from their countries of origin. This thesis is about Kurdish refugees from Turkey, Iraq and Iran. Since the 1980s increasing numbers of Kurds have been forced to flee the various conflicts in Kurdistan. Today, some of these refugees are present in European countries.

Contemporary changes in population movements mean that countries which previously were unaffected by immigration are receiving increased numbers of refugees and migrants. These global changes are also altering migration flows to countries with a long history of immigration (Castles and Miller 1993). Finland, which traditionally has been a country of emigration, turned into a country of immigration during the 1980s. Britain, which for a long period of time experienced immigration and emigration within the British Commonwealth, has received increased numbers of refugees in recent years from countries with which Britain has very few historical ties. These new population movements and the consequent establishment of new refugee communities are relatively little studied phenomena.

This thesis concerns itself with newly arrived Kurdish refugees and their communities in Finland and Britain. The two countries of settlement are in significant respects different and this study aims, from a sociological and comparative point of view, to analyse the process of the refugees' "integration" into these two different societies. The refugees' relation to the countries of origin from which they were forced to flee is

also of interest here. Hence, this thesis describes the social organisation of the Kurdish refugee communities and how this is influenced by the refugees' relation to the country of origin on the one hand and to the country of settlement on the other. By doing this, this thesis develops an analytical framework which also has a wider theoretical significance within the area of international migration and ethnic relations.

My interest in questions relating to refugee resettlement and "integration" first emerged during the work on my MA thesis (Wahlbeck 1992) which discusses Finnish opinions about refugees and asylum seekers. Following the completion of my MA degree I worked for one year as a social worker with responsibility for the resettlement of Iranian Kurdish refugees in a small Finnish municipality. During these two periods of my life I frequently had to answer the question of how refugees "adapt to life in Finland". This question seems to imply several things about how the integration of refugees is understood to happen. First of all is the assumption that refugees should adapt to (or even assimilate into) their new country of settlement. Secondly, the question seems to assume that the integration of refugees into the wider society is dependent on the refugees' own cultural and social resources, or even their own choices about whether or not to adapt. I also noticed a tendency to emphasise the importance of assumed cultural differences in the process of "refugee integration." It was commonly assumed that refugees had a fundamentally different culture which could not easily be combined with Finnish cultural values and it was believed that this would inevitably lead to various cultural conflicts.

However, during my job as a refugee resettlement worker I found that the refugees in the municipality generally were eager to become integrated into the wider society. It soon became clear to me that the biggest obstacles to the integration of the refugees were by no means associated with their own cultural "luggage" or with the exercise of "free choice" on their part in respect of adaptation. Instead the obstacles seemed to be related to the receiving society itself. Factors like unemployment, social isolation, discrimination, xenophobic attitudes and racism seemed to play a far bigger role for the process of integration than was usually understood to be the case by the wider

Finnish population. At the same time the importance of cultural differences and conflicts seemed to be widely exaggerated.

Another issue to draw my attention was that of the retention of pre-migration social networks among refugee communities. When it comes to the issue of resettlement, it is commonly assumed that refugees have lost everything they have and that, in a way, they have to start their lives all over again. This approach, so dominant in refugee resettlement discourse, does not acknowledge that refugees may have resources and social networks of their own. However, my own experiences as a social worker suggested to me that, right from the beginning, refugees are able to set up well functioning social networks through which advice and information can be obtained. Almost immediately upon arrival in Finland the refugees seemed to be able to get in touch with compatriots, friends and relatives in Finland, Europe and Kurdistan. Rather than being individuals totally torn away from their social settings, refugees are able, at least to some extent, to retain pre-migration social organisations and networks.

These contradictions between my own experiences with refugees on one hand and the discourse dominating refugee resettlement on the other, provided the starting point for this research. As a result, I decided to study how refugees themselves experience the process of integration into their new countries of settlement. My aim in doing so was to study, from a sociological point of view, the relationships which newly arrived refugees have both with their countries of settlement and with their countries of origin.

An initial aim of the study has been to develop a theoretical framework that would make it possible to avoid some of the common misunderstandings and dangers in refugee research and political discourses. In particular, the study aims to avoid three common pitfalls in refugee research. The first is the danger that the exoticism or cultural distinctiveness of refugee groups is excessively emphasised. This approach can reinforce racist and culturalist discourses which define refugees as the “other” and can support various exclusionary policies. The second danger is to see refugees as “problems.” This approach is often found among studies dealing with assimilation and integration from the point of view of the receiving society. Refugees are seen as

individuals who can choose, more or less freely, whether or not to “adapt,” and to the extent that they resist integration they are defined as “problems”. This approach forgets the profound influence of social structures on social relations. The third and opposite danger is to overemphasise the importance of social structures. This approach regards refugees as powerless victims of racism and as totally ruled by social structures. This view overlooks the refugees’ own resources and the fact that social relations consist of both structure and agency. The challenge for refugee research is to strike a balance among these three extreme positions.

My initial assumption was that theories of ethnicity and ethnic relations could be used to highlight these issues. However, during my fieldwork it soon became clear that refugee issues could not be fully understood with what might loosely be called an “ethnic relations” approach. Rather, as I will attempt to show in this thesis, an understanding of refugee issues needs a more sophisticated conceptual framework. Thus, the aim of this thesis is to present a conceptual framework which besides explaining the empirical findings in this study, also has a wider relevance for refugee studies. In this respect it is argued that the concept of diaspora is a useful tool for an understanding of the social organisation of refugee communities.

The study tries to understand and describe the refugees’ own perspective on the issues under study. Consequently, this thesis uses field research methods which enable the researcher to take into account the refugees own point of view. This choice of methodology also supports the aim to avoid some of the earlier mentioned common pitfalls in refugee research. Since I became acquainted with many Kurds during my job as a social worker it made sense to concentrate on Kurdish refugees and their experiences. (However, the empirical material is collected almost two years after I finished my job as a social worker.) Having had a long-standing interest in human rights issues, I also became increasingly interested in the whole Kurdish question. These are the reasons why this thesis is based on field research methods among Kurdish refugees.

The comparative perspective in this research required the collection of a good deal of empirical material. This study describes how the social organisation of the Kurdish refugee communities is related to both country of origin and country of settlement. In order to be able to study these relations from a comparative point of view it is necessary to have at least two countries of origin and two countries of settlement. The two countries of settlement chosen for this study were Finland and England. These two locations were regarded as sufficiently different in order to study the influence of the society of settlement on the refugee communities. The fieldwork in these countries was carried out during 1994 and 1995. In addition, this thesis studies Kurdish refugees from three countries of origin: Turkey, Iraq and Iran. This selection was partly influenced by some of the Kurds themselves who wanted to emphasise that all Kurds should be seen as one unity. Thus, rather than looking at only two countries of origin, three countries of origin are included here.

Some issues which this study has not been able to address have to be mentioned. First of all, the aim of this thesis is not to study Kurdish society, history or politics. During my fieldwork it was repeatedly suggested to me that I should concentrate on the Kurds in Kurdistan rather than on the Kurds in exile, since "it is in Kurdistan where the problems are." However, given that there are plenty of persons with a far better knowledge of the "Kurdish question," it is clear to me that I am not the right person to write about Kurdistan. In fact, there are already a number of books about Kurdish history, nationalism and politics, as well as numerous reports on the human rights situation in Kurdistan. On the other hand, an understanding of the refugees' situation in exile does require familiarity with the reasons for their flight. Therefore, chapter four contains a brief description of Kurdish history and the political situation in the three countries of origin. (For those who wish to gain a more thorough knowledge of these issues this chapter also includes plenty of references to the literature available on the subject.) Obviously, some of the theories of ethnicity and nationalism, which in this thesis are discussed in the context of the situation in the countries of exile, might also be applied to the situation in Kurdistan. However, within the scope of this thesis it is not possible to discuss theoretical issues relating to Kurdish nationalism and ethnic relations in the countries of origin.

Secondly, this is not a study of refugees' psychological adaptation to life in exile. Rather, the aim is to study the processes of integration and the social organisation of the refugee communities from a *sociological* point of view. Obviously, the social and psychological processes are related to one another. However, a study of adaptation, identity formation and other psychological processes related to refugee resettlement would have required a totally different approach and methods to those used in this research.

Chapter two discusses the concepts and theories used in this thesis. The chapter concludes with a suggestion for a conceptual framework for understanding how the social organisation of refugee communities is related to both the country of origin and the country of settlement. Chapter three discusses general methodological issues, and the methods and empirical material used in this study. The societies of origin are described in chapter four. In particular, this chapter briefly describes the main political developments in Kurdistan which has led to forced migration and which continue to influence the refugee communities. Chapter five contains a description of the two societies of settlement. More specifically, the chapter analyses the different refugee resettlement policies in Finland and England. The results from the fieldwork carried out in Finland and England are presented in chapter six and seven. In chapter six the refugees' experiences in their new country of settlement are described from the refugees' own point of view, while chapter seven concentrates on describing the social organisation of the Kurdish refugee communities. These two chapters discuss the relation to the country of origin on one hand and the country of exile on the other, as well as the influence these have on the refugees and their communities. Both chapters will relate the results to the previously presented theoretical and conceptual issues. The results are summarised and briefly discussed in chapter eight.

Before concluding this chapter, it is necessary to explain some terminological issues pertaining to this thesis. Generally, this thesis uses the terms and definitions used by the Kurdish informants and interviewees themselves, rather than using any "objective criteria" or some other externally imposed definitions. This approach is related to the

well-known theorem presented by the Chicago-sociologist W. I. Thomas: "If men [*sic*] define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Thomas 1966, xl). Hence, this thesis aims to describe the Kurdish refugees' own points of view, since it can be argued that their definition of the situation is the one which is of greatest sociological interest.

The term "refugee" is a legal term with a clearly defined meaning within international law. However, in this thesis the term is used as a sociological and not as a legal term. The legal definition is often too narrow to apply as a part of a sociological approach (partly because the implementation of the Refugee Convention is inconsistent and responds to political shifts in the receiving countries). In this thesis the term refugee includes all those who feel that they are refugees, which in practice includes persons with full refugee status, quota refugees, asylum seekers, and persons with some of the "B-statuses" given to asylum seekers. These more specific descriptions are of course also used where appropriate.

Some Kurds prefer to use the expressions "North Kurdistan" or "North-West Kurdistan" rather than Turkey, "South Kurdistan" rather than Iraq and "East Kurdistan" rather than Iran. For the most part, this thesis reproduces the expressions used by the informants themselves. However, in the general parts of the text the terms "Turkey," "Iraq" and "Iran" are preferred, since these are more easily understood by the reader. For similar reasons the expressions "Kurd from Turkey" and "Kurd from Iraq" are preferred. However, the use of "Turkish Kurd" and "Iraqi Kurd" is avoided since these concepts may be considered offensive and contradictory. An exception is the term "Iranian Kurd," which is generally accepted and widely used by the Kurds from Iran, and for this reason this term is also employed here.

The term "England" is used in this study to describe the country in which one part of the fieldwork was carried out. However, the term "United Kingdom" is used when referring to the state which gives asylum to the refugees. United Kingdom is a shorter name for The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, while Great Britain includes England, Scotland and Wales, but not Northern Ireland.

In conclusion, this thesis is based on a comparative study of the Kurdish refugee communities in Finland and England. The fieldwork was carried out during 1994 and 1995 among newly arrived Kurdish refugees from Turkey, Iraq and Iran. The aim is to describe from a sociological point of view the processes which influence the social organisation and integration of the Kurdish refugee communities in Finland and England. The thesis aims to develop a conceptual framework which, besides describing these specific cases, also has a wider significance for refugee studies in general.

CHAPTER 2

THEORY AND LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter explains the central concepts and theories used in the thesis. A broad perspective is required in order to develop sound theoretical approaches applicable to refugees. Richmond (1988, 1993, 1994) argues that refugee theory should be seen as a part of other migration theory. However, it is possible to go further than this and argue that general theories of ethnic relations are necessary in order to understand the social processes involved in the integration of refugees into the receiving society.

A sociological point of view is adopted in this thesis in order to study the processes which influence the social organisation of the Kurdish refugee communities in the country of settlement. Social organisation is here understood as "any relatively stable pattern or structure within a society, and the process by which such a structure is created or maintained. As such the term is a highly general one overlapping with such terms as social structure, social order, etc." (Jary and Jary 1991, 589).¹ Obviously, there are a number of psychological and social-psychological processes (identity formation, prejudice, etc.) which are relevant and closely related to the social relations described here. However, this thesis is focused upon the wider sociological and "macro" perspectives, rather than on the psychological processes related to refugee integration.

A number of concepts and theories which are used to describe the "inclusion" and "exclusion" of migrants and refugees within the receiving society are discussed in this chapter. Clearly, there are many ways to categorise people in order to include and exclude groups in society. Besides ethnicity, gender, age and social class also play important roles. Since this thesis concerns itself with refugees' specific experiences,

the rest of the chapter concentrates on the discussions about inclusion and exclusion within the research area of international migration and ethnic relations.

Refugee Theory

According to international law, a refugee is a person who, “owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his [*sic*] nationality” (United Nations 1954, 152). From a sociological point of view it is important to note that such a person belongs to a group of people which has a very distinctive relationship with both the country it has been forced to flee from and the country where it is involuntarily settled. As Kunz argues, “It is the reluctance to uproot oneself, and the absence of positive original motivations to settle elsewhere, which characterises all refugee decisions and distinguishes the refugee from the voluntary migrant” (Kunz 1973, 130). This thesis attempts to describe the special relationships that refugees have with both the country of origin and the country of settlement.

There is an abundance of literature about refugees but only a small number of these are sociological studies and even fewer consider theoretical questions relating to refugees’ situation in the receiving countries (cf. Escalona and Black 1995; Stein 1981b; Srinivasan 1995). One weakness with refugee research is that most research “has been tactical, *ad hoc*, diffuse and reactive” (Robinson 1993, 6). In addition, the existing empirical studies have to a great extent been uninformed by general sociological theory and the experiences of refugees are rarely distinguished from those of other migrants (Richmond 1988). Similar arguments are presented by Gold (1992) who finds that studies in the ethnographic sociological tradition are rare, and that policy-oriented research has dominated the field at the expense of independent, holistic scholarship. Furthermore, Steen (1992) argues that concepts like “identity” and “culture,” which are both widely debated and held problematic in the social sciences, are too often used in an uninformed and confusing way in refugee research.

Many of the few theoretical contributions that exist in the area of forced migration have developed typologies to distinguish between different migration movements. Zolberg, Suhrke and Aguayo (1989) identify refugees as either activists, targets or victims. Kunz (1973) distinguishes free migrants from refugee settlers, and furthermore makes a distinction between anticipatory and acute refugee movements. Richmond (1988, 1993, 1994), however, argues that a distinction between voluntary and involuntary migration is of doubtful validity since all migration movements in various degrees and forms include different constraints. Instead he is, inspired by structuration theory within sociology, suggesting an elaborate typology of several forms of proactive and reactive migrations.

Hein (1993), in an overview of the discussion about the differences between refugees and migrants, argues that from a sociological point of view it is only in their relation to the state, whether in country of origin, during flight, or in the country of asylum, that refugees are distinguished from ordinary migrants. Quite correctly he concludes that “refugee status is a relationship to the state that takes a number of forms during the process of uprooting, migration and adaptation” (Hein 1993, 55).

There are authors who specifically discuss refugees’ integration into the society of settlement. For example Stein (1981a) and Vasquez (1989) describe how refugees over time pass through different stages in their psychological relation to life in exile. Joly (1996) emphasises that there still is a need for more research in the area of how refugees relate to the country of settlement and how the refugee experience will distinguish them from other migrants. She also argues that refugee adaptation is not just a matter of time, instead “the refugees’ pattern of group formation and social interaction with the receiving society must be examined in relation to their position within and vis-à-vis the structure of conflict in the society of origin” (Joly 1995a, 27).

As Joly (1996) points out, Kunz (1981) is one of the few authors who make an attempt to present a theory that bridges the gap between country of origin and country of settlement. This theory argues that, depending on the degree of identification with the homeland, one can distinguish three groups of refugees: “majority-identified,” “events-

alienated” (for example discriminated minorities) and “self-alienated persons.” These three groups also have a different attitude to the flight from the homeland, the first two groups are “reactive fate-groups” while the last group is a “purpose group.” These groups show different patterns of ideological and national orientation in exile, the refugees who are reactive fate groups might show four different patterns of integration: “integrated accommodation,” alienated “passive hurt” individuals, persons with a “hyperactive search for assimilation” and finally persons who in exile feel that they have a “historic responsibility” to work for their cause and speak up for those silenced at home. The purpose group of refugees may become “revolutionary activists,” as may over time some of the events-alienated refugees. A final category consists of the self-fulfilling purpose groups who might leave more or less voluntarily and become “founders of utopias.” The problem with these elaborate classifications is, however, that they are not very well defined in the very short article by Kunz (1981), thus the theory is not easily applied to empirical studies.

Another problem, connected to all theories developing different descriptive categorisations, is that a mere description of different cases is not sufficient if one wants to understand the social processes behind the categories. The social processes are better understood by a more qualitative and ethnographic approach.

There are a number of interesting ethnographic studies which have described refugee communities in exile from a sociological or anthropological point of view. These studies all investigate refugees within a context taking into account both the country of origin and the country of settlement. Politically active refugees have been studied by Bousquet (1991) in her study of Vietnamese refugees in Paris and by Lundberg (1989) in his study of Latin American refugees in Sweden. The comparative perspective has been used by Gold (1992) in his study of Vietnamese and Soviet Jewish refugees in California, and by Steen (1992) in her study of Sri Lankan Tamils in Denmark and England. Furthermore, Kay (1987) has added an important gender perspective in her study of Chilean refugees in Scotland. There are also some interesting articles dealing with refugees from East Europe (Baškauskas 1981; Kunz 1971; Luciuk 1986).

All these studies describe how the refugee communities display a political and social orientation towards the country of origin. In many cases political events and conflicts “at home” continue to influence, and often divide, the refugee communities. It can be argued that this pattern is different from the relationship other migrants have with their countries of origin. Paradoxically enough, it looks as if refugee communities are greatly divided, usually politically, at the same time as the communities often contain large resources for ethnic or political mobilisation because of the refugees’ similar background and life histories. The same political convictions which can divide the community, can also unite those smaller groups of refugees who share the same political beliefs and background in the country of origin.

Conceptualising Inclusion

Obviously, refugee studies cannot on their own give enough theoretical guidance for a study of refugees’ social organisation in the country of settlement. One also needs to look at theoretical traditions in the wider area of *international migration and ethnic relations*. Within these research traditions one can find a number of theories and concepts describing the inclusion and exclusion of migrants. The processes and discourses making a difference between “us” and “them” are common in all societies, but they take very different forms depending on the social circumstances. Nevertheless, a shared feature is that by defining the “other” we are also defining who we ourselves are (cf. Miles 1989). This section will discuss some of the concepts and theories which have been used to conceptualise various forms of inclusion.

A number of different concepts, including adaptation, assimilation, accommodation, acculturation and integration, are used in the literature to describe the inclusion of refugees and immigrants into the new society of settlement. Clearly, the term adaptation is mostly used to describe processes at a personal level. Since this thesis deals with social processes it concentrates on the later four concepts.

Assimilation

Assimilation is a frequently used term. According to the *Collins Dictionary of Sociology* assimilation is “the process in which a minority group adopts the values and patterns of behaviour of a majority group or host culture, ultimately becoming absorbed by the majority group” (Jary and Jary 1991). However, a definition of assimilation also should take into account that this is a process which can affect both sides in the relation, i.e. the majority may also change its values, patterns of behaviour and culture. This type of process is exemplified in the American debate about the “melting pot” at the beginning of the century when it was argued that all immigrants in the United States would assimilate into each other and become “American.”

One of the most influential American sociologists advocating an assimilationist theory was Robert E. Park, one of the leading scholars in the so called Chicago school within sociology. Park developed a model he called the “race relations cycle.” Assimilation is the final outcome in this cycle. The first phase in this cycle is competition, where the individuals still are foreigners to each other and the relations are strictly economic. In the next phase, conflict, people are politically aware of their situation and the conflicts which arise out of the competition. Accommodation, is the phase where individuals and the groups agree on the rules which will regulate the relations between the groups, and people will tolerate and accept each other. The final outcome is assimilation, where people see each other as individuals and not only as members of different groups (Park 1950; Park and Burgess 1930). Park based his model on studies in an urban American setting (cf. Lal 1990) but nevertheless he argued that the race relations cycle is universal and irreversible.

Hence, assimilation comprises an inclusion of individuals into the society at large. A society based on assimilation does, however, not include diverse cultures or separate ethnic groups in the way a multi-cultural society does. It is today obvious that assimilation between groups seldom is established in the way envisaged in Park’s race relations cycle. In the USA, for example, this is described by Glazer and Moynihan (1963). They argue that ethnicity remains important in the United States and that

ethnic groups largely have become political interest groups. Gans (1979), on the other hand, argues that the so called ethnic revival in the USA is only a “symbolic ethnicity” and that the processes of assimilation and integration are still at work in the USA. However, his examples are drawn from the Jewish and white Catholic minorities and not from the black or Hispanic minorities.

The assimilationist discourse was also dominant in Britain during the early post-war years. When the post-war migrants started to arrive in Britain it was commonly assumed that they would assimilate and/or integrate into British society if they stayed for a longer time. It was thought that the racism that existed was “caused by the ‘strangeness’ of the immigrants, and that with the acculturation and eventual assimilation of the immigrants, or their children, the issue of racism would disappear” (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992, 158). The belief in an easy integration into British society was also common among the immigrants themselves. Most immigrants from the so called New Commonwealth were English speaking British citizens and there was no reason why they would not be welcome in Britain.

In Britain, assimilation policies were dominant until the early 1960s. Already in the late 1950s it began to be apparent that the process of assimilation did not work as smoothly as was earlier hoped it would. The immigrants were met by increased hostility from their working-class and middle-class white neighbours. The racism that immigrants met was apparent and not very well hidden in the early post-war years (e.g. Rex and Tomlinson 1979).²

Although it is clear today that complete assimilation rarely occurs, it is still a key concept. Milton Gordon has tried to outline a model of how assimilation is related to other concepts within this area of research. Gordon (1964, 71; 1978, 169) outlines seven variables within the assimilation process: structural assimilation, acculturation, identificational assimilation, amalgamation, absence of prejudice, absence of discrimination, absence of value and power conflict. In a more recent discussion of Gordon’s model Yinger (1985) argues that the last three of Gordon’s seven variables can be better seen as consequences of assimilation. Yinger also wisely renames the

terms “structural assimilation” and “identificational assimilation” as respectively “integration” and “identification.” The four variables which can be seen as separate but interdependent subprocesses of assimilation are therefore: integration (structural aspect), acculturation (cultural aspect), identification (psychological aspect) and amalgamation (biological aspect). Yinger’s definitions of these four concepts seem to be logical and useful. The use of the concept of assimilation as a general term encompassing these other concepts is, however, not a unanimously accepted definition.

Acculturation

The term acculturation is widely used within cultural anthropology, which reflects the importance which processes of cultural change have in anthropology. Acculturation can be understood as “a process in which contacts between different cultural groups lead to the acquisition of new cultural patterns by one, or perhaps both, group(s), with the adoption of all or parts of the other’s culture” (Jary and Jary 1991, 3). As mentioned above, Gordon (1964, 1978) and later Yinger (1985) also describe acculturation as the cultural aspect of assimilation.

Within the area of social-psychology another way of using the concept of acculturation can be found in J. W. Berry’s (1988) often quoted acculturation model. Here acculturation is seen as the process in which “individuals negotiate their way into life in a plural society” (Berry 1988, 2). Although I will not use this definition of acculturation, the model still includes a useful distinction between the concepts of assimilation and integration. Berry sees the difference between assimilation and integration in the individual’s degree of retention of identity. An integrated person from a minority can keep his/her minority identity but if a person is assimilated he/she will have the same identity as the majority. I find that this is a more useful and precise definition of assimilation than the wide interpretation suggested by Yinger.

Integration

As mentioned earlier, integration should be seen as describing a structural process, rather than individual assimilation or cultural acculturation. The concept can also largely replace the concept of accommodation used by Park in his race relations cycle. Integration as a structural aspect means that a person can keep his or her distinct identity and belong to an ethnic minority group, rather than assimilate, and at the same time be a structural part of the wider society. A society in which integration, and not assimilation, is the dominant pattern of inclusion is often a multi-cultural society, where people are often regarded as living in different communities.

The concept of community needs clarification before some of the other theoretical issues can be discussed. A community can be described as “any set of social relationships operating within certain boundaries, locations or territories” (Jary and Jary 1991, 97). These social relationships do not necessarily have to operate within geographical boundaries but can also exist at a more abstract and ideological level. This concept is often used as a translation of *Gemeinschaft* (Tönnies 1970). Since community is a term with positive connotations it has been much used and “it has been suggested that the concept is one of the most difficult and controversial in modern society” (Jary and Jary 1991, 97-98.).

If one talks about refugees’ process of integration it has to be clear into what community the integration is supposed to happen. One of the first sociologists who tried to tackle this issue is Raymond Breton (1964) who argued that immigrant integration is possible in at least three different directions: within the majority community, within another ethnic minority group, or within the immigrants’ own ethnic group. According to Breton, the integration can happen in one, two or three directions at the same time and finally, it is also possible for the immigrant to be unintegrated. Furthermore, he argues that the ability of the different communities to integrate immigrants largely depends on the institutional completeness of the community.

Breton's framework is obviously an oversimplification. The process of integration is not a clear-cut and straight-line process. There are many ways of being integrated into society and in some situations one may be more integrated than in others. The concept presupposes a group of people who are being integrated into another social formation. However, in practice it is often difficult to identify these social groups and formations as well as their boundaries. Actually, if one takes a post-modernist stance one could probably argue that nobody is fully integrated into our so called post-modern society. Since the whole concept of community is imprecise and flexible it is obvious that a unitary and homogenous "majority community" does not exist. Who defines the minority, which is usually supposed to change in order to become more integrated, is another interesting question. The concept of integration often represents the point of view of the dominant majority and contributes to the creation of a "we" who belong and "the others" who do not belong (cf. Ekholm 1994; Miles 1993; Schierup 1987).

Given the fact that there are no precise definitions of integration or apparent ways in which it could be measured it is not surprising that recent books on the subject avoid defining the concept altogether. None of the contributors in *Avenues to Integration* (Delle Donne 1995) or *Immigration and Integration in Post-Industrial Societies* (Carmon 1996) offer an exact definition of integration. Occasionally it is not even clear in these edited books if integration is seen as a structural or psychological process. Because of the problems with the concept of integration this thesis will not use the concept as if it represented an absolute measurable phenomenon. Instead, the concept of integration used here describes tendencies in the structural aspects of the process by which refugees become part of social groups and institutions in society.

Multi-Culturalism

In Britain, multi-culturalism became an issue from the 1960s onwards and followed the more assimilationist policies that had been predominant since the war. This change in policy was largely an answer to the problems of racism, discrimination and lack of

integration among the newly arrived immigrants (e.g. Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992; Rex and Tomlinson 1979).

The first official recognition of multi-culturalism in Britain was in 1968 when the Labour Home Secretary Roy Jenkins defined integration “not as a flattening process of uniformity, but of cultural diversity, coupled with equality of opportunity in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance” (Rex 1994, 6). These notions of liberal and cultural pluralism were the dominant perspectives in the academic “race-relations” discourse until the end of the 1970s (Denney 1983). Multi-culturalism is often connected to liberal views of society (cf. Kymlicka 1995).

In Britain, multi-culturalism has been an issue largely discussed within the area of education. Various multi-culturalist policies have been adopted and incorporated into the syllabus of the British schools. In practice this has usually meant teaching school children about the different cultures which the ethnic minorities are originating from (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992). The idea is that a greater understanding of other cultures will lead to less prejudice. Within the multi-culturalist discourse prejudice is often seen as the cause of discrimination and racism, and therefore it is believed that a better knowledge of other cultures will solve the problems (Donald and Rattansi 1992).

Multi-culturalism is today a much used, and abused, concept, despite the fact that it is an ambiguous concept that raises a number of theoretical questions (cf. Vertovec 1996). Firstly, this concept describes a notion of a society marked by cultural pluralism. This means that the concept implies both inclusion and exclusion at the same time: people belonging to the same society but at the same time forming different cultural groups. When we look at present day societies we soon notice that almost all societies are, to various degrees, multi-cultural. In all contemporary states we find different ethnic minorities and sub-cultures. Actually, multi-culturalism seems to be more the rule than the exception.

A second problem connected with the concept of multi-culturalism is that, above all else, it is a political concept, usually with strong positive connotations. This means that

the concept is ambiguous and its meaning shifts depending on the situation. For example, a number of countries have officially declared themselves to be multi-cultural and to be following multi-cultural policies, e.g. Canada, Sweden and Australia. A closer look at these countries, however, reveals that their policies are quite different from each other and that some of the policies clearly are not pluralistic and also are regarded as repressive by the minorities themselves. This exemplifies the fact that multi-culturalism is a relative concept and one has to be careful when it is used in a scientific discussion.

A third problem with the term multi-culturalism concerns the concept of culture itself. There seems to be disagreement about what this “culture,” which furthermore there is supposed to be multiples of, really is and what its relation to other social phenomena might be. This dilemma will be discussed in more detail later.

In 1985, John Rex tried to define the multi-cultural value-standpoint. According to him we first of all have to make a distinction between equality, which is a quite different value-standpoint, and multi-culturalism. Logically speaking, the multi-cultural society must mean a society in which people are not equally but differently treated. Equality is of course a noble goal in itself, but to pretend that it has something to do with multi-culturalism can only create fuzziness (Rex 1985, 1996). One way of clarifying this distinction is to look at some of the studies that are made about the “plural society.” Both the classical studies made by Furnivall (1939) and Smith (1965) describe colonial or post-colonial societies which are far from equal or harmonious and institutionally divided between different ethnic groups. Rex argues that the ideal multi-cultural society instead should be a society “which is unitary in the public domain but which encourages diversity in what are thought of as private or communal matters” (Rex 1985, 4; 1996, 15). By dividing society into these two domains we avoid confusing the ideal multi-cultural society with the undesirable colonial variants of pluralism.

The institutions of law, politics and economy belong to the public domain of society. In the multi-cultural society all citizens are equally integrated and have equality in these institutions. In the private domain, on the other hand, one finds matters relating

to the family, to morality and to religion. In a multi-cultural society there is a diversity and cultural pluralism in these matters. There are areas of society, like education, which intrude into both domains and these are areas where conflicts might occur and where some kinds of compromises have to be found. However, even in the absence of different cultures society is by no means unitary. There will always be conflicts in society, but societies are also able to produce institutions to deal with these conflicts (Rex 1985, 1996).

The concept of a multi-cultural society understood in this way also relates to the concept of integration. People might be integrated into society at a structural level, i.e. the public domain, and at the same time keep their own culture and identity. The concept of assimilation, on the other hand, would presuppose that people would give up their separate identities and cultures.

Dilemmas of Multi-Culturalism

In a book about Swedish multi-culturalism, Aleksandra Ålund and Carl-Ulrik Schierup (1991) demonstrate that there are new syncretic cultures developing among the young generations of immigrant descent. This has implications for the dual division of society into the public and the private domain as outlined in Rex's (1985) model of a multi-cultural society. As Rex himself writes, "I now see that the contract between immigrant groups and a national society involves more than this and that what I said was something of an oversimplification. None the less the notions of equality and the recognition of cultural diversity do have some significance, and it is worth developing them further" (Rex 1996, 56).

Ålund and Schierup (1991) and Schierup (1992, 1994) demonstrate that the Swedish official multi-culturalist policy has indirectly supported a culturalist construction of new discriminatory boundaries. The welfare bureaucracy in Sweden has undertaken to construct an organised multi-cultural society, and thereby it has created a society divided by artificial cultural boundaries. This analysis is also applicable to British society where the term "race-relations industry" is occasionally used; a term which

refers to the public sector and organisations dealing with “race-relations.” The British case is extensively discussed by Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992), who describe how the racialised boundaries have been created in different contexts.

One interesting feature of British society is the multi-culturalist preoccupation with “communities.” People are seen as belonging to specific, usually culturally defined, communities which are distinct from each other and also have clear boundaries (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992). The whole immigration and minority policy in Britain is often described as a communitarian policy in contrast to the French citizenship model which encourages assimilation (cf. Lloyd 1993, 1994). The British communitarian policy for ethnic minorities can be seen as connected to what Goulbourne calls the “communal option”:

Briefly, the communal option presumes that humanity can be legitimately and properly divided into easily recognisable ethnic or racial categories, and that members of these categories wish to enjoy security within specified enclaves which are exclusively their own. These enclaves are further presumed to constitute the proper boundaries within which individuals should be encouraged to conduct their daily lives. (Goulbourne 1991, 297)

The British multi-culturalist project has attempted get all communities represented in the political process. This has mainly been done through “community leaders” who are seen as representing the communities. The problem is that this preoccupation with communities has created new divisive lines between people. The “community” is a label put on a very complex reality. The community centres or their leaders are never representative or democratically chosen by the people they are seen as representing (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992). Different political goals within ethnic groups have also been describe by Pnina Werbner (1991), who argues that it is the wider society which encapsulates and marginalises ethnic groups by insisting on community-wide policies.

Among refugee communities it becomes even clearer than among other ethnic minorities that there are no clear and simple united communities. The earlier mentioned political disagreements between refugees seem to be a typical feature of

most refugee communities. Thus, multi-cultural policies presuming that easily recognisable communities do exist are not always the most suitable for refugee resettlement programmes. The influences of these community policies on the refugee resettlement in Britain are discussed in chapter five.

Despite all the critique of community policies, one should not forget that multi-culturalist policies can lead to many important improvements for minorities. This has been the case for example in Britain. However, at the same time these policies have also played a part in the racialisation and culturalisation of differences between groups in British society. An easy answer to the dilemmas of multi-culturalism would be to abolish the notions of common cultures or ethnic groups and only see people as individuals. However, this individualism leads to a neglect of structures. It is a fact that people are divided into different social groups and also themselves feel that they belong to different social groups. There might be “hidden” discriminatory practices and ideologies in society which discriminate against people on the ground of their belonging to different groups. An individualistic approach is not able to take these kinds of structural disadvantages into account.

Multi-cultural policies are obviously not able to solve all the problems connected with the tendencies to exclude certain ethnically defined social groups from certain areas of life. There are a number of exclusionary structures, ideologies and discourses which have a continuous presence in contemporary societies. The following sections deal with three phenomena: racism, ethnicity and nationalism.

Exclusion and Racism

Racism and Anti-Racism

In Britain the multi-culturalist discourse was followed from the late 1970s by another dominant value-standpoint - anti-racism. This standpoint emphasises that an acceptance of cultural pluralism is not enough when the structures of society still

create disadvantages for some groups. A lack of knowledge and prejudice are not the main causes behind racism, as the multi-culturalist discourse often suggests. Instead of creating an understanding of different cultures and counteracting prejudice, the policy should be to fight against racist structures in society. Obviously, it is not the differences in themselves, but the meaning given to these differences which creates the problems.

By the late 1970s, when the anti-racist standpoint became an issue in Britain, it was clear for most social scientists that a multi-cultural policy would not be able to end the disadvantage of the black population in the UK. The discrimination of the black population could not be explained only by looking at prejudice or cultural conflicts. Instead, racism and discrimination had to be removed by structural change of society (Denney 1983). The rise of anti-racist arguments can also be seen in relation to other political movements in British society. This anti-racist standpoint is often connected to more or less Marxist views on society, rather than the liberal notion of society which is more related to *multi-culturalism*. *More militant and separatist attitudes were also gaining support among the black population (cf. Rex and Tomlinson 1979)*. Among the white population anti-racism can be seen in relation to the socially oriented and radical atmosphere during the 1970s, where the anti-racist movement sometimes was seen as a part of a wider movement against oppression in society.

Similar anti-racist arguments have been presented in the United States, where for example Omi and Winant (1994) presents an important critique of ethnicity theory in the United States. According to them, Glazer and Moynihan's (1963, 1975) understanding of ethnic groups as interest groups, by which individuals freely can work for the improvement of their conditions, does not take into account the "racial formation" in the United States. "Race" has to be seen as a field of social conflict in the United States which cannot be subordinated to ethnic identity, social inequality or colonialism (Omi and Winant 1994).

Racism and discrimination are clearly obstacles for both assimilation and integration because of the boundaries and structures of exclusion they create. Thus any discussion

about integration or assimilation has to take into account racism and other processes of exclusion.

The Concept of Racism

A historical perspective is helpful in order to understand the racism of today. In the 19th century Europe found a new way of constructing “the other.” This was the heyday of the so called scientific racism. Until the 19th century it was usually not assumed that people belonged to different biological races, but during the 19th century the question of “race” became an important question within science and politics in Europe. The appearance of the idea of different “races” is related to the development of colonialism, capitalism and modernity. These social and economic changes created a need for a new ideology which could give a legitimisation for the exclusion and exploitation of certain groups (Goldberg 1993; Guillaumin 1980; Malik 1996; Miles 1989). The discourse of “race” is intrinsically connected to the idea that social groups can be regarded as natural ones (Guillaumin 1980; Malik 1996).

Although “race” is an old term, the concept of racism started to be used only after the Second World War. By this time it was commonly agreed that there was not any scientifically valid biological legitimisation for a division of people into races. However, a typical feature of racism is that it seems to take different disguises depending on the social contexts. Racism, and the assumption that social groups can be regarded as natural, has taken new forms in the contemporary world and is still part of the social construction of reality in western societies (cf. Goldberg 1993; Malik 1996; Miles 1989).

The concept of racism has suffered from a good deal of conceptual inflation since its introduction. Today racism is used to refer to a range of detested practices, procedures and outcomes as well as a wide range of exclusionary ideologies. Robert Miles (1989) argues that there is reason to use the concept solely to refer to an ideology. His delimitation of the concept of racism is followed in this thesis (with an exception for

the later discussed term “new racism”). However, the widespread use of “race” as a political or social concept is avoided here.

The term xenophobia is also useful in cases where exclusionary discourses and practices do not seem to be based on traditional racist ideologies. This term depicts a fear of everything unknown, manifested in a fear of groups of people which are experienced to be “foreign,” i.e. “the other.” Racism should not be confused with discrimination, which is an act or practice and does not necessarily have anything to do with an ideology. Furthermore, neither racism nor discrimination should be confused with prejudice, which describes a categorisation made at an individual level. Prejudice, discrimination and racism might be, but are not necessarily, interrelated phenomena.

New Racism

One attempt to describe how racist ideology might take new forms and lead to different outcomes in the contemporary world is encapsulated in the term “new racism.” Broadly speaking, this term refers to contemporary changes in the exclusionary discourses and practices where the notion of cultural differences has replaced the idea of biological differences in the process of defining “the other,” and where “races” largely become conceptualised as nations instead of biological groups (Barker 1981; Malik 1996).

Although Miles (1989, 1993) finds that “new racism” is a vague term,³ it can be argued that this concept can be useful in order to depict the changing disguises in which exclusionary ideologies can appear. In Britain, for example, the processes of exclusion in contemporary society are no longer simply a question of “race” or colour of skin, instead exclusionary practices are today taking much more subtle forms (Cohen 1994). The concept new racism has been advocated by persons working within the tradition of cultural studies. For example Paul Gilroy (1992) argues that the new racism in Britain has three features. Firstly, it uses a coded language where racial meanings are inferred rather than stated. Secondly it identifies race with the terms “culture” and “identity,” and finally:

The new racism has a third important feature which enables it to slip through the rationalist approach of those who, with the best will in the world, reduce the problem of racism to the sum of power and prejudice. This is the closeness it suggests between the idea of race and the ideas of nation, nationality and national belonging. We increasingly face a racism which avoids being recognized as such because it is able to link "race" with nationhood, patriotism and nationalism, a racism which has taken a necessary distance from crude ideas of biological inferiority and superiority and now seeks to present an imaginary definition of the nation as a unified *cultural* community. It constructs and defends an image of national culture - homogenous in its whiteness yet precarious and perpetually vulnerable to attack from enemies within and without. The analogy of war and invasion is increasingly used to make sense of events. (Gilroy 1992, 53)

Clearly, the concept of new racism leads us to look at the question of nationalism in order to understand contemporary processes of exclusion of immigrants and refugees, thus nationalism is discussed in a later section. Most of the discussion on racism and "race" in this chapter is based on the British academic discourse, and one can ask to what extent these concepts and theories have any significance in Finland. Obviously, the Finnish context is very different, and the public discourse is based on a different history and uses different concepts. Nevertheless, the general tendency to regard social groups as natural groups, the new racism with its culturalist discourse and the exclusionary perception of the nation clearly are also valid descriptions of the Finnish case.

Rethinking Culture, Difference and Racism

The recent discussion in Britain concerning multi-culturalism and racism has revolved around the question of how "culture" really should be understood. The notion of multi-culturalism has been criticised recently because it usually involves a static view of culture and a preoccupation with tangible culture (the "saris, samosas and steel-bands syndrome").⁴ This notion might also lead to an overemphasise on cultural differences. Research which only pays attention to cultural differences and cultural content may result in the researched group being defined as "the other." This easily leads to an erroneous treatment of social problems, whose origins are located in the social structures, as problems created by cultural differences (Donald and Rattansi 1992).

This emphasis on cultural differences is clearly evident in the case of refugees. They are often seen as experiencing huge cultural conflicts between their old culture and the culture of the new country of settlement. Sometimes this is described as a culture-shock. This relates to the whole discourse of multi-culturalism which emphasises cultural differences. Some studies of refugees acknowledge the fact that refugees' culture can be used as a resource, but often the refugees' lack of acculturation is regarded as a problem and one that will lead to conflicts with the culture prevailing in the receiving society. This culturalist discourse often distracts attention from the structural reasons for the problems that refugees experience. In this way the culturalist discourse hides the social inequalities and power relations that are the root causes of exclusion, conflicts and problems. It is possible to argue that culturalist explanations often have far too big an influence on both researchers and practitioners of refugee resettlement.

Donald and Rattansi (1992) suggest a critical rereading of the concept of culture to overcome the problems connected with the notion of multi-culturalism. One of the leading British theorists in this "rereading of culture" is Paul Gilroy. He argues that we should understand "the cultural not as an intrinsic property of ethnic particularity but as a mediating space between agents and structures" (Gilroy 1987, 16). Gilroy (1992) also has criticised the limited anti-racist project because it involves too narrow a view of society. A limited anti-racist project is not able to attack these more subtle forms of exclusion in contemporary societies. Contrary to what a limited anti-racist project suggests, it is not possible to extract racism from other political antagonisms within society. Furthermore, Gilroy criticises both the British multi-culturalist and the anti-racist project because of their preoccupation with ethnic differences. He argues that the key to understand the problem is to look at how culture itself is understood.

At the end of the day, an absolute commitment to cultural insiderism is as bad as an absolute commitment to biological insiderism. I think we need to be theoretically and politically clear that no single culture is hermetically sealed off from others. There can be no neat and tidy pluralistic separation of racial groups in this country. ... Culture, even the culture which defines the groups we know as races, is never fixed, finished or final. It is fluid, it is actively and continually made and re-made. (Gilroy 1992, 57)

The problem seems to be that the multi-culturalist and anti-racist policies largely are based on the same notions of differences that they are trying to attack. “Thus, establishing a system of identity politics as a form of resistance to Eurocentrism, orientalism and racism, fails exactly because its basic assumptions have been formed within the discourse of difference it most wants to attack” (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992, 194).

Obviously, both the multi-cultural and the anti-racist standpoints have led to improvements for, and the empowerment of, the minorities in the UK. However, these policies have not been able to change the systems of thought based on mutually exclusive categories of people divided by cultural differences, which largely lies behind exclusionary policies. Thus the multi-cultural and anti-racist projects themselves also have contributed to the racialisation and culturalisation of difference. There is a need for a proper understanding of culture which takes into account its fluid and changing character (Gilroy 1987, 1992). It can, however, be argued that this discussion concerning the nature of culture is not totally new; similar ideas have previously been presented within anthropology and in some theories about ethnicity.

Ethnicity and Nationalism

Ethnic groups and ethnicity, which is “the character or quality of an ethnic group” (Glazer and Moynihan 1975, 1), are central concepts in any study of the social dimensions of international migration. These concepts have been used in many different ways and for many different purposes within the social sciences. There is a clear linguistic shift from “race” to “ethnicity” after the Second World War (Bacal 1989). Those social scientists who today use the term “race” are usually making a distinction between “race” as a categorisation imposed from outside and “ethnicity” as an identification made by the individuals themselves, although there is considerable disagreement and confusion surrounding the definition of these concepts (cf. Mason 1986; Ratcliffe 1994; Yinger 1986).

Early writings on ethnicity often stressed the importance of shared cultural values and a group awareness of cultural distinctiveness as a basic element in ethnic group membership (e.g. Narroll 1964). Other authors like Geertz (1963) and Gordon (1978) have talked about the importance of common descent. According to Rex (1986a), the latter emphasis can be called a primordial view on ethnicity.

It also has been common to understand an ethnic group as a minority. However in a widely influential text Glazer and Moynihan use the term to refer “not only to subgroups, to minorities, but to all the groups of a society characterized by a distinct sense of difference owing to culture and descent” (Glazer and Moynihan 1975, 4). This broad definition is clearly more logical and has rightly gained a dominant position within present day anthropology (Eriksen 1993). Why should only minorities be able to feel that they belong to a certain group? Hence, everybody has ethnicity and all persons belong to ethnic groups.

One of the most influential theories about ethnic groups is the theory first presented by the anthropologist Fredrik Barth (1969). Barth's work is a rejection of Narroll's (1964) view of ethnicity as a shared culture, and can at the same time be seen as a critique of primordial views of ethnicity. According to Rex (1986a), Barth's approach to ethnicity can be called a situational view. Barth suggests that ethnic groups are socially constructed. “Ethnic groups are categories of ascription and identification by the actors themselves” (Barth 1969, 10). He argues that these processes of constructing and maintaining the boundaries should be the object of study. The most important notion is that it is not the cultural content which constitutes the ethnicity of a group but, instead, the boundaries between different groups. The participants own definition of the situation becomes important and the struggle for scarce resources is an important force in the process of ethnicity. Barth's point of view is later elaborated by Sandra Wallman (1978a, 1978b, 1979, 1986) and Richard Jenkins (1986, 1994).

According to Wallman (1978a, 1978b), the boundaries between ethnic groups are indicated by markers. Almost everything can be used as a marker by the participants

who are defining the boundaries, e.g. language, clothes, behaviour, music. Depending on the situation, a certain marker is important and not another. Characteristics perceived as “race” are only one of many possible markers defining a boundary between ethnic groups. With reference to this, Wallman (1978a, 1978b) argues that the concepts “ethnic groups” and “ethnic relations” can be used instead of the terms “race” and “race relations.”

An important addition to the situational view is delivered by John Rex (1986a). According to Rex, Barth’s theories do not account for conflicts of interest sufficiently and he does not say anything about the underlying forces of his system. What are the reasons and the power-relations that determine the outcome? What happens if the self-identification is not the same as the identification provided by the out-group? (Rex 1986a, 28, 96-98). However, both Barth and Wallman discuss interest conflicts, and they even argue that *it is in these situations that ethnicity becomes active, and it is then used as a weapon in the struggle for scarce resources*. Nevertheless, Rex’s critique is still important because it points to the fact that anthropological studies also need to look at the more “macro-sociological” economic and political structures of society.

One way of gaining an understanding of ethnicity is to look at the ways in which ethnicity works and what kinds of social functions it has. Ethnicity is a relation and ethnic groups always need at least one other group to reflect their ethnicity on, a fact which is commonly understood in anthropology (Eriksen 1993). Ethnicity also comprises two different sides. According to Eriksen (1993), ethnicity comprises aspects of meaning as well as politics. As Daniel Bell (1975, 169) states, “Ethnicity has become more salient because it can combine an interest with an affective tie.” Abner Cohen writes in *Two-Dimensional Man* (1974) about how people live in both a symbolic and a political world. Lal (1983) sees ethnicity as having two functions, to promote group interests and to help people achieve identity.

For a long time ethnicity was seen as a factor which would disappear from the social arena due to the processes of modernity in society. This kind of primordial attachment would disappear in the change from *Gemeinschaft* to *Gesellschaft* (Tönnies 1970) and

from “mechanical solidarity” to “organic solidarity” (Durkheim 1938). This has clearly not happened, instead ethnic phenomena are perhaps more salient today than ever. This development can only be understood if we look at the twofold structure of ethnicity. The first factor is that ethnic groups can act as interest groups within society and there can be economic and political advantages connected to group membership. These are, of course, functions that social groups in general, and social classes in particular, are able to provide to their members. However, the second crucial factor is the emotional, symbolic and meaningful side of ethnicity. Ethnicity can give meaning to our lives and a sense of belonging in contemporary impersonal, global and alienating societies. This is the reason why ethnicity is still an important social force today.

Nationalism

According to Gellner (1983, 1), “nationalism is a theory of political legitimacy, which requires that ethnic boundaries should not cut across political ones.” Today most authors seem to agree that nationalism is an ideology which emerged during the eighteenth century in Europe. The basis for this ideology is the notion that there is a “people” or a “nation,” and they have something in common regardless of the members’ position in society, and where there is a people or nation they should also have a “state” (i.e. political control over a specific territory). In this sense the nation is an abstract and imagined community (Anderson 1983).

Today most researcher’s agree that the emergence of nationalism is connected to the emergence of the capitalist and modern society. Many researchers propose economic reasons for the rise of nationalism. For example, Gellner (1983) argues that the nation-state is a cultural form and political system that is necessary for economic growth.

Benedict Anderson’s (1983) historical work concentrates on the psychological appeal of nationalism. Besides different necessary conditions for nationalism, the most important thing is the emergence of commercial printing on a widespread scale, which leads to “national print-languages.” This facilitates communication and interaction and makes the creation of an “imagined community” possible. At the same time a

normative language is strengthened and administration is facilitated. Nationalism creates a feeling of a continuing and eternal nation, perceived as a natural *Gemeinschaft*, which according to Anderson explains why “people love and die for nations, as well as hate and kill in their name” (Anderson 1983, dust-jacket).

Anthony Smith has a different focus in his studies of nationalism. He takes issue with those who look at nationalism as simply a consequence of modernity. According to Smith (1986), the nations have ethnic origins and ethnicity is an independent element of nationalism not reducible to other economic or social processes. Consequently, nationalism has its roots in older history although it is a modern ideology (Smith 1983, 1986).

Smith is commonly regarded as representing a primordialist view, which is largely at odds with the situational view with its emphasis on the social construction of ethnicity and nationalism. Smith’s approach is, however, more elaborate than this characterisation would suggest. In actual fact, he accepts that nations are largely social constructions. Although nations have ethnic origins and are historical communities, this history is constantly rewritten and manipulated to meet the demands of nationalism. What matters is not the authenticity of the historical record but the poetic, didactic and integrative purposes which that record is felt to disclose. Smith even rejects an overtly primordialist and fixed notion of nations and ethnic groups. Instead he proposes an intermediate approach, where it is possible to look situationally at ethnicity, but only within certain limits given by history (Smith 1986). However, this approach is still in conflict with the notion that nations are imagined (Anderson 1983) and the suggestion that a nation’s traditions can be invented (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983).

The question is whether Smith’s approach is sufficient for a sociological understanding of nationalism. To regard ethnicity as an independent social force is not a satisfactory sociological explanation. Certainly, political power relations and social changes have a profound effect on ethnic feelings and national identities. It is doubtful whether Smith’s approach sufficiently takes into account the relation between nationalism and

ethnicity on one hand and social structures and forces on the other. A related problem is that his perspective is difficult to combine with the notion of ethnicity as a relation. According to Smith (1986), ethnicity cannot be a wholly dependent tool or boundary marker of other social and economic forces. This point of view is different from many sociologists' and anthropologists' points of view. Although it might be said that Smith only has a different emphasis, the fact is that his writings on the subject seldom deal with social structures (which sociologists usually do) or with boundary processes (which anthropologists tend to do). Nevertheless, Smith's theories remain important insofar that he clearly shows that myths and symbols are important aspects of nationalisms, a fact that many authors tend to forget.

Another important issue is that Smith makes a logical connection between nationalism and ethnicity. The theories within these two fields have largely developed independently, but they still have very much in common. Both theories of nationalism and of ethnicity stress that identities are socially constructed. Surprisingly, "the remarkable congruence between theories of nationalism and anthropological theory of ethnicity seems unrecognised (or at least unacknowledged) by Gellner and Anderson" (Eriksen 1993, 100).

Eriksen (1993) also gives an example of how studies about nationalism could benefit from anthropology. The question why nationalism is still so salient today has puzzled many researchers. Within anthropology it has been known for a long time that ethnicity tends to attain its greatest importance in situations of flux, change, resource competition and threats against boundaries. Therefore it is not surprising that movements based on ethnicity and nationalism are strong in societies undergoing modernisation and social change.

Globalisation, Transnationalism and De-Territorialisation

In the contemporary world the process of globalisation is challenging the traditional ways in which ethnicity and nationalism have been conceptualised. Globalisation may

be defined as a “social process in which the constraints of geography on the social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding” (Waters 1995, 3). The social relations emerging from these developments are not easily confined within the borders of nation-states. Thus they can be regarded as transnational, a term which indicates a relation over and beyond, rather than between or in, the nation-states. New technological developments and increased international migration have made various new global, transnational and even totally de-territorialised social relations possible. This is obviously not leading to a new uniform world culture (Featherstone 1990), instead the contemporary global world with its drastic expansion of mobility is a place where “difference is encountered in the adjoining neighbourhood, the familiar turns up at the ends of the earth” (Clifford 1988, 14). Consequently, the local and the global become increasingly intertwined in a process of “glocalization” (Robertson 1995).

The contemporary processes of globalisation do not diminish the importance of ethnicity, on the contrary, it is given a new significance in a global world (Featherstone 1990; Hall 1991; Waters 1995). One major change is that the connection between ethnicity and locality has become blurred. “Ethnicity, once a genie contained in the bottle of some sort of locality (however large) has now become a global force, forever slipping in and through, the cracks between states and borders” (Appadurai 1990, 306). The processes of globalisation have, among other things, lead to the emergence of de-territorialised ethnicities. Another development is an increasingly disjunctive relationship between nation and states, both of which, in a way, have become one another’s projects (Appadurai 1990).

One of the more interesting contributions to the discussion on transnationalism is made by Basch et al. (1994). Their book is especially valuable in that, unusually among the literature on globalisation and (post)modernity, it is based on empirical research. In their studies among migrants from the Caribbean and the Philippines in USA, Basch et al. describe how the migrants’ social, economic, political and cultural networks involve both country of origin and country of settlement. These processes are described with the notion of transnationalism:

We define “transnationalism” as the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. We call these processes transnationalism to emphasize that many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders. (Basch et al. 1994, 11)

At this stage it should be added that, although globalisation has mainly been discussed during recent years, it is obviously not something that suddenly appeared one morning in the 1980s. Global migration, for example, is older than recorded human history and transnational social relations also existed before the advent of jet flights and the internet. Not surprisingly, migration researchers have also before the 1980s sought to conceptualise migrants’ transnational and de-territorialised social relations.

Schierup (1985) as well as Schierup and Ålund (1986) point out that there are anthropologists who have managed to see migration as a dynamic process. The social processes which constitute and reproduce the total “social field” of migrants’ life experiences can be described with the concept of “migrancy” which connotes the continuous processual character of migration. Schierup and Ålund refer to the concept’s usage by the anthropologist Mayer (1962), who studied the process of urbanisation among Xhosa migrants in South Africa. Mayer shows that the various parts of migration - emigration, immigration, integration, remigration, etc. - cannot be isolated from one another. Furthermore, migration is never absolute and there might be an oscillation between town and country for a long time (Schierup 1985; Schierup and Ålund 1986).

Thus, migration has never meant a definite end to the old social context in which migrants have lived. Instead, as Schierup (1985) points out, although migrants live in one “social field” this consists of a double existential frame of reference in which migrants continue to live in for a long time:

For the immigrant this double existential frame of reference is not a socio-psychological aspect alone, but is authentically rooted in social and material realities. Separation from social networks, groupings, material possessions and alternatives of labour and education in the countries of origin takes place only slowly - for some not at all. (Schierup 1985, 153)

There are of course significant differences in this “double existential frame of reference” between labour migrants and refugees. Furthermore there is also reason for avoiding to see this issue as a duality since this suggests that there is necessarily something contradictory or irrational in the social reality of migrants and refugees. It is more fruitful to understand this issue as something transnational, i.e. that the social relations of a person are largely unrelated to his or her actual geographical location.

The studies of social networks made by another anthropologist working in Africa, J. Clyde Mitchell (e.g. 1989), are also related to Mayer’s approach to migration. Mitchell’s approach to social relations influenced many later studies of immigrants in Britain (Rogers and Vertovec 1995) and the whole tradition of social network studies. The social network approach emphasises structures. Researchers in this tradition often develop detailed models of the structure and functions of particular social networks (Mizuchi 1994). However, this kind of structural sociology is not suitable for this thesis which studies the processes involved in social relations rather than the structures (cf. Schatzman and Strauss 1973). Nevertheless, this study will use the term network, but in a more general way as used, for example, by Rex and Josephides (1987). These writers, inspired by Radcliffe-Brown (1952), describe networks as the “relationships which arise between individuals in the course of meaningful action” (Rex and Josephides 1987, 14).

In addition to these anthropological studies, there is reason not to forget the classical work of Thomas and Znaniecki (1958). In their study of Polish migrants they studied the social organisation of the Polish peasant in Poland *and* in the United States. Their study carried out at the beginning of the century can still be regarded as a good model for the sociological study of a transnational reality (cf. Lie 1995)

The importance of social networks transcending national borders has also been discussed within more contemporary migration research (Tilly 1990). This approach has been influential in many empirical studies of chain-migration, among others in studies of Finnish migration to Sweden (Jaakkola 1984; Nyman-Kurkiala 1991;

Pohjola 1991). Furthermore, the importance of social networks can also be discerned in studies emphasising that immigrant and ethnic minority associations, both formal and informal, can have many important functions for their communities (Carey-Wood et al. 1995; Jenkins 1988; Joly 1995b, 1996; Rex, Joly and Wilpert 1987; Salinas, Pritchard and Kibedi 1987).

Since refugees can be distinguished from migrants by the fact that refugees have been forced to leave their country of origin, it is plausible that the feature of de-territorialisation would be even more salient among refugees. For example, the Tamil refugees in Steen's (1992) study have one obvious thing in common:

They do not form a 'people' or a 'community', which means that they cannot be represented 'as if' one was anthropologizing in a Jaffna village in the North of Sri Lanka. There is thus no question of writing a monography in the conventional sense of the term, assuming an easy correspondence between a people and a place. 'The setting' (or the equivalent) cannot appear at a crucial point in chapter one. For refugees there is no such fixed setting; this is, indeed, *the whole point about them*, regrettably missed in many refugee studies. Moreover, it is this point which clearly distinguishes migrants from refugees. Migrants 'decide' to leave and to re-create their life in another place; refugees are torn away from their homeland and still cling to it. ... In the case of refugees *everything* that should normally define them in a socio-cultural context is non-existent, or rather, still back home (e.g. in Sri Lanka). (Steen 1992, 110)

In the literature on ethnicity, an ethnic group is often regarded as being defined by its relation to and interaction with other groups (e.g. Barth 1969). An ethnic minority is thus defined in relation to the ethnic majority in the society. However, it is difficult to adapt this relational context to the de-territorialised reality in which refugees live. Gisèle Bousquet (1991) finds that theories of ethnic relations are not easily applied to refugee communities. She challenges Abner Cohen's (1969) idea that ethnicity is used to mobilise the members of an ethnic group within contemporary urban political conflicts, on the ground that the Vietnamese refugees in her study arrived in the host-country as an already distinct culturally and politically self-identified ethnic group. Unfortunately, she does not develop her challenge much further than this, nor does she draw any wider conclusions from her results.

It can be suggested that the problem has nothing to do with theories of ethnic relations as such, but with the strict localisation of ethnic relations that these theories usually assume. In an increasingly globalised world ethnicity might also be defined in relations which are transnational or even totally de-territorialised. Similar ideas are discussed by James Clifford (1992) who argues that anthropologists have made a mistake in strictly localising cultures and social relations.

The changing and processual character of the process of “migrancy,” as well as the continuous transnational social networks, also constitute challenges for the typologies of refugee and migration movements presented earlier. Is it useful to formulate theories of migration on strict classifications of migration movements in cases where these are under constant change? In other words, a person who initially leaves his or her country as one type of migrant may, depending on the situation and/or the passing of time, become another type of migrant.

Diasporas

Obviously, refugee research needs a new conceptual framework in which the refugees’ de-territorialised and transnational social relations can be described. In recent years there has been an increased interest in the notion of diasporas. Lie (1995) argues that there has been a change of focus in recent publications in the sociology of international migration. Instead of studying international migration the focus is often on transnational diasporas. The new diaspora discourse has thus meant that the former interest in immigration and assimilation has largely given way to an interest in transnational networks and communities. This discourse has emphasised personal experiences, and the researchers, who themselves are often from the minority communities, have tried to describe the minorities’ own interests and definitions (Lie 1995).

The concept of diaspora originated as a concept describing the Jewish dispersal from their original homeland. It has often been used to describe various well-established

communities which have an experience of “displacement,” like the overseas Chinese, the Armenians in exile, the Palestinian refugees, the Gypsies or the whole African diaspora (cf. Chaliand and Rageau 1991; Clifford 1994; Cohen 1997; Safran 1991). It is common to argue that one criterion of a diaspora is a forcible dispersal. Goulbourne suggests that this word should be used only for a group which “has been forcibly dispersed and lives in what its members regard as exile, the group keeps its distinctive identity rather than wholly assimilate or integrate, and it looks forward to the day of return to the original homeland” (Goulbourne 1992, 4). Likewise, Chaliand describes diasporas as “born from a forced dispersion, they conscientiously strive to keep a memory of the past alive and foster the will to transmit a heritage and to survive as a diaspora” (Chaliand 1989, xiv).

The diasporic phenomena obviously have a long history and are not only connected to the modern world (Cohen 1997). What, however, is new in the contemporary world is the steadily increasing impact of globalisation. It is a process which through the ease of international mobility and the facilitating of transnational social relations increases the possibilities for the formation of diasporas. The concept of diaspora is clearly associated with transnationalism, as Khachig Tölölyan writes, “Diasporas are the exemplary communities of the transnational moment” (Tölölyan 1991, 4). Today the concept of diaspora is used increasingly to describe any community which in one way or another has a history of migration (Marienstrass 1989). The concept has been regarded as useful in describing the geographical displacement and/or de-territorialisation of identities and cultures in the contemporary world. This approach includes writings on syncretism, “hybridity” and cultures of resistance among groups of migrant origin (cf. Brah 1996; Gilroy 1991; Hall 1993; Kaya 1996). Thus, today the concept of diaspora is used to describe the processes of transnationalism, the experience of displacement as well as the salience of pre-migration social networks, cultures and capital, in a wide range of communities (Clifford 1994; Cohen 1997; Safran 1991; Sheffer 1986).

Thus, it can be argued that today an increasing number of communities have a diasporic relation to the society in which they live. The transnational social

organisation these groups display diverges from the traditional way the nation-state and its citizens are understood. Consequently, these groups represent a challenge to the exclusivist claims of modern nation-states. It may be that these forms of social organisation “have pre-dated the nation-state, lived within it and now may, in significant respects, transcend and succeed it” (Cohen 1995, 16). A slightly different perspective is, on the other hand, given by Basch et al. (1994) who argue that international migration, rather than contesting nation-states, leads to nations and even nation-states themselves becoming de-territorialised as a result of the dispersal of populations.

The advantage of using the concept of diaspora is described by Clifford when he writes that “transnational connections break the binary relation of minority communities with majority societies - a dependency that structures projects of both assimilation and resistance” (Clifford 1994, 311). This binary relation between a majority and a minority is what the concept of ethnic minorities presupposes. Therefore the “ethnic relations” approach cannot give a sufficient understanding of the de-territorialised social relations of refugees. Seeing refugees as living in a diasporic relation is a way of throwing some more light on the special relationships that refugees have with both the society of origin and society of settlement. Thus, the concept of diaspora can also help to bridge the artificial “before” and “after” distinction commonly applied to migration, and hereby it can encompass the refugees’ own definition of their situation.

The Ethnic Origins of Diasporas

Sheffer (1986, 1995) argues that diasporas play an increasing role in international politics, an influence which in the USA, for example, has been described by Shain (1995). These new trans-state organisations have largely been neglected by politicians and analysts although clearly their number and significance are growing in the contemporary world. The increase in migration and the new global means of communication and transport all contribute to this process. Sheffer’s profile of modern diasporas reflects his interest in the political dimension of diasporas:

[Diasporas] were created as a result of either forced or voluntary migration ...; they consciously maintain their ethno-national identity; they create communal organizations, or are on the way to creating them; equally consciously, they maintain explicit and implicit ties with their homelands; even if only in rudimentary form, they develop trans-state networks connecting them with their respective homelands and their brethren in other countries; and they face grave dilemmas concerning dual and divided loyalties to their homelands and host countries. (Sheffer 1995, 9)

Sheffer (1995) wants to stress the autonomous individual and collective decisions taken by migrants after arrival in the country of settlement. He argues that it is not the migrant's background but their free choice to join existing diasporas, or become new diasporas in the country of settlement, which is the most accurate explanation for the emergence of new diasporas. Furthermore he wants to emphasise the ethnic character of contemporary diasporas. According to Sheffer, the attachment to the homeland can be attributed to the primordial nature of ethnicity. In the conclusion of his article, Sheffer (1995) also argues that diasporas are neither "imagined" nor "invented" communities in the sense described by Anderson (1981). However, this critique of Anderson is not fully explained.

Sheffer's (1995) emphasis on migrants' free choice seems to be widely exaggerated. Obviously, it is not in the power of individuals to freely choose their identity and group membership. Furthermore, Sheffer's own emphasis on the primordial dimension of ethnicity is, of course, in conflict with the issue of free choice (which he also acknowledges). Thus, Sheffer's argument is rather confusing since it tries to support both a primordial view on ethnicity and an instrumental view where migrants are able to make free choices. However, it would appear that these different points of view are still connected with each other since Sheffer declares that his analysis subscribes to the "synthetic" approach to the meaning of ethnicity. In this approach, largely formulated by Anthony Smith (1981), "the origins of modern ethnicity lie in an inseparable combination of primordial, instrumental and environmental factors" (Sheffer 1995, 18). Sheffer's argument on the ethnic nature of diasporas finds strong support in Smith's own writings:

An *ethnie* need not be in physical possession of 'its' territory; what matters is that it has a symbolic geographical centre, a sacred habitat, a 'homeland' to

which it may symbolically return, even when its members are scattered across the globe and have lost their homeland centuries ago. *Ethnie* do not cease to be *ethnie* when they are dispersed and have lost their homeland; for ethnicity is a matter of myths, memories, values and symbols, and not of material possessions or political power. (Smith 1986, 28)

The main problem with Sheffer's approach to diasporas remains the same as with Smith's more or less primordial view on ethnicity. It is doubtful if these approaches can sufficiently take into account the structural constraints and power relations within social relations. In the case of diasporas, it is clear that policies in the host-society also have a great impact on the diasporas. Exclusionary or inclusionary ideologies, structures and policies within the host-society all influence ethnic diasporas. Neither Smith's notion of ethnicity nor Sheffer's notion of diasporas sufficiently takes into account these structures in society.

Diaspora as an Analytical Tool

The concept diaspora is currently very popular and there are numerous definitions. The range of phenomena supposedly spanned by the concept is such that it is in danger of losing its explanatory power. In order to be able to use the concept analytically I prefer the precise definition of diaspora presented in the first number of the journal *Diaspora*, where according to William Safran diasporas are:

Expatriate minority communities whose members share several of the following characteristics: 1) they, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from a specific original "center" to two or more "peripheral", or foreign, regions; 2) they retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland - its physical location, history, and achievements; 3) they believe they are not - and perhaps cannot be - fully accepted by their host country and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it; 4) they regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return - when conditions are appropriate; 5) they believe that they should, collectively, be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity; and 6) they continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another, and their ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship. (Safran 1991, 83-84)

This thesis explores to what extent the above mentioned characteristics of a diaspora can be found in the Kurdish refugee communities. However, Safran's definition has also been the object of discussion. James Clifford (1994) argues that this normative definition is too strict, and does not take into account all those instances that can be called a diaspora. He argues, for example, that there does not necessarily have to be any centre for the diaspora, nor do all members of the diaspora necessarily want to return "home." However, for the purpose of this thesis there is no point in using Clifford's less precise definition since, as I will argue later, Safran's specific criteria are to a great extent fulfilled by the Kurdish refugee communities. The use of a less precise definition can only add to the confusion surrounding the concept.

Of wider theoretical importance is Cohen's (1997) discussion of Safran's typology. Firstly, he points out that although Safran's definition is useful, there is some degree of repetition concerning the relationship of the diasporic group to its homeland. Furthermore, he adds that on occasion the goal of a diaspora is not simply a question of the maintenance or restoration of a homeland, but one of its very creation (the case of the Kurds and the Sikhs are here mentioned as examples). Secondly he argues that some issues dealing with the nature of the relationship to the country of exile have to be added in order to include "trade, labour and imperial diasporas" (Cohen 1997, 24) as well as the more "postmodern" cultural diasporas. A third addition mentioned by Cohen (1997) is the question of time. This was first pointed out by Richard Marienstrass in his discussion of the notion of diaspora, "Certainly, the word diaspora is used today to describe any community that has emigrated whose numbers make it visible in the host community. But in order to know whether it is really a diaspora, time has to pass" (Marienstrass 1989, 125).

Cohen (1997) wants to emphasise the fact that although diasporas are associated with victims and suffering, they also paradoxically involve possibilities and resources. He argues that it is important to supersede the victim-tradition of diasporas. In fact, there are plenty of examples of the creativity and inventiveness of diasporas. The African diaspora's achievements in the arts and popular music, the Jewish diaspora's successes in science and the Chinese diaspora's accomplishments in trade are just a few well

known examples. It can be argued that achievements like these have not happened despite the diaspora, but rather because life in the diaspora has been the impetus behind these achievements. Life in a diaspora may both include new possibilities and propel exiles towards new levels of accomplishment and inventiveness (cf. Cohen 1996, 1997). Some indication of the rationale behind this paradox is found in an article by Edward Said, himself a Palestinian exile:

Exile, unlike nationalism, is fundamentally a discontinuous state of being. Exiles are cut off from their roots, their land, their past. They generally do not have armies or states, although they are often in search of them. Exiles feel, therefore, an urgent need to reconstitute their broken lives, usually by choosing to see themselves as part of a triumphant ideology or a restored people. The crucial thing is that a state of exile free from this triumphant ideology - designed to reassemble an exile's broken history into a new whole - is virtually unbearable, and virtually impossible in today's world. Look at the fate of the Jews, the Palestinians and the Armenians. (Said 1990, 360)

The exile's search for a new whole history not only takes political forms, it might also evolve into intellectual activities:

Much of the exile's life is taken up with compensating for disorienting loss by creating a new world to rule. It is not surprising that so many exiles seem to be novelists, chess players, political activists, and intellectuals. Each of these occupations requires a minimal investment in objects and places a great premium on mobility and skill. The exile's new world, logically enough, is unnatural and its unreality resembles fiction. (Said 1990, 363)

One example of an author who gets his inspiration from life in exile is Salman Rushdie whose work largely has been related to the creation of what he himself calls "imaginary homelands" (Rushdie 1991).

Diaspora and Ethnic Relations

In most definitions diasporas are regarded to be communities. Despite this, the concept has seldom been used as a well-defined sociological concept. Instead the concept has mainly been used in order to describe feelings and experiences of displacement. However, it is important to note that a diaspora can be seen as a social organisation (in fact, Cohen (1995, 1996) explicitly uses the term social organisation, although he

never develops this idea further). Hence, to live in a diaspora is not only a question of having a diasporic consciousness or identity, but it can also have a profound influence on the social organisation of the community.

Obviously, diaspora theories have a lot to gain from previous studies of migration and transnational social networks, a connection which seems to be largely overlooked in much of the literature on diasporas. For example, Safran (1991) identifies a number of open questions and research agendas in the study of the diaspora phenomena, including the following:

In the relationship between perceptions of discrimination, actual oppression, and diaspora sentiments, which are the independent and which the dependent variables? Is there a reciprocal causality? Is diaspora consciousness a concomitant feeling of otherness, of alienation, or of a lack of hospitality on the part of the host society; or on the contrary, is the lack of hospitality a response by the host society to the exceptionalism that diaspora consciousness signifies? (Safran 1991, 96)

These are, of course, central questions. However, it is important to remember that these are not new questions for social scientists. The interest in migrant communities and minority-majority relations is as old as social science itself. It is obvious from most studies in this area that the way in which immigrants are integrated is largely dependent upon the existing social structures and the policies adopted by the receiving society. Exclusionary policies, racism, discrimination, and xenophobia all have a great impact on integration. When using the concept diaspora it is important not to forget this. There is a danger that the concept diaspora, with its preoccupation with “migrant communities” and their relationship to the country of origin, may disregard the host-society and the power structures involved in majority-minority relations. If this happens the introduction of the concept diaspora leads back to culturalistic and other social and psychological theories in which immigrants are largely seen as choosing to integrate or not, and exclusionary structures and ideologies, like racism, are not seen to play any significant role.

Theories and discourses that diasporize or internationalize ‘minorities’ can deflect the attention from long-standing, structured inequalities of class and race. It is as if the problem were multinationalism - issues of translation, education,

and tolerance - rather than of economic exploitation and racism. While clearly necessary, making *cultural* room for Salvadorans, Samoans, Sikhs, Haitians, Khmers, and so forth, does not, of itself, produce a living wage, decent housing, or health care. Moreover, at the level of everyday social practice cultural differences are persistently racialized, classed, and gendered. Diaspora theories need to account for these concrete, cross-cutting structures. (Clifford 1994, 313)

It is important to remember that there is no reason to see diasporas as a solely positive development. As Clifford says, “Suffice it to say that diasporic consciousness ‘makes the best of a bad situation.’ Experience of loss, marginality, and exile ... are often reinforced by systematic exploitation and blocked advancement” (Clifford 1994, 312). Although diasporas are often defined in relation to nation-states, it must be remembered that a diaspora cannot provide its members with the same services and opportunities that are provided by a state for its citizens. Thus, it is important not to see diasporas as a positive and sufficient alternative to egalitarian welfare states

Before concluding this chapter, it has to be added that Kurds in exile have been called a diaspora by a political scientist, Jochen Blaschke (1991a), when he describes the Kurds living in Germany. They are also referred to as a diaspora in *An Atlas of International Migration* (Segal 1993). The concept is also occasionally used among the Kurds themselves. Just to give one example: In a recent interview Abdullah Öcalan, the chairperson of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), comments on the Kurdish asylum problem and declares that “the Kurds are living in a vast Diaspora like the Jewish Diaspora of the past” (Laizer 1996b, 47).

Conclusion

The diaspora discourse and the notion of diasporas can provide useful analytical tools for refugee studies. The notion of diaspora can describe the dispersal as well as feeling of displacement which is common for all refugees. Furthermore this framework can take into account the transnationalism and de-territorialisation of social relations connected to contemporary migration phenomena. This framework conceptualises the dual orientation towards both the country of origin and country of settlement among

migrants and refugees, and can thus bridge the artificial distinction between before migration and after migration which is common in many migration studies. Thus, this thesis will study the social organisation of the Kurdish refugee communities in Finland and England within a diasporic conceptual framework. The definition of a diaspora which is utilised here is the one presented by Safran (1991).

However, it is obvious that the diaspora framework needs some modifications in order to be used as an analytical sociological concept. It is obvious that when using the concept of diaspora, one has to take into account previous research and theories of ethnic relations, international migration and forced migration, which have been presented in this chapter. Despite the emphasis on transnationalism it has to be understood that diasporas are influenced by exclusionary and inclusionary structures and policies in the country of settlement. For example, racist ideologies and various exclusionary discourses have a profound effect on refugee communities. A diaspora, although it might create a strong transnational community, cannot replace the advantages to be gained from an inclusion into an egalitarian welfare state. This thesis presents an attempt to use the notion of diaspora in such a way that it takes into account both the inclusionary and exclusionary processes in the society of settlement as well as the diasporic group's continuous transnational relation to the country of origin.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

This thesis is based on an ethnographic study of Kurdish refugee communities which was carried out between August and December 1994 in Finland and between January and September 1995 in England. The methods used were traditional field research methods, and these provide the basis for a description of the communities' social organisation. However, this thesis seeks to be not only descriptive, but to develop a conceptual framework for a sociological understanding of the social organisation of refugee communities in the countries of settlement. In terms of Schatzman and Strauss's (1973) classification of presentations of field data, this thesis is neither a descriptive account of the Kurdish refugee communities nor a substantive theoretical account of refugee integration and diasporas. Instead this research will furnish what Schatzman and Strauss call an analytic description whereby the conceptual scheme used (i.e. the concept of diaspora) is developed on the basis of the data that are obtained (cf. Burgess 1984).

Methodology

The development of a conceptual scheme closely resembles what Glaser and Strauss (1967) call theory generation. The methodology in this thesis conforms to their understanding of theory as an ever-developing process. The analysis of the results is largely based on the generation of what Glaser and Strauss call a substantive grounded theory, by which they mean a theory which is "developed for a substantive, or empirical, area of sociological inquiry, such as patient care, race relations, professional education, delinquency, or research organizations" (Glaser and Strauss 1967, 32). The substantive theory is defined in opposition to formal theory, by which they mean "that developed for a formal, or conceptual area, such as stigma, deviant behaviour, formal organization, socialization, status congruency, authority and power, reward systems or

social mobility” (Glaser and Strauss 1967, 32). Both these types of theories might be regarded as theories of the “middle range” (Merton 1949). In this study a substantive theory is developed for the empirical area of refugees in the country of settlement. As Glaser and Strauss (1967) point out, the theory generation of a substantive theory can be accomplished by a comparative analysis between or among groups within the same substantive area. In this study the comparison is made among Kurdish refugees in two locations: Finland and England.

Furthermore, substantive theory must be grounded in data: “Substantive theory faithful to the empirical situation cannot, we believe, be formulated merely by applying a few ideas from an established formal theory to the substantive area” (Glaser and Strauss 1967, 33). One research tradition which emphasises the empirical perspective is that of field research methods as described by Schatzman and Strauss (1973) as well as Burgess (1984). Field research methods are based on methods developed within social anthropology and by the sociological traditions of community and urban studies, for example the Chicago school. Within social anthropology Malinowski (1922) is regarded as the first user of a field research approach, and within the Chicago school the classical works by Thomas and Znaniecki (1958) and Park (1950) are of special methodological importance. The tradition of community studies is largely based on these two earlier perspectives (Bell and Newby 1971).

One of the main ideas of the Chicago school was that sociology should be an empirical science where social phenomena should be studied in their own natural settings. The method of participant observation enabled the researcher to put himself in the place of the researched and thereby to understand their point of view. It was believed that case-studies were able to provide a deeper understanding of social reality than was possible with any other method. This point of view was later elaborated by Glaser and Strauss (1967), amongst others, who argued that in-depth case-studies are efficient for theory generation. The informants used should be active participants in the sphere of life under study (Blumer 1969). The sample of informants also can be a representative sample. This requires the sample to be checked against different background variables relating to the total population (Bell and Newby 1971).

Field research, more than other methods, is based on a process of analytic induction (Hammersley 1989). This means that the concepts, theories and methods should grow out of an understanding of the field of study, and therefore they cannot be clearly defined in advance. The methodology of this thesis is also influenced by the tradition of symbolic interactionism advocated by Herbert Blumer (1969). Symbolic interactionism is predominantly an American sociological tradition and seldom referred to in British or European studies. This tradition is, however, related to the Weberian perspective advocated by John Rex (e.g. Rex and Tomlinson 1979). In fact, the scientific history of these two perspectives can be traced to the same roots within German philosophy and to the work of Georg Simmel, Max Weber and, before them, Immanuel Kant (Hammersley 1989; Matthews 1977; Rock 1979). Both the Weberian perspective and symbolic interactionism emphasise that one should understand the social actors' own points of view and the meaning they give to their actions. Herbert Blumer (1969) expresses this notion by stressing that one should study the social actors' own definition of the situation. These definitions are produced in interaction with other actors, and therefore the researcher should concentrate on situations of social interaction and the various ways in which meaning is produced in these situations. Language has thus been an area of great interest for interactionists. Nevertheless, it should be noted that symbolic interactionism is also applicable to macro-sociological phenomena (e.g. Blumer and Duster 1980; Lyman 1984).

The interactionist methodology enables the researcher to look at the persons under study as subjects in their own right, instead of mere dependent variables ruled by the social structure. This methodology also enables the researcher to study the *processes* involved in the field of research. By doing so one can avoid the common problem of regarding "ethnicity" or "culture" as stable entities unrelated to the social contexts in which they occur, and at the same time avoid viewing people as passive victims governed by their cultures and social structures. Process-oriented field research is also advocated by Schatzman and Strauss:

The researcher may come to see social relations not as structures that "perform" a limited number of functions, nor as structures which change from time to time,

but as processes which from time to time may be dealt with as structures and which will exhibit a multitude of consequences. (Schatzman and Strauss 1973, 8)

However, in recent years the tradition of symbolic interactionism has been seriously criticised from a number of different perspectives. Hammersley (1989) has pointed out the theoretical contradictions, while Denzin (1992) summarises the criticisms concerning the theory's astructural, apolitical, acultural, ahistorical and overtly rational common-sense biases. Denzin suggests that a solution would be to merge symbolic interactionism with contemporary cultural studies. One of the main criticisms is that, in the major sociological dichotomy between structure and agency, symbolic interactionism does not sufficiently take into account structural constraints.¹ It is obvious in the area of international migration and ethnic relations that structures such as economic inequalities, racist ideologies and migration policies play a very significant role. For anybody studying immigrants it is of course especially important not to forget the influence of exclusionary policies and other discriminatory social structures. Any other approach easily leads to a "blame the victim" situation where immigrants are defined as deviants or as problems.

In addition, this work is also related to a sociological tradition represented by the work of John Rex, who strives to describe how migrants in increasingly multi-cultural western European countries mobilise in order to defend their interests (e.g. Rex 1996). This approach suggests that what is important is not only to describe the social organisation of refugee communities, but also to look at the functions of these social structures for the community in question. This is of course related to the usually well understood fact that immigrant and ethnic minority associations, both formal and informal, can perform many important and positive functions for their communities (e.g. Carey-Wood et al. 1995; Jenkins 1988; Joly 1995b, 1996; Rex, Joly and Wilpert 1987; Salinas, Pritchard and Kibedi 1987). It has thus been clear from the beginning of this study that associations have to be included in the research. However, besides studying formal associations it is also important to look at the more informal interaction which occur within the group (Rex and Josephides 1987). Furthermore, in this study the role of associations is viewed within the framework of the diaspora concept. As explained in the previous chapter, a diaspora can be understood as a social

organisation and not only as a consciousness, culture or identity, and consequently it is obvious that what constitutes the diaspora to a large part are the associations and informal networks within the community.

There are a number of recent sociological and anthropological studies of refugee communities which have used similar ethnographic methods to those employed in this research. These studies include research among Vietnamese refugees in Paris (Bousquet 1991), Soviet Jews and Vietnamese refugees in California (Gold 1992), Chilean refugees in Scotland (Kay 1987), Latin American refugees in Sweden (Lundberg 1989) and Sri Lankan Tamils in England and Denmark (Steen 1992). All five of these studies have been influential in the writing of this thesis.

Ethical Questions

In a study of an oppressed minority like the Kurds ethical questions should be given the highest priority. During my fieldwork I have declared who I am and what I am doing as clearly and honestly as possible. Furthermore, confidentiality is of utmost importance when studying refugees. Since refugees have fled persecution, they or their relatives might still live in danger. Accordingly, the anonymity of the respondents and informants has been protected during the research process and in the thesis itself. Ethical questions are especially important in the study of vulnerable minorities (cf. Grönfors 1982). For example, it is important to establish whether this research can in any way improve the Kurdish refugees' situation or might, on the contrary, only worsen the situation. Although the final outcome of research can never be anticipated fully in advance, there are a number of ways in which I have tried to mitigate potential problems.

First, the research has been planned in co-operation with Kurdish refugees. Prior to carrying out fieldwork, I had discussions with a number of different Kurdish associations and individuals concerning their opinions about this research project. The whole methodology of this research also presupposes that the research process is a

continuous interaction between the researcher and the researched, with the researcher trying to understand the latter's own point of view. Through this approach I have been able to develop the research project so as to consider issues which the refugees themselves regard important. Also the focus of my research has been influenced by this interaction, to study Kurds from all the main parts of Kurdistan was a wish expressed by many Kurds during the initial contacts with the "field."

Secondly, the theoretical perspective of this study leads to an interest in the relational context in which the Kurdish refugee communities' situation is defined. This means that there is a great emphasis on the role of the social structure and the majority society in this process. This relational context guarantees that the refugees are not defined as "problems." The chapters presenting the results of the field work will also highlight a number of instances where a change of policy could lead to improvements for the refugees. However, at the same time this study avoids any "victimisation" of the minority by emphasising that they are also actors in this process.

Related problems are discussed by Schierup (1987), who argues that studies of the integration of refugees have often reflected the interests of the receiving states. In this research an attempt has been made to avoid the problems associated with the concept of integration through the choice of a research method that aims to understand the refugees' own point of view. Furthermore, it will be argued that the concept of diaspora suggests a rethinking of conventional ways of understanding integration. It should also be noted that I have not been in contact with either the Finnish or British authorities in order to plan this research. Contacts with the authorities could have worked against my attempt to understand the refugees' own point of view and to establish a trustful relationship with the informants. In Britain my role as a researcher independent of the British authorities was not difficult to establish since I am from Finland. Actually, I frequently discovered that it was a positive asset to be Finnish and not British. In Finland, my role as an independent researcher was a little bit harder to achieve, since I did not hide the fact that I had previously been a social worker. In any case, only a few of my contacts in Finland were with persons who had known me in a professional capacity before I carried out the fieldwork.

Methods and Empirical Material

There are of course a lot of different research traditions which have developed within the areas of anthropology and sociology that are related to the above mentioned perspectives. The method used in this research is field research as outlined by Burgess (1984) and Schatzman and Strauss (1973). Field research covers several different methods, for example participant observation, unstructured interviews and documentary methods. The researcher has to be a methodological pragmatist and must use every possible method which can furnish more knowledge.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Among the different kinds of empirical material collected for this research, the most important material consists of interviews with a sample of fifty Kurdish refugees from Turkey, Iraq and Iran. Semi-structured interviews are used because this is a method that least restrains the respondents while it still retains a good capacity for later analysis. The aim of the interviews was to give a broad understanding of the refugees' situation and problems as seen from their own point of view. The interview guidelines, which were continuously developed during the fieldwork, are enclosed as an appendix.

The method used to find my sample was a combination of snowballing and quota sampling. The sample was chosen exclusively through contacts with Kurdish individuals and associations. Since I was introduced to my interviewees by fellow Kurdish refugees, I generally experienced fewer problems with access than I had expected. All the persons approached in this way accepted the invitation to take part in the research. The establishment of a trustful relationship was also helped by the fact that the interviews did not include sensitive questions relating to the refugees' activities and background in the country of origin. However, I did experience problems with access on various public occasions and at more spontaneous meetings in the community centres when I was not introduced by another Kurd.

The sample only includes persons who regarded themselves as refugees in the two countries in question. In this case “refugees” also include persons in the UK with Exceptional Leave to Remain and persons in Finland with a residence permit given on humanitarian grounds. The sample includes three persons in Britain who arrived as refugees but later have received British citizenship. In two other cases, the interviewees originally arrived as refugees in a third country but later moved to Britain or Finland. The interviews have only been conducted with adult refugees who left Kurdistan or their countries of origin as adults.

In qualitative research involving small numbers it is impossible to have samples which are statistically representative of the whole population. However, I have tried to achieve a sample which includes representatives from all three countries of origin and both sexes. Out of a total of fifty interviews, sixteen were conducted with Kurds from Turkey, twenty-one with Kurds from Iraq and thirteen with Kurds from Iran. Twenty-four of the interviews were conducted with men and thirteen with women, while thirteen of the interviews were group interviews with the whole family present, varying from two to nine persons. Thus, a total of about eighty participants were involved in these fifty semi-structured interviews. The distribution of all semi-structured interviews by country of origin, country of exile and sex is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Semi-structured interviews.

| Country of origin | Country of exile | | Total |
|-------------------|------------------|----------------|-------|
| | <i>Finland</i> | <i>England</i> | |
| <i>Turkey</i> | | | 16 |
| Males | 4 | 7 | |
| Females | | 3 | |
| Families | 1 | 1 | |
| <i>Iraq</i> | | | 21 |
| Males | 4 | 4 | |
| Females | 2 | 3 | |
| Families | 5 | 3 | |
| <i>Iran</i> | | | 13 |
| Males | 3 | 2 | |
| Females | 1 | 4 | |
| Families | 2 | 1 | |
| Total | 22 | 28 | 50 |

Of the twenty-eight interviews in Britain, twenty-six took place in London and two in the Birmingham area. In Finland, nine of the interviews were conducted in the capital area of Helsinki, while thirteen were made in three smaller cities. This relatively well represents the proportion of Kurds in the capital area in the two countries.

The aim was to achieve a sample with persons who had lived in the country of exile for between two and ten years. However, the final sample does include one man from Turkey as well as a family from Iraq who had lived in the country of exile for only about one year. The purpose of this time frame was to provide a sample of refugees who were relatively new arrivals but who had still received a decision on their asylum applications and were no longer asylum seekers. However, since some persons have to wait for up to four years for a decision, the sample still includes five interviews with asylum seekers from Turkey.

During the fieldwork I made a particular effort to gain access to the experiences of Kurdish women. In order to do this the interviews usually had to be organised without the husband or other men being present. This is because the men often had a tendency to dominate the conversation. Although I am a man, it usually proved to be possible to organise interviews with women. It may be that my status as an outsider, who could not be regarded to follow Kurdish social norms, made it easier to get access to interviews with Kurdish women than it would have been for a Kurdish man. However, I experienced problems in finding enough female interviewees in Finland since there in fact are very few single female refugees in the country. For example, among the few Kurds from Turkey living in Finland, I was despite my best efforts not able to find a single female interviewee.

Interviews were conducted both with refugees who were active in associations as well as with persons who avoided all Kurdish organisations. The sample also represents a fairly wide spectrum of political orientations, comprising both persons who described themselves as non-political as well as persons who were active supporters of political

movements in Kurdistan. These political orientations included support for all the main Kurdish parties as well as some smaller left-wing parties.

Although the sample is fairly representative according to the known variables relating to the whole population, it still cannot be seen as statistically representative of the Kurdish refugee communities in Finland and England. Furthermore, the sample is of course to an even lesser degree representative of the population in Kurdistan. The question whether this is a representative sample or not, is on the other hand a secondary issue since this study does not use any statistical methods in order to make statements about any wider community. Instead, this thesis is concerned with the major social processes involved in the refugee communities, and these processes are best studied by comprehensive case-studies.

The interviews were mostly carried out in the homes of the interviewees, but some interviews were also conducted in restaurants, in community centres and other public places. The visits in refugees' homes often took a very long time during which there were many discussions outside the scope of the actual interviews. Often delicious Kurdish meals constituted a pleasant part of these visits. Twenty of the semi-structured interviews were completed with the help of interpreters, since my knowledge of Kurdish is limited to a few words in Sorani, and I cannot speak any Turkish at all. The interviews in England were conducted in English. In Finland most of the interviews were in Finnish, although a few were also conducted in Swedish or English. In this thesis a translation of an interview statement, made by me or by an interpreter, is indicated with "[t]" after the quotation.

All of the interviews were tape-recorded except for seven interviews where the respondents did not wish to be taped. All the semi-structured interviews were later transcribed to an electronically readable form. These computer files were coded with the computer program Atlas/ti, which is a flexible program for qualitative text analysis.² Although such transcription demands a lot of work this facilitates the later analysis of the interviews. Atlas/ti can easily handle large amounts of text and codes,

and thus the mechanical tasks during the analysis are far easier (cf. Richards and Richards 1994).

One bias often associated with interview methods is that the information given by those who are most articulate and speak the language most fluently can easily dominate the empirical material. In order to avoid this bias, the material collected through interviews is combined with information gathered from other sources.

Associations

In an attempt to get a clear picture of the Kurdish communities, I tried to contact all Kurdish organisations in both countries. A Kurdish organisation is here defined as one which explicitly states that it works for Kurds and/or Kurdish issues. The biggest organisations were visited frequently during the fieldwork, and all the Kurdish organisations with their own premises were visited at least once. Some of the smallest organisations could only be contacted over the phone. Separate interviews were undertaken with either the chairperson or some of the employees of the different associations.

The associations' publications in English and Finnish have been studied (e.g. journals, annual reports and newsletters). These included the following journals in England: *Hawkar*, *KCC News*, *Kurdish Observer*, *Kurdistan Focus*, *Kurdistan Human Rights Bulletin*, *Kurdistan Report* and *Ronahî*. In Finland *Denge Kurd - Kurdien Ääni*, *Dlanpar* and *Kurdistan Review* were studied. However, these journals are concerned almost solely with the situation in Kurdistan, and they provide very little information about life in exile.

With the help of this empirical material, information was collected about the Kurdish associations' official aims, the extent and nature of their activities, their funding and details of their membership. I was especially interested in the organisations' work with newly arrived refugees and their opinions about the problems experienced by refugees.

Participant Observation

In order to further my understanding of the social organisation of the Kurdish refugee communities, the method of participant observation was used in a variety of social occasions, including several different Kurdish public gatherings and private meetings at various locations. For example, besides the more commonplace visits to Kurdish associations I participated in five different *Newroz* celebrations, two public demonstrations, one gathering remembering the massacre in Halabdjá, one “15 August party” celebrating the Kurdish insurrection in Turkey, one seminar celebrating International Women’s Day and several more private happenings. These various events enabled me to meet and discuss with a great number of Kurds. However, to utilise fully all the possibilities in the method of participant observation would have required full knowledge of the Kurdish dialects and Turkish. Therefore, the use of this method has largely been limited to a confirmation of information collected by other methods.

Additional Sources of Information

In addition to the above mentioned empirical material I also found official statistics to be useful. Statistics published by the Home Office in the UK and by the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs in Finland were valuable sources of background information. There are also a variety of other relevant publications and unpublished material which are quoted in this thesis.

Conclusion

The methods utilised in this study are ethnographic field research methods. These allow the researcher to study social phenomena in their own natural settings and to understand the social actors’ own points of view. This approach is particularly suitable for a study of refugees which inevitably includes many practical and ethical problems. The empirical material collected through these methods provides the possibility to

describe the social organisation of the Kurdish refugee communities from the refugees, own point of view.

Field research methods are also useful for theory generation. As pointed out in chapter two, research within the area of refugee studies often stands on a relatively weak theoretical base. Thus, these methods are also helpful in an attempt to make a contribution to a theoretical discussion about refugees in the country of exile.

CHAPTER 4

POLITICS AND FORCED MIGRATION IN KURDISTAN

Introduction and History

In order to understand the experiences of refugees in the country of exile, an understanding of their background and reasons for flight is absolutely necessary. This chapter thus provides a short general introduction to the Kurdish question, and then continues with a brief description of recent political developments and forced migration in each of the three countries of origin.

The area traditionally inhabited by the Kurds, Kurdistan, is today divided between Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran. There are also indigenous Kurdish populations in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkmenistan (Kendal 1993b). As the map in Figure 1 illustrates, the Kurds constitute a clear majority in large areas of the Middle East. This chapter will deal mainly with the situation in Turkey, Iraq and Iran. These three countries account for at least 90 per cent of the Kurdish population, and all the refugees in this study originate in one of these countries. The Kurds, who are estimated to number almost thirty million,¹ are often referred to as the world's biggest nation without a state. The Kurds are commonly portrayed as persecuted minorities in all the states dividing Kurdistan. Although this can be said to be generally true, a more detailed picture is needed in order to understand the Kurdish tragedy.

Kurdish political history and the problems experienced by the Kurdish nationalist projects can only be understood if one takes into account that Kurdistan lies in an area where several empires and regional powers meet. On the other hand, the states in the

region have always had problems controlling the mountainous Kurdish regions and the numerous Kurdish insurrections. It is only since the advent of modern warfare that the states in the region, with disastrous consequences, have attempted to gain full control over Kurdistan. Some of the recent human rights violations in the area will be discussed later in this chapter.

The entire area of Kurdistan has never formed a state, but the Kurdish emirates under the Ottoman Empire had a degree of independence and the Mahabad republic declared independence in 1946. However, these political units only comprised small parts of what today is commonly regarded as Kurdistan. Instead Kurdish society was for a long time a tribal society, where tribal allegiances had a considerable influence on the political and social structure. However, over time the tribal structure has given way to other loyalties, for example loyalties based on nationalist and socialist discourses (Bruinessen 1992a). Nationalism arrived relatively late in Kurdistan, which is also a reason for the difficulties experienced by the Kurdish nationalism. There are a number of recent authoritative publications outlining the history of Kurdistan and the Kurdish national struggle (Bulloch and Morris 1993; Chaliand 1993, 1994; Entessar 1992; Gunter 1990, 1992; Kreyenbroek and Sperl 1992; Laizer 1996a; McDowall 1992, 1996; Olson 1996). Instead of providing too much historical detail I will refer my readers to these books.

The Kurdish language is an Indo-European language related to Farsi (Persian), but not related to Arabic or Turkish. The countries in the region today use different alphabets; the Arabic alphabet in Iraq, Syria and Iran, the Roman alphabet in Turkey and the Cyrillic alphabet in the CIS. The Kurdish dialects have developed in widely different directions because of the cultural persecution of the Kurds, the lack of a Kurdish cultural and political centre and the absence of a common written Kurdish language. Many of the dialects are today mutually unintelligible. The two most important dialects are Kurmanji, spoken in northern Kurdistan and Sorani, spoken in southern Kurdistan (Entessar 1992; Kreyenbroek 1992; Nerweyi 1991). The Kurdish dialects, despite their huge differences, do not have clear borders between each other; nor do the differences in dialects have anything to do with the actual political borders in the

region (Kreyenbroek 1992). One also has to remember that many Kurds today use the main language in the state where they are living as their first language. This is especially true in Turkey where the assimilation policy and prohibition of the Kurdish language have forced many Kurds to abandon Kurdish. In Iran the Kurdish language is often used only in private while Farsi is used in public.²

When it comes to religion, most Kurds are Sunni Muslims following the Shafi'i legal school (this distinguishes them from their Turkish and Arab Sunni neighbours who are mostly followers of the Hanafi legal school). However, not all Kurds are Sunni Muslims since there are significant communities of Shia Muslim, Alevi, Yezidi and Jewish Kurds (Bruinessen 1992a, 1992b). There are also Christian communities in Kurdistan, but persons belonging to these are not usually regarded as Kurds. Because of the religious diversity, religion cannot be used as an ethnic marker in the case of Kurds.

All the above mentioned factors would suggest that it is hard to define who is a "Kurd" and who is not. However, my own experience is that the Kurds themselves are very clear of their own identity and ethnic boundaries. Consequently, in this research the only definition of "Kurd" that is used is one that is based on self-definition. Although all the Kurds I have met are proud of their Kurdish identity there might also be some persons of Kurdish ancestry who choose not to identify themselves as Kurds and who avoid using the Kurdish language. This might happen because of the social stigma that is sometimes attached to Kurdishness.

Because of their unhappy present political condition, the name of Kurd is usually associated with the idea of resistance to national suppression and the sufferings from human rights violations. Our oppressors have described us, unjustly and successively, as a primitive mountain people refractory to civilization, lawless nomadic tribes without any national consciousness, highway robbers, eternal rebels, bloody landlords, red communists, and today as international terrorists. Contrary to historical facts, we are said to have never been organised into a state or states of our own. Our past has been so blurred, our present is so full of struggle that it is often forgotten that we are a people of the Hurrians and the Medes respectively the Kurds' first and second ancestors. (Kurdistan Parliament in Exile 1995, 3)

The leading European authority on Kurdistan, the anthropologist Martin van Bruinessen (1990, 1992a, 1992b), points out that while the Kurdish people have ancient historical roots, Kurdish ethnic identity as a clear cut category uniting all Kurds and separating them from other possible ethnic identities is a rather recent phenomenon. He stresses that Kurdish identity has largely developed as a reaction to the cultural and political domination by the Turks, Persians and the Arabs.

What unites them is not any set of objective, economic, political or cultural criteria, but only the awareness among them that they constitute one people. This awareness is a result of a series of historical developments, the most important of which was the rise of Kurdish nationalism. To the extent that the Kurds feel one and have an awareness of a common destiny, they are a nation. But for each individual Kurd, the Kurdish nation is not the only entity with which he [sic] feels he shares a common destiny. Beside those who have been assimilated to a dominant nation by force, there are also Kurds who have quite willingly chosen to identify themselves primarily as citizens of their state or as followers of a particular religion or sect. (Bruinessen 1990, 26)

The Kurdish nationalist project is, like all other nationalisms, eager to construct a common Kurdish history, identity, culture and language. At the same time the opponents of Kurdish nationalism, especially the Iranian, Iraqi and Turkish states, are trying to prove that the Kurds are not a nation. It must be stressed that the aim of this thesis is not to take part in the heated dispute between the advocates and opponents of Kurdish nationalism. Furthermore, the theoretical framework of this thesis largely relies on the assumption that ethnic groups and nations always are social constructions, and thus there cannot be any "objective" criteria for who constitutes a nation and who does not. Undoubtedly, however, there is today a strong Kurdish nationalism which influences many Kurds from all parts of Kurdistan and which regards all the Kurds as one nation. Consequently, there is only one Kurdish national project, but in practice there are disagreements among the Kurds about how Kurdish interests best can be defended.

Because of the political divisions within Kurdistan a wide range of political parties are found within Kurdistan and in the Kurdish diaspora. In all three countries there are Kurdish parties and organisations, which are mainly various left-wing and/or nationalistic movements.³ Especially in Iran, and at least until recently in Turkey,

Kurds have also been active in all-Iranian and all-Turkish parties. The existing Kurdish parties, despite their appeal to Kurdish nationalism, are largely confined to the present political borders in the region. Furthermore, they usually regard a political solution within the existing political borders as the only realistic aim in the present situation.

The Kurdish political parties have often been forced to depend on support from neighbouring states. Throughout their history the Kurds have also been taken advantage of in conflicts between states in the region. In fact, many of the Kurdish rebellions have been opposed and fought by other Kurds. To a large extent the divisions and conflicts between Kurdish parties can be explained by their different political alliances to the neighbouring states. The governments of these states have usually oppressed their own Kurdish minorities, and therefore the Kurdish parties have often become involved in complex political relations with both international and domestic repercussions.

Many of my informants have pointed out that the democratic tradition in Kurdistan is not very well developed. Most organisations in Kurdistan are associated with some of the political parties. One of the leading Kurdish social scientists in Europe, Omar Sheikmous (1995), points out that formal organisations without affiliation to a political party have been almost non-existent in Kurdistan (with the possible exception of Iran). According to him the lack of a tradition of free organisations can partly be understood through the overwhelming influence of the communist parties. These were the first “modern” organisations in Kurdistan, and usually they were also influenced by a political culture in which all other organisations, political as well as non-political, had to be affiliated to the communist party. The Kurdish nationalist parties were established after the communist parties and often used the latter’s organisational structure as a model, and consequently all social, cultural, sport and other organisations were affiliated to some of the political parties. According to Sheikmous (1995) this tradition still has a profound effect on Kurdish organisations in the diaspora, but one can discern some degree of change away from this model and towards a more democratic form of organisation since the beginning of the 1980s.

The influence of socialism and communism on the Kurdish political scene can only be understood when taking into account the relative economic underdevelopment of the Kurdish regions and the social, cultural and political persecution of the Kurdish people in most of the states.⁴ Van Bruinessen calls the economic process in the whole of Kurdistan one “that deserves the name of underdevelopment rather than that of development” (Bruinessen 1992a, 20). The underdevelopment of the Kurdish regions in Turkey is described by Kendal (1993a) and Chaliand (1994). Majeed Jafar (1976) uses the term “under-underdevelopment” for the situation of the Kurdish regions in the underdeveloped Turkey. The Turkish sociologist Ismail Besikci (1991) describes Kurdistan as an interstate colony.⁵ Similar economic situations can also be found in Iraq, where according to Chaliand (1994) the Iraqi government’s policy has long been to economically marginalise the Kurdish regions. The underdevelopment of Iranian Kurdistan in comparison to other parts of Iran is described by Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou (1993). He is also the author of one of the most comprehensive studies published in English about the economic situation of Kurdistan: *Kurdistan and the Kurds* (Ghassemlou 1965).⁶

The underdevelopment of Kurdistan, described in the above mentioned sources, includes features like high illiteracy, high birth-rates and poor health services in the Kurdish areas. There are, however, big differences between urban and rural areas within Kurdistan. For example, illiteracy is especially high among women in the countryside, while more affluent Kurds in the cities have much better opportunities to get an education.

Given the economic and political situation in Kurdistan, many Kurds have perceived their struggle for independence as an anti-colonial or anti-imperialist struggle. In the literature of the Kurdish parties there are often references to other independence struggles in the third world. The political solutions in Palestine and South Africa are mentioned as possible models for a solution to the Kurdish problems, and during a demonstration I attended in London one of the most popular phrases was “yesterday Vietnam, today Kurdistan.”

During this century Kurdistan has experienced a high level of internal migration. This has been fuelled by the high birth rates and changes in the agricultural methods in the Kurdish countryside. Many Kurds have moved to the big cities both inside and outside Kurdistan looking for jobs, but often they end up as unemployed living in the poorest parts of the cities (cf. Chaliand 1994; McDowall 1996). Perhaps even more consequential than voluntary migration has been the forcible expulsions of the population. Iraq and lately also Turkey have used systematic and extensive village destruction programmes in their fight against Kurdish guerrilla.

Turkey / North-West Kurdistan

After the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire the Treaty of Sevres, signed in 1920, sought to guarantee statehood to "Armenia, Kurdistan and Arabia" (Vanly 1993, 145). However, this agreement was replaced by the Treaty of Lausanne (1924) after the turbulent events in Anatolia ended with Mustafa Kemal gaining the power in Turkey. The Kemalist programme of Turkish national liberation, unity, secularism and modernisation was largely influenced by European nationalist ideology. This was an ideology alien in the Middle East (Chaliand 1994) and not very easy to implement in the multi-ethnic environment of Anatolia.⁷ The most serious ethnic conflicts in the disintegrating Ottoman Empire were between Muslims and the Armenians as well as the Greeks. These conflicts ended with the Armenian genocide⁸ and massive population exchanges between Greece and Turkey at the beginning of this century. The Kurds in Anatolia ended up in conflict with the Kemalist ideology after Mustafa Kemal in 1922 declared that the new state was Turkish. In 1924 the Kurdish language was banned (Chaliand 1994). Several Kurdish rebellions followed, which were violently suppressed by the Turkish state, the last major uprising being in Dersim between 1936 and 1938 (Bruinessen 1994; Chaliand 1994).

Even the existence of a Kurdish minority has been in clear conflict with Turkish nationalism and the Kemalist ideology on which modern Turkey is founded. During

Turkey's entire existence the Turkish government has tried to deny that Kurds exist. The Kurds have been called "mountain Turks" and Kurdish identity has been oppressed through legislation forbidding anything "Kurdish" or even any mention of the fact that Kurds exist. Consequently, there are no official figures of how many Kurds there are in Turkey. Bruinessen (1992a) estimates that in 1975 the total number was at least 7.5 million, or at least 19 per cent of the population. In the mid-1990s the number of Kurds in Turkey was estimated to be around 14 million (Sheikhmous 1994) or 12 million (Chaliand 1994).

When the laws forbidding the use of Kurdish were introduced, only 3 to 4 per cent of the Kurds could speak any Turkish at all (Kendal 1993a). Although there have been some cosmetic changes in legislation in recent years, the cultural oppression of the Kurds continues to this day. There has been a clear policy of forced assimilation of the Kurdish population in Turkey. It is argued that if a Kurd is prepared to accept Turkish identity, he/she can be accepted as a Turk, and in fact many assimilated Kurds can be found in important positions in Turkish society. Despite this, there is a clear tendency to regard any expression of Kurdish identity or culture as a dangerous threat to national unity. In Turkey "separatism" is a crime that leads to harsh prison sentences.

Those who are detained in Turkey might face torture. In 1993 the UN Committee against Torture came to the conclusion that the existence of torture in Turkey cannot be denied, and according to Amnesty International the torture of political and criminal detainees in police stations was widespread and systematic (Amnesty International 1994a).⁹

Although the Kurds in Turkey have been denied their ethnic identity and been forced to assimilate, they have experienced a very strong ethnic revival and nationalistic movement since the beginning of the 1980s. Since 1984 there has also been an increase in the activities of Kurdish guerrilla from the Kurdistan Workers Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan, PKK). The PKK was originally a political party with an explicit Marxist-Leninist ideology. The party and its leader Abdullah "Apo" Öcalan have been using a clear Marxist rhetoric (e.g. Öcalan 1992). However, during the mid-

1990s the party distanced itself from Marxism-Leninism. In 1985 another organisation working closely with the PKK was founded, The National Liberation Front of Kurdistan (Enîya Rizgariya Netewa Kurdistan, ERNK).

There are, and have been, several other Kurdish parties and organisations in Turkey, nearly all of which have been declared illegal in Turkey. In London I found that many Kurds from Turkey also supported other left-wing parties beside the PKK. One worth mentioning is the Socialist Party of Kurdistan (PSK, formerly named Turkish Kurdistan Socialist Party), which has advocated a peaceful solution to the Kurdish question but is nevertheless forbidden in Turkey. However, during the early 1990s the polarisation of the conflict in Turkey led to a situation where the PKK and its sister organisation the ERNK became clearly the most important Kurdish political organisations (cf. Barkey 1993).

Although the PKK is usually thought to be committed to an independent Kurdistan and opposed to any solution based on autonomy (in contrast to the Kurdish parties in Iraq and Iran), this is not supported by the literature studied for this research. Actually, in a recent letter Öcalan writes, "I would like to emphasise that we are not insistent on the division of Turkey, and that such propaganda does not reflect our approach to the question" (ERNK 1995, 26). In 1984 the PKK started its armed struggle against the Turkish government and those whom they regarded as collaborators in the Turkish imperialists' oppression of the Kurds in North-West Kurdistan. The Turkish republic has had a rather violent and polarised political history. Also the PKK used extraordinarily violent methods in the beginning of its campaign (cf. Gunter 1990; Bruinessen 1988). On the other hand the Turkish government's response to the Kurdish nationalist movement and the guerrilla war was not only an armed response, but in practice also an increase in the persecution of all Kurds in eastern Turkey.

The PKK is considered a "terrorist" organisation by the Turkish authorities and Turkish mass media. The British Parliamentary Human Rights Group, led by Lord Avebury, who made a mission to Turkish Kurdistan in October 1993 came to the conclusion that:

In Britain and elsewhere, the question of Turkish Kurdistan is often presented as one of a reasonably democratic government seeking to cope with an intractable problem of terrorism. We believe that the reality is one of military terrorists aiming to extinguish the identity of a people. (Parliamentary Human Rights Group 1993, 28)

The discussions I had with Kurdish refugees from Turkey gave me the impression that a clear majority of the Kurdish population supported the national uprising led by the PKK and the ERNK. As the above mentioned report observes, "Whether the majority of the people in the region actually support the PKK itself, they are widely opposed to the continuation of Turkish rule in its present form" (Parliamentary Human Rights Group 1993, 6). Kurdish informants have pointed out that the historical importance of the PKK's struggle is that the party has managed to continue to fight longer than any other Kurdish movement. The present movement also has a greater level of popular support than previous uprisings, which largely served the interests of tribal and feudal leaders. It seems to be clear that the PKK in the mid-1990s had considerable support among the Kurds in Turkey, but especially among the most marginalised parts of the Kurdish population.

The situation during recent years in the Kurdish parts of Turkey can only be described as a civil war between the PKK and the Turkish army. The fights between the PKK and the Turkish government are even occasionally fought inside Northern Iraq where the PKK has several bases. In the mid-1990s there were also approximately 20 000 Kurdish refugees from Turkey living in Northern Iraq (McDowall 1996). Bruinessen (1988) refers to an account in the Turkish newspaper *Cumhuriyet* (12 February 1986) where a "fact-finding mission of the parliamentary opposition party, the Social Democrat-Populist Party, reported that all of eastern Turkey has become a sort of concentration camp where every citizen is being treated as a suspect and where oppression, torture and insult by the military are the rule rather than the exception" (Bruinessen 1988, 46). According to official Turkish sources (*Cumhuriyet* 9 May 1994 cited by ERNK 1995) 9,595 persons have lost their lives in the conflict, of which 3,028 are civilians (i.e. neither PKK guerrillas nor government soldiers). Kurdish sources (ERNK 1995) estimated in August 1994 that 34,000 persons have died during

the civil war, of which 5,000 were civilians. 2,000 villages have been destroyed and 3.5 million people have been forced to move. The human rights situation has clearly deteriorated during the 1990s. Amnesty International (1993b) places most of the blame on the Turkish security forces, but also finds PKK guerrillas guilty of gross violations of human rights. These accusations are also supported by Human Rights Watch (1993c). During the 1990s the PKK has at least twice unilaterally declared a cease-fire, but this has not stopped the hostilities. The Turkish government has also resolutely refused to negotiate with organisations they regard as “terrorists.”

There is a particularly bad situation for the Kurdish villagers who find themselves in the middle of the conflict. The Turkish authorities have established a system of village guards to fight the PKK. If villagers do not participate in this system they will face repression from the army and their villages might be destroyed; and if they do participate they will find themselves in conflict with the PKK (Amnesty International 1993b; Rugman and Hutchings 1996). According to McDowall (1996), several Kurdish tribes have migrated to avoid coming under either the government or PKK pressure. In the mid-1990s there seemed to be a policy to totally depopulate the rural areas in eastern Turkey, and villages seemed to be systematically burned down by the Turkish security forces (Rugman and Hutchings 1996).

Whatever the methods of the PKK, the population rapidly discovered that there was little it did which was not matched by the ruthlessness of the security forces. A major migration to town began for those caught in the crossfire of the conflict. (McDowall 1996, 424)

The political situation in Turkey differs from the situation in Iraq and Iran, since the Turkish government proclaims its commitment to a western style democracy. For example Gellner (1994) argues that the idea of a secular democracy (although in a combination with a strong army) is a profoundly important part of Kemalism. However, it looks as though Turkish democracy does not include the Kurdish question and the provinces in the east, “Following Özal’s death in April 1993, it has become clearer than ever that when it comes to the Kurdish question, it is not the civilian led elected government which determines policy but the army dominated National Security Council” (Kutschera 1994, 14).

There also seems to have been an increase in the number of extrajudicial killings and “disappearances” in eastern Turkey. According to Amnesty International (1993a), people active in the legal opposition or suspected of having contacts with the PKK have been killed either directly by, or with the collusion of the Turkish security forces. Kurdish sources (for example numerous articles in *Kurdistan Report*) also point out that many of the atrocities in eastern Turkey are carried out by death squads and irregular troops, the so called contra-guerrillas.

In the 1990s there seemed to have happened a polarisation of Turkish society on the Kurdish question. As McDowall observes, “From 1990 onwards ... the majority of the Turks began to view the Kurdish minority itself as a profound menace” (McDowall 1996, 440). At the same time the government’s crackdown on the PKK has also affected moderate Kurdish and Turkish associations, politicians, artists and intellectuals (cf. Barkey 1993). Even Kurdish members of Parliament who have opposed the government’s policies have been imprisoned. In the 1990s assimilated Kurds, who cannot speak Kurdish and have never before strongly identified themselves as Kurds, are largely forced to choose sides in an increasingly polarised conflict.

Alevi Kurds

A majority of the Kurds from Turkey living in London are Kurdish Alevis. The Alevis are a religious sect, not belonging to either the Sunni or the Shia sects of Islam and they do not follow Islam’s traditional religious rituals. There are over three million Alevis in Turkey,¹⁰ of whom one third are Kurdish. Traditionally Alevis are a socially stigmatised group, and until this day they have been a marginalised underclass in Turkish society (McDowall 1992). The Alevi community has experienced a large rural - urban migration, which has led them to towns where they often live in their own quarters and are regarded as a threat by the dominant Sunni population (Bruinessen 1992b). The Alevis have also experienced large-scale forced migration, where the population has been forced to move from areas with high PKK activity (McDowall

1992). Being Kurdish and Alevi in many ways means a double marginalisation. The social situation of the Alevis has traditionally made them incline towards the political left in Turkey (McDowall 1992). As a couple of my informants told me, this has also made it easy for them to start to support the PKK during the 1990s, despite the fact that the PKK originally largely was associated with only the Sunni Kurdish communities.

To understand the sudden influx of Alevi Kurds in Britain in 1989, one has to go back to 1978 when “tensions between the rightist and leftists in Marash province culminated in a major massacre of Alevis organised by the fascist Grey Wolves (National Action Party), in which at least one hundred, and probably several hundred, died” (McDowall 1992, 59). In the local elections in Marash in 1989 Sunni Muslim revivalists and rightists did particularly well, and among the Alevis in Marash there was a fear that the events of 1978 would be repeated (McDowall 1992). According to Collinson (1990), the Turkish authorities’ sharp reaction to the May Day demonstrations in 1989 was also a contributing factor. In May and June 1989 a large number of Turkish citizens arrived in Britain to seek asylum, and according to my informants in London most of these were Alevi Kurds. There seem to be several reasons why they chose to flee to Britain instead of any other country. During my fieldwork most Alevi Kurds described the migration as a chain migration, where most people had relatives or friends who had previously arrived in Britain.

Escape from Turkey

Because of the labour migration from Turkey there are established Turkish and Kurdish communities in many European cities. The present refugee migration is therefore often a continuation of previous chain migrations (cf. Hjarvø 1991). In addition today, as during earlier migration movements from Turkey, it is not always easy to distinguish between political and economic reasons for the flight. This is especially true since the persecution of the Kurds takes both economic and political forms.

Although the interviewees were not asked about the reasons for their flight from Turkey, many persons volunteered to explain this. Most refugees disclosed that the only thing they had done was publicly to express support for the Kurdish cause, and that they therefore faced imprisonment or feared for their life in Turkey. The interesting thing is that none of the persons I met said that they would have been personally active in the PKK or the ERNK in Turkey. This is in contrast to the Iraqi and Iranian refugees who often described how they had actively taken part in the Kurdish resistance movements.

The refugees from Turkey I met often used their connections in Europe, as well as the resources of their relatives in Turkey, in order to be able to travel to Europe. The refugees in London usually travelled more or less directly from Turkey to Britain. Often they planned to go to Britain from the beginning. There are also some persons who have arrived as students, but who because of the developments in eastern Turkey and their political activism in Britain have found that they cannot safely return to Turkey. It is difficult to find any clear pattern of migration among the refugees in Finland because of the small sample, but it appears that many persons travelled through the Soviet Union/CIS and ended up in Finland in their attempt to reach Western Europe.

Iraq / South Kurdistan

After the First World War the British established a new state out of the three ancient Ottoman *vilayets* of Basra, Baghdad and Mosul. Largely against their will, the Kurds therefore found themselves living in a state with a predominantly Arab population (Vanly 1993). The Kurds are in the mid-1990s estimated to be around 23 per cent of the population of Iraq, numbering approximately four and a half million (Sheikhmous 1994).

Relations between the Iraqi government and the Kurds have never worked well. The Kurdish areas have occasionally been granted limited autonomy by the government,

but usually the (Arab) state's wish for political hegemony has led to conflicts between the Kurdish minority and the government. Kurdish *peshmergas* (guerrilla soldiers) have recurrently been involved in a guerrilla war with the government. The Kurdish *peshmergas* have periodically controlled large parts of northern Iraq. During the 1920s and 1930 the Kurdish uprisings were mostly local conflicts, but from the 1960s the wars between the Kurds and the government were fought on a larger scale (Chaliand 1994). During the war in 1974 the Kurds were able to get considerable support from Iran and were able successfully to fight the government troops until Iran suddenly withdrew its support in 1975. After the defeat in 1975, the Kurdish movement was split into two parties which have continued their separate fights for autonomy.

The two main Kurdish parties in Iraq are the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). These two parties got 45 per cent and 43.6 per cent of the votes respectively in the Kurdish elections in 1992 (McDowall 1996). The Kurdish nationalist movement in Iraq has been divided by different alliances with foreign countries and by a friction between modern left-wing intellectuals from an urban background and those supporting a more traditional Kurdish leadership (Sherzad 1992). This friction is also noticeable in the problematic relations between the KDP and the PUK. The KDP's leader Masud Barzani is often regarded as a more traditional leader while the PUK's Jalal Talabani has a background in left-wing intellectual organisations. There is also a geographical difference: Most KDP supporters are in the northern Kurmanji-speaking parts of Iraq, while the PUK is more powerful in the Sorani-speaking south (cf. Laizer 1996a).

The Kurds in Iraq have always had a clear Kurdish identity and have also enjoyed greater cultural rights than their Kurdish neighbours in Iran and Turkey. The language has been accepted as an official language in the Kurdish areas, and this was the case for example in the agreement on autonomy that was signed in 1970 (McDowall 1992). Kurdish has also been accepted, at least since 1974, as a language of instruction at every level of teaching (Chaliand 1994).

Although the Kurds in Iraq have had cultural rights, the government has repeatedly been fighting a war against its Kurdish minority. Saddam Hussein's policy towards the Kurds can be described as a genocide,¹¹ including forcible deportations, chemical warfare, mass executions and human rights violations on an enormous scale. During the late 1980s the Iraqi government's war with the Kurds went into a new phase. After the war between Iran and Iraq ended in 1988, the Iraqi army was able to concentrate all its resources on the Kurdish rebellion. Saddam Hussein introduced the *Anfal* campaign in 1988, a new extensive programme of Arabisation and genocide of the Kurdish population during which at least 50,000, but probably 100,000 Kurds were killed by the government (Human Rights Watch 1993a). McDowall (1996) puts his estimate even higher and writes that 150,000 - 200,000 persons perished in the *Anfal* operations. In many cases Kurdish villagers were transported to concentration camps where the men were executed and women and children deported to another part of Iraq (McDowall 1996).

During the *Anfal* campaign Saddam Hussein repeatedly bombed Kurdish villages and towns with chemical weapons. According to Kurdish sources cited in Chaliand (1994), bombardments with chemical weapons against civilians took place repeatedly between 15 April 1987 and 15 May 1988. During this time these bombardments drew surprisingly little attention from the international community. The most tragic case is the bombing of the town Halabja on 16 March 1988, where 5,000 people died.

Kurdish sources estimate that 3,500 Kurdish villages out of a total of 5,000 have been destroyed in Iraq, while American sources estimate the number of destroyed villages at 1,200 (Chaliand 1994). According to other sources the number in 1990 was 4,000 destroyed villages out of an estimated 7,000 (Bruinessen 1992a). About 800,000 Kurds were deported from the Kurdish areas to camps in other parts of Iraq (Sherzad 1992). Between 1969 and 1988 at least 130,000 Fali Kurds were deported from Iraq to Iran, since these were not regarded to be citizens of Iraq (Morad 1992).

The Kurdish rebellion collapsed in 1988, and a large part of the *peshmergas* and many civilians fled to Iran and Turkey. Chaliand (1994) estimates that the total number of

refugees created by the conflict in Iraq was 400,000 persons of whom 370,000 fled to Iran. McDowall (1996), on the other hand, estimates that the total number of Kurdish refugees from Iraq living in Iran in 1988 was around 250,000 persons. Most of the Iraqi refugees I met during my fieldwork are persons who fled into Iran around 1988 and, as will be explained later, were not able to stay there.

In 1990 the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait created a new situation for the Kurds in Iraq. Despite encouragement from the Allies, the Kurdish parties were reluctant to join the fight against Saddam Hussein. But in March 1991 a spontaneous uprising in Kurdistan led to the whole of northern Iraq being controlled by the Kurds. After it became clear that Saddam Hussein was not, after all, defeated and that the uprising would not get support from the Allies, it soon became clear that this rebellion would end in a disaster. Remembering Saddam Hussein's earlier atrocities against the Kurds, the population fled *en masse* towards the neighbouring countries (Chaliand 1994; Bruinessen 1992a). According to UNHCR (1992), there were 1.4 million Kurdish refugees from Iraq in Iran, and 450,000 refugees by the Turkish border by mid April 1991. For the first time in Kurdish history this humanitarian catastrophe was closely followed by the Western media. In order to alleviate this massive disaster, a humanitarian intervention by troops from the USA was soon started. Largely on the initiative of the British government, a safe haven for the Kurds under the protection of the United Nations was established in Northern Iraq (Bulloch and Morris 1993).

The Kurdish parties soon organised an election for a National Assembly and established control over Northern Iraq. Negotiations with Saddam Hussein about autonomy failed, so the Kurdish National Assembly unilaterally declared autonomy for the region. Symptomatic of the Kurds' precarious situation is the fact that the National Assembly did not declare Kurdistan independent. Nor would any of the neighbouring states support an independent Kurdish state. In a seldom seen mutual understanding, the foreign ministers of Turkey, Iran and Syria meet in November 1992 and issued a joint statement declaring their commitment to Iraq's territorial integrity (Barkey 1993).

Many Kurdish refugees in Europe managed to visit Northern Iraq after it came under the protection of the UN. Many of my informants told me that they again started to hope that it would be possible to move back. The economic situation in the region, however, was extremely vulnerable. All the wars had destroyed much of the infrastructure and a large part of the Kurdish villages. Because Northern Iraq is still a part of Iraq, the UN sanctions against Iraq also affect the Kurdish regions. Since also Saddam Hussein stopped all trade with the Kurdish areas, the region has become totally dependent on the trade at the border with Turkey. In this way the Kurds in Iraq became largely reliant on the goodwill of the Turkish government, a fact that has led to very bad relations with the PKK.

The complicated problems in Northern Iraq did not help to resolve the old disagreements between the two main parties, the KDP and the PUK. Repeated violent clashes between *peshmergas* from different parties (the KDP, PUK, PKK and the Kurdish Islamic Movement in different constellations) as well as a disagreement over the tax income from the border trade, finally led to open civil war between the two main parties during 1994 and 1995 (cf. Laizer 1996a). At the time of writing the hostilities between the KDP and the PUK continue.

What started as a promising attempt to achieve Kurdish autonomy seems to have ended in economic despair, social breakdown, human rights violations and civil war (Amnesty International 1995a; Ofteringer and Becker 1994; Laizer 1996a). Furthermore, Saddam Hussein is still in power in Baghdad and it is not clear for how long the United Nations will be ready to provide protection for the Kurds. Of course, this is not a situation where there can be any return migration from the diaspora. On the contrary, the situation in Northern Iraq might create new refugees in the area.

Escape from Iraq

The Kurdish refugees from Iraq whom I have met during this study are mostly persons who were active in the Kurdish resistance movement and who were forced to flee to Iran in 1988. I have not asked the interviewees about their activities before the flight,

but still most of the Iraqi refugees told me that they had been *peshmergas* for several years before they fled out of the country. A few interviewees also arrived in Europe earlier, in two cases as students.

The Kurds who in 1988 fled from Iraq were accepted as refugees by Iran. Iran has acceded to the Geneva Refugee Convention and Protocol (United Nations 1995), and has in fact taken care of a large proportion of the world's refugees. According to UNHCR (1993) 4.4 million refugees lived in Iran in December 1991, of whom most were from Afghanistan. The Kurdish refugees were accommodated in Iran in camps where "conditions have been physically deprived and restricted, with strictly limited time allowed outside camp, and inadequate food and health facilities inside" (McDowall 1992, 111). When the Kurdish refugees from Iraq arrived in 1988 there were already 50,000 Kurds from Iraq living in Iran who had arrived as refugees in 1975, and also an unknown number of Faili Kurds who had been deported from Iraq (McDowall 1996).

Many of the refugees from Iraq held political opinions clearly in conflict with the dominant ideology in the Iranian Islamic Republic. Many Kurdish refugees did not feel safe in Iran, especially since the conflict between the Iranian Kurds and the Iranian government remained unsolved. Many Kurdish refugees from Iraq have therefore tried to continue their flight from Iran. Since the Kurdish refugees from Iraq (for obvious reasons) do not have any official Iraqi passports or travel documents, these have to be obtained in Iran. All the persons I interviewed in Britain had been forced to buy very expensive false travel documents in order to get out of Iran. As Koser (1997) writes, refugees who travel directly from Iran largely have to rely on intermediaries or "travel agents." It appears that the only possible destinations by plane from Iran have been Syria and Russia, from where the refugees have continued their journeys. Few of the refugees I interviewed had any clear plan of where they wanted to travel. Most people seemed to have had a very poor knowledge of possible destinations. A woman from Suleimanya described her knowledge of Europe:

It is incredible when I think of it now, but I had never heard about visas or anything and was not aware of Europe or did know about the countries and way

of life here. I knew of capitalism and that Europe was highly industrialised but that was it. Although I lived in a town, I was from a poorer part of the town and I had never met a European and did not know or had met anybody who had been to Europe.

Some Kurds from Iran and Iraq told me that Sweden has a reputation as a country where human rights are respected, and consequently many persons try to get to Sweden. In practice it is often the persons who sell the travel documents and flight tickets who decide where the refugees will fly. One refugee explained that she had bought a visa for the United Kingdom, since this was the cheapest one available, which was probably because the UK was regarded as the country where it would be most difficult to get asylum. Two other persons told me that they had been on their way to Sweden, but because of problems with their travel documents during the change of flight at Heathrow Airport they had to apply for asylum in Britain.

After 1988 many refugees from Iraq have also continued their flight from Iran to Turkey, where the Turkish authorities have kept Kurdish refugees from Iraq strictly isolated from the local Kurdish population in elementary camps near the Iraqi border (Laizer 1991), or in some cases under the protection of UNHCR in towns in the western part of the country. UNHCR in Turkey has been able to organise resettlement for some of the refugees in a third country (this will be discussed in more detail in the section about Iran). The creation of the safe haven in Northern Iraq in 1991 slightly changed the situation, but because of earlier described circumstances, there are still refugees coming from Iraq to Turkey. However, according to Amnesty International (1994b), the policy of the Turkish authorities in 1993 was that there were no longer any genuine refugees coming from Iraq. Therefore the authorities endorsed a forced return and even denied the refugees from Iraq the right to leave Turkey for another country.

Beginning in 1990, Finland has invited a number of Iraqi refugees from UNHCR camps in Turkey and Pakistan as part of the Finnish annual refugee quota. Most of the Iraqi refugees in Finland have therefore arrived as quota refugees, although there are also many who have travelled through the former Soviet Union and arrived in Finland

as asylum seekers. In my sample in Finland all refugees from Iraq had arrived as quota refugees. None of the refugees I interviewed had planned to go to Finland, and in fact many told me that they had never heard about the country before they were given the opportunity to be resettled there.

Iran / East Kurdistan

The part of Kurdistan that today lies within the borders of Iran consists of areas that in 1514 were incorporated in the Safavid (Persian) empire. The Kurds usually have a sense of closer affinity with the Persian language and culture than with Turkish or Arabic. The Iranian state is also a multi-cultural state with several minorities (Azeri, Arabs, Baluchi, etc.) and it has a far longer history as a state than Turkey and Iraq. The Kurds comprise between 10 per cent (Bruinessen 1992a; McDowall 1992) and 15 per cent (Chaliand 1994; Sheikmous 1994) of the Iranian population, or between 5.5 million and 8 million persons in the mid-1990s. As McDowall (1992) points out, the sense of affinity with Iran impels today's Kurds towards autonomy rather than independence from Iran. This sense of an identity as Iranians, although not identification with the present government, has also been evident in most of my interviews with Iranian Kurdish refugees.

Despite this, one of the most important events in the history of Kurdish nationalism took place in this part of Kurdistan. The Mahabad Republic declared itself independent in 1946. The republic was instigated by, but failed to get support from, the Soviet Union, and was crushed within a year by the Iranian army. Although the Iranian state has not denied the Kurds their cultural identity, the persecution and assimilation policy has been "more cunning" (Vanly 1993, 139). The Kurdish aspirations for greater autonomy have always been received with hostility from the government and the Kurdish language is not used as a language of instruction in schools. Especially since the revolution in 1979, one difference that might be of importance is that the Iranian Kurds are mostly Sunni Muslims, while most other Iranians are Shia Muslims.

The Iranian Kurds' relations with the government deteriorated badly after the Iranian revolution 1979. Many Kurds participated in the revolution in the belief that this would lead to a better situation for the Kurds. The Kurds acquired de facto autonomy over the Kurdish parts of the country and started negotiations with the new government over the future role of the region. It soon became clear that the new government under Ayatollah Khomeini would not allow autonomy since it would be contrary to Islamic principles and would divide the Muslims (Koochi-Kamali 1992). In 1979 Khomeini issued a *fatwa* declaring a holy war "against the atheist people of Kurdistan" (Chaliand 1994, 78).

There have been two Kurdish political parties of importance in Iran. The most influential and popular is the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDP-Iran). In March 1980 the KDP-Iran received 80 per cent of the votes in Kurdistan in the Iranian parliamentary elections (Chaliand 1994). The second important party is the more radical Marxist party, the Revolutionary Organisation of Toilers, known as *Komala* (The Organisation). This party was inspired by Maoist ideology (Chaliand 1994) and was working as the Kurdish section of the Iranian Communist Party, although demanding autonomy for the Kurdish regions in Iran (Komala 1984).

After the negotiations with the government broke down, Khomeini sent revolutionary guards to take control of Kurdistan. Despite this, the Kurdish parties and other Iranian opposition parties were able to control the mountains in Iranian Kurdistan for several years. Fights between Kurdish *peshmergas* and the government troops continued until 1983 inside Iran, but since then the Iranian opposition has largely been forced to operate from inside Iraq (Chaliand 1994). Political disagreements and violent clashes between the two Kurdish parties during late 1980s also hampered their efforts. Furthermore, there have also been divisions inside the parties. The relations between the Iranian and Iraqi Kurdish parties have always been problematic because of the different alliances the parties have had with the two states. After the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war in 1980, relations between the Kurdish parties in the two countries became even more complicated (Koochi-Kamali 1992).

McDowall (1992) estimates that at least 27,500 Iranian Kurds had died in the fights with the government by early 1984, of whom only 2,500 were fighters. According to my informants Kurdish sources indicate about 55,000 dead Kurds between 1979 and 1992, of whom only 5,000 were *peshmergas*. Similar figures are mentioned by Laizer (1996a), who adds that approximately 300 Iranian Kurdish villages have been destroyed. At the beginning of the 1990s Iranian Kurdistan was under tight military control and foreigners were not allowed to visit the area.

In recent years the future of the Iranian Kurdish opposition movements has not looked very bright. Bruinessen suggests that Komala has become “gradually weaker and more isolated, it turned increasingly radical, and came to see itself as the vanguard of world revolution. The Party split in the late 1980s, and many of its leaders sought refuge in European countries” (Bruinessen 1992a, 42). The assassination of Iranian opposition party leaders in exile has also seriously affected the activities of the parties. It is commonly assumed that agents working for the Iranian government lie behind these assassinations. In 1988 the KDP-Iran was split into two branches. According to Bruinessen, “Both branches of the party still had headquarters in Iraqi Kurdistan by the beginning of 1991 but their position was very delicate, and they seemed not to have any clear strategies” (Bruinessen 1992a, 42). This disunity continued until the end of 1996, despite talks about reunification.¹² Meanwhile the Iranian government’s human rights abuses against Kurds and other Iranian citizens have continued until recent years, including political arrests, unfair trials and summary executions (Amnesty International 1995b).

The Escape from Iran

During my fieldwork I mostly met Kurdish refugees from Iran who have been active in Iranian Kurdish opposition movements. These refugees had often lived in the Kurdish mountains in the liberated areas for a long time, up to ten years, active as *peshmergas* in some of the Kurdish parties. Many of the interviewees had continued their flight from the liberated areas in the mountains to Turkey, or in some cases to Iraq. Other refugees had travelled straight from Iran over the border to Turkey. According to

Amnesty International (1994b), every year hundreds of Iranian refugees arrive in Turkey, and the International Organization for Migration estimates that nearly 1.5 million Iranians have entered Turkey since the late 1970s (IOM 1996).

It looks like the earlier mentioned disintegration of the parties and their infrastructure has forced many refugees to leave the mountains. Some persons have been wounded or have suffered other physical weaknesses, and are more a burden than an asset for the Kurdish parties, thus having to seek asylum elsewhere. Several of the Iranian Kurds who participated in this research said that the disunity and decline of the Iranian Kurdish movements and opposition parties were major factors behind their decision to seek asylum in Europe. Many of my interviewees, both from Iran and Iraq, also indicated that, after several years in the mountains, personal reasons influenced their decisions. Many persons told me that their children's future was the ultimate reason why they decided to leave their mountain hide-outs.

Turkey has ratified the United Nations 1951 Refugee Convention and acceded to the 1967 Protocol, but has kept the geographical limitation of the convention. This means that Turkey, from a legal point of view, only accepts as a refugee a person who has fled from his or her country as a result of events occurred in Europe (Kirişçi 1996; United Nations 1995). Consequently, neither refugees from Iran nor Iraq are regarded as refugees in Turkey and are not allowed to stay in the country. Instead there is an informal agreement between UNHCR and Turkey that UNHCR can take care of and determine the refugee status of persons from non-European countries and if necessary organise their resettlement in a third country. Despite this co-operation there are frequent reports that the Turkish authorities deport refugees back to the countries they are coming from, and even persons waiting for resettlement are under the constant threat of being sent back. There are several reports of refugees who have been forcibly returned to Iran where they are reported to have been executed or imprisoned (Amnesty International 1994b). UNHCR is therefore trying to resettle people as fast as possible. However, this is a complicated process. Even in the fastest cases it seems to take at least one year, and two years is not uncommon, to determine the status of a person and find a country for resettlement.¹³

Finland has accepted Iranian refugees within its yearly quota since 1989, and a large number of the Iranian refugees in Finland are Kurds who have arrived as quota refugees since 1990. All Iranian Kurds in my sample in Finland had arrived as quota refugees. As in the case of the refugees from Iraq, none of the persons I interviewed had originally planned to move to Finland. Some of them told me that they had wished to move to a country where they had relatives or friends, but since their lives were in immediate danger they accepted any country UNHCR suggested.

Iranian refugees regard themselves as being under a continued threat from Iranian agents also in Turkey. In fact, several Iranian opposition politicians have been killed in Turkey (Amnesty International 1994b). Iranian refugees are housed near Ankara by UNHCR in certain cities which they are not allowed to leave and where they are monitored by the local police. This arrangement might be in order to protect the refugees from assassinations, but it also allows the Turkish authorities to isolate Iranian Kurds from the local Kurdish population.

Because of the above mentioned factors, many Iranian refugees in Turkey fear for their lives and wish to leave as soon as possible. Since Iranian refugees, for obvious reasons, have seldom been in a position to obtain valid travel documents, those who wish to leave Turkey immediately have to buy expensive documents on the black market. This was the case for all Iranian refugees whom I met in Britain. Only one person told me that she had planned to go to the UK from the beginning because she had relatives in the country. The other interviewees did not have any plans and travelled to the first place for which they could get valid tickets, since they did not dare to stay in Turkey. A young woman from Iran told me about her escape:

ÖW: Did you actually plan to go to Britain from the beginning, or, did you choose the country?

R: You know first let me say, I did not want to go anywhere honestly and I had to make decision in just a few days, in about three days, and I did not mind where I was going, just I wanted to leave Iran, I had a plan going to Germany because of some friends I had there. Many times I was taken to the Airport in Istanbul, but I could not, they could not manage, and after a while I decided to come here and they took me.

ÖW: So, it was more like a coincidence that you came here?

R: You know, because when you leave, in that particular situation I did not care very much where I was going to, I was just going to leave Iran and I was in a very bad condition of everything, mentally and whatever. When you are forced to leave you do not mind where you are going to.

Characteristics of the Forced Migration

The conflicts in Kurdistan have grown more serious over the years. During the earlier local conflicts, refugees were able to flee to another part of Kurdistan and return when the conflict was resolved. During the more intensive conflicts between the governments and the Kurds in recent years the refugees have been forced on a massive scale to flee to the neighbouring countries or to become displaced persons within the country. However, the complicated political situation in the region and the simultaneous conflicts between the Kurds and the governments in Turkey, Iraq and Iran have made it increasingly hard to find refuge in the neighbouring states. At the same time the size of the conflicts and the devastation in the region has made repatriation more difficult. The need for asylum outside the region has consequently increased.

Although the Kurds are oppressed by the governments in Turkey, Iraq and Iran, and this oppression is a major reason for the flight from these countries, there are also other reasons for the flight from Kurdistan. The reasons are often a complex combination of the various political, economic and social problems which I have outlined above. For example Bruinessen (1992b) points out that the reason for flight is often a combination of state persecution and various local conflicts, and that furthermore there are also religious and sectarian conflicts in the region which can create refugees. It is also important to remember that many persons have not personally been involved in politics, but are merely victims of violent conflicts or forcible deportations.

Clearly, human suffering cannot be quantified or properly understood by social science. But since the different patterns of migration among the refugees will have a

relevance for the later theoretical discussion in this thesis, there is reason to return to the typologies of refugee migration presented in chapter two. In terms of the typology suggested by Zolberg et al. (1989), who distinguish between refugees as activists, targets or victims, it is not very easy to classify the Kurdish refugees. In my own sample many of the refugees from Iran and Iraq would fall into the category of activists, since they have personally participated in the conflict as *peshmergas*. Travelling with them are of course also family members and children who probably should be regarded as victims or even targets of the conflict. In the case of refugees from Turkey it seems as though most persons are victims who are caught in the cross-fire or are exposed to generalised social violence. However, since the Kurds in eastern Turkey, as well as in other parts of Kurdistan, are facing persecution largely because they belong to a certain ethnic group, all Kurds can correctly be regarded as targets in the sense described by Zolberg et al. (1989).

Almost all Kurdish refugees are what Kunz (1973) would call “acute refugees” who have escaped from an ongoing conflict. Very few persons can be regarded as “anticipatory refugees.” Since the Kurds are an oppressed minority, they seem to fit Kunz’s (1981) category of being “events-alienated.” However, the Kurds are a majority within Kurdistan, which makes this description somewhat problematic. Furthermore, many Kurds, especially those active in left-wing parties, also seem to fit the description of “self-alienated” refugees, since they can be regarded as “revolutionary activists” with a “purpose.” Hence, none of the typologies earlier described in chapter two seems to be suitable for all Kurdish refugees.

Kurds in Exile

Munir Morad (1992) estimates that in the period 1960-1988 there were all in all 2.5 million displaced persons and refugees originating in the Kurdish area (including Kurds and other minorities traditionally living in the Kurdish area). Today, the number is probably far bigger. For example ERNK (1995) estimates that the number of Kurds forced to move because of the conflict in Turkey alone is 3.5 million. Furthermore, the changes in Iraq since 1988 have created new groups of refugees and displaced persons.

Sheikhmous (1994) estimates that the Kurdish diaspora outside the Middle East and CIS numbers at least 500,000. Of these at least 300,000 can be found in Germany, where the labour migration from Turkey also included many Kurds. The Turks and Kurds in Germany have been extensively studied by social scientists, as in the account of the Kurdish community by Blaschke (1989, 1991a, 1991b) and Senol (1992).

Since the labour migration to Europe was stopped in the early 1970s, most Kurds have arrived in Europe as refugees. Other countries in Europe with large Kurdish populations are France, The Netherlands, Austria, Switzerland and Sweden (Blaschke 1991b; Sheikhmous 1990). A short history of the Kurdish associations and their cultural and political activities in Europe has been written by Sheikhmous (1989). The book *Kurden im Exil* (1991) includes an extensive list of Kurdish organisations, artists and journals in exile. Contemporary Kurdish refugee migration has been studied in Greece by Black (1995). Collinson (1990) has studied the Alevi Kurdish refugee migration to Britain, while the fieldwork for Reilly's MA-thesis (1991) was conducted in the Kurdistan Workers Association in London. There are also some publications about the Kurdish refugees in Finland (e.g. Mäkelä 1993; Nyholm and Aziz 1996).

The refugees who arrive in Europe are of course not representative of the whole Kurdish population. It is only certain persons who can and will flee abroad. First, politically active persons are of course more likely to become refugees than others. In Kurdistan, as well as in most parts of the world, a politically active person is usually male, relatively young, well educated, often coming from an urban middle-class background. Secondly, not all persons have the economic resources to pay for the travel expenses that a flight to Europe entails. Usually the money is borrowed from and collected by relatives, but still the opportunity to seek asylum in Europe is not open to all refugees. However, the refugees resettled by UNHCR are often large families and other persons who have not had the necessary economic resources.

Conclusion

This chapter proves that at least one of Safran's characteristics of a diaspora is fulfilled in the case of the Kurds in exile. Kurdish refugees have experienced a forced dispersal, since "they, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from a specific original 'center' to two or more 'peripheral,' or foreign, regions" (Safran 1991, 83). The conflict in Kurdistan is a complex one where national and local conflicts are overlapping in a situation where political ideologies, religious divisions, ethnic conflicts and economic inequality all play their role. In Iran, Iraq and Turkey the conflicts between the governments and the Kurds have become worse during the 1980s and early 1990s. However, there are differences between the political backgrounds in the three countries of origin. The oppression the Kurds face has taken different forms in the three countries. There are also considerable differences between the prospects for the Kurdish political parties and the Kurdish national projects in the three countries. There is, however, still one Kurdish nationalism which is uniting the Kurds from different countries.

At the same time as the conflict has become worse in terms of human suffering, it has become increasingly difficult for refugees to seek refuge within another part of Kurdistan or the Middle East. Consequently, there is an increased need for asylum outside the Middle East. The protection, or lack of protection, which two countries in Europe, Finland and the United Kingdom, has been able to offer to persecuted Kurds will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

THE COUNTRIES OF RECEPTION

This study is based on research carried out in Finland and England. This chapter describes the two societies of reception which have received Kurdish refugees and asylum seekers and is thus a continuation of the previous chapter which described the refugees' societies of origin. Both Finland and the United Kingdom have relatively restrictive asylum policies and also recently arrived Kurdish refugee populations. However, in most other aspects relating to refugee resettlement the two countries are unlike each other. A comparison between the two different societies makes it possible to describe the impact of different social structures on the refugee communities. The consequences of these differences are discussed in chapters six and seven, while this chapter concentrates on identifying the differences and similarities in the two receiving societies. It can be expected that the different social structures in England and Finland have different consequences for the process of integration and for the social organisation of the refugee communities. A comparative perspective also gives an opportunity to highlight some general features in the way refugees are integrated. Despite all the differences between the two cases, a number of features remain the same.

Finland

Finland has never experienced any large scale immigration of labour migrants. On the contrary, until the early 1980s it remained a country of emigration. The number of refugees arriving in the country has also been very small and most persons have

arrived during recent years. Although the changes have been slow, Finland has during recent years changed from a country of emigration to a country of immigration. When looking at the reception of refugees in Finland, and ethnic relations in general, one has to remember this historical context.

Finnish history includes comparable situations to the present patterns of immigration. The country was a part of Sweden until the year 1809 and a part of the Russian empire until the year 1917. Finland has been a meeting place between east and west, and can be regarded as a multi-cultural society already from its independence. Since then the minorities in the country, at least officially, have had a relatively secure position in Finnish society. The Swedish speaking minority (300 000 persons) has a relatively secure legal position since Swedish is one of the two official languages of the country. Also the relations between the majority and the smaller cultural minorities (in order of estimated size: Gypsies, Samis, Jews and Muslim Tartars) have in an international comparison often worked relatively well in Finland (cf. Pentikäinen and Hiltunen 1995). Ethnic relations in Finland have until recently been a question relating mainly to these old and well-established minorities.

Migration is certainly not an uncommon phenomenon in the history of Finland. The total number of persons who emigrated from Finland between 1860 and 1992 is estimated to be slightly more than 1.1 million (Korkiasaari 1993), which can be compared to the fact that the population of Finland today is 5 million. During the turn of the century the emigration from Finland was mainly directed towards North America, but later, after the Second World War, it was mainly directed to Sweden. In addition, there is reason to mention the 422,600 displaced persons, from the areas in Eastern Finland that were occupied by the Soviet Union, who after the Second World War had to be resettled in other parts of Finland (Waris 1976).

After the Second World War Finland managed to keep its independence, but the country found itself in a rather remote and isolated geographical location in a post-war Europe that was divided between east and west. Despite the special relationship with

the Soviet Union, the border between the countries was in many ways a closed one. During the post-war years in Finland economic changes and urbanisation produced a relatively large unemployed population. At the same time the Swedish economy experienced a shortage of labour. These circumstances produced a situation with minimal immigration to Finland accompanied by a large emigration to Sweden. This combination of factors meant that the formerly relatively pluralistic society during the post-war years became a country which “has been referred to by many commentators as the least multi-cultural country in Europe” (Tolvanen 1991, 102). For example, as late as 1980 the foreign citizens living permanently in Finland numbered only 13,000 persons, which in a European context was probably comparable only to Albania.

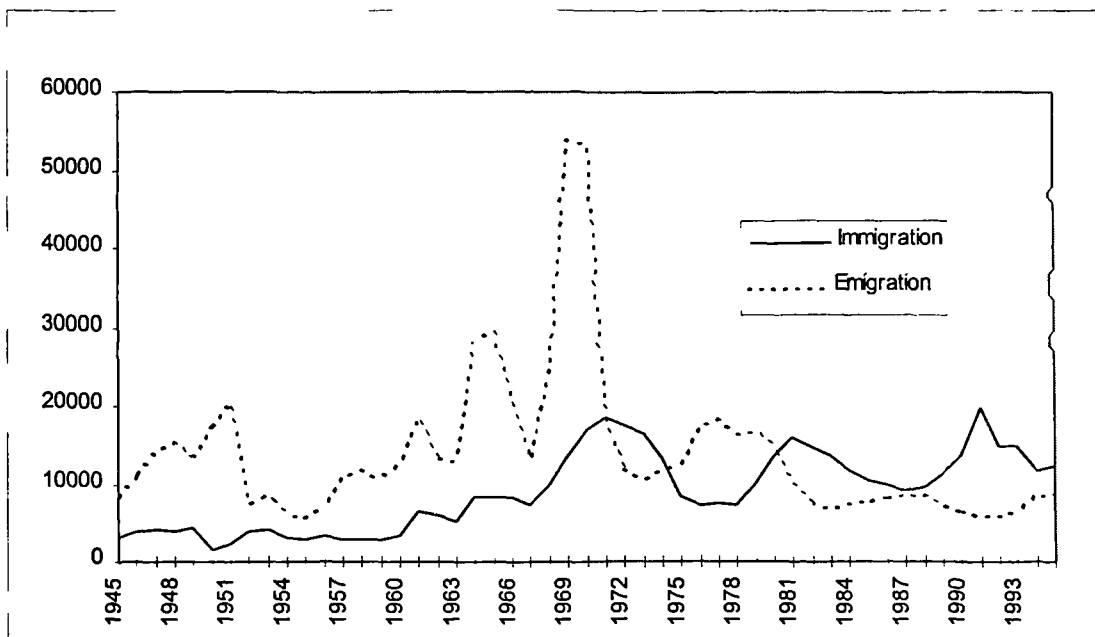


Figure 2. Immigration and emigration in Finland between 1945 and 1995. Sources: Korkiasaari (1993), Nieminen (1994) and Statistics Finland (1995, 1996).

Until the 1980s, the migration movements described in Figure 2 consisted mainly of labour migration to Sweden and a return migration from Sweden. The number of Finns who officially moved to Sweden in the period 1945-1992 is 520,000 persons, but

about half of them later moved back to Finland. Since 1980 the number of people moving to Sweden has been low, and more people have moved back to Finland than emigrated to Sweden (Korkiasaari 1993).

During the 1980s the post-war pattern of migration has changed greatly in Finland. Immigration is today larger than emigration. The available statistics clearly indicate that the immigrants in the 1980s and 1990s are no longer only former Finnish emigrants who are returning to Finland (Korkiasaari 1993). Immigration now largely comprises of persons from the CIS and the Baltic states, but other nationalities are also found among the immigrants. Since 1990, persons from the former Soviet Union who can prove that their ancestors were Finnish are treated as repatriates and can move to Finland. In practice this repatriation has been applied to the Ingrians, who since the seventeenth century have lived in the area around St Petersburg. Some of the older Ingrians speak Finnish, but most of the young people no longer have a knowledge of the language. No exact numbers are available, but there were probably around 13,000 Ingrians living in Finland in 1995 (Nieminen 1995).

Figure 3 outlines the number of foreign citizens living permanently in Finland. Although the increase in the number of foreigners looks quite spectacular, one has to remember that this increase in a comparative European perspective only represents a return to a more “normal” proportion of foreigners within the country. In fact, the number of foreigners living in the country remains relatively small. One can identify three reasons for the increase in the immigration to Finland during the 1980s. First, the positive economic development in Finland during the 1980s was an enabling effect (although the country later in the 1990s went into a severe economic recession). Secondly, the collapse of the Soviet Union created a situation where some migration from the east is possible. However, the border remains heavily guarded by Russia and the migration has perhaps not been as big as expected. The third reason, although quite marginal, is refugee migration. As Figure 3 shows, only a small part of the foreign population in Finland are refugees.

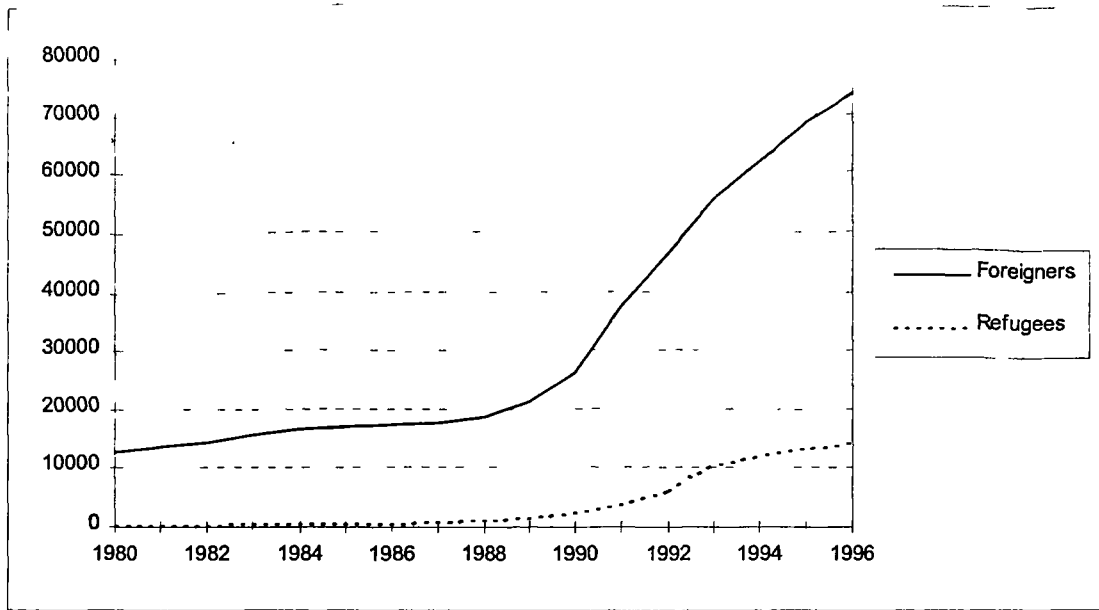


Figure 3. Foreign citizens and refugees living in Finland, 1980-1996. Sources: Korkiasaari (1993) Nieminen (1994) and statistics published in *Monitori* and *Pakolasinfo*. The number of refugees is an estimation made at the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs based on the number of refugees arrived in Finland.

Refugees in Finland

The first main influx of refugees into Finland happened after the Russian Revolution in 1917. Finland was mainly a transit country, but there were still 33 500 Russian refugees living in Finland in the year 1922 (Jaakkola 1989). After this the country did not experience any larger number of refugees until the 1980s.

By international comparison, Finland is a relatively small country. Therefore it has been an aim of the Finnish foreign policy to strengthen the role of the United Nations and to be actively involved in its work. The logical consequence of this is Finnish participation in the work of the UNHCR. In 1968 Finland acceded to both the Refugee Convention and the Protocol. During the end of the 1980s Finland was among the ten

biggest contributors to the budget of the UNHCR. Another aspect of this international co-operation has been the introduction of an annual quota for refugees.

In comparison with the other Nordic countries the quota has been rather small, although there has been a significant increase during recent years. The selection of the refugees has been made on humanitarian grounds and Finland has tried to compensate for its small quota by accepting refugees whom UNHCR has found it difficult to resettle elsewhere. The first refugees who arrived within a quota were 300 Chilean refugees, who arrived from 1973 onwards. Since the late 1970s Vietnamese refugees have arrived as quota refugees. In recent years the quota has included refugees from the Middle East and from former Yugoslavia.

The number of asylum seekers, arriving outside of any quota, has been relatively small. At least in part the small number can be explained by the, as seen from the asylum seekers point of view, remote location of the country.¹ Another issue which probably has an influence is the restrictive implementation of the Refugee Convention. It is only around 1 per cent of the asylum seekers who have managed to get full refugee status and this percentage has during recent years been remarkably constant. Finland, together with Norway, has recently had the lowest recognition rates in Europe. On the other hand, the various "B-statutes" in Finland have been granted relatively frequently. During the last ten years around half of the decisions have been negative and half of the decisions have granted the asylum seeker a residence permit. In practice those who have "B-statutes" have the same rights and receive the same services as those who have full refugee status. For example, a person with one of the "B-statutes" has the same right to family reunification as those with full refugee status. However, despite some positive changes in recent years, the Finnish asylum policy can still not be described as anything other than restrictive. The number of asylum seekers and the size of the annual quota are presented in Figure 4.

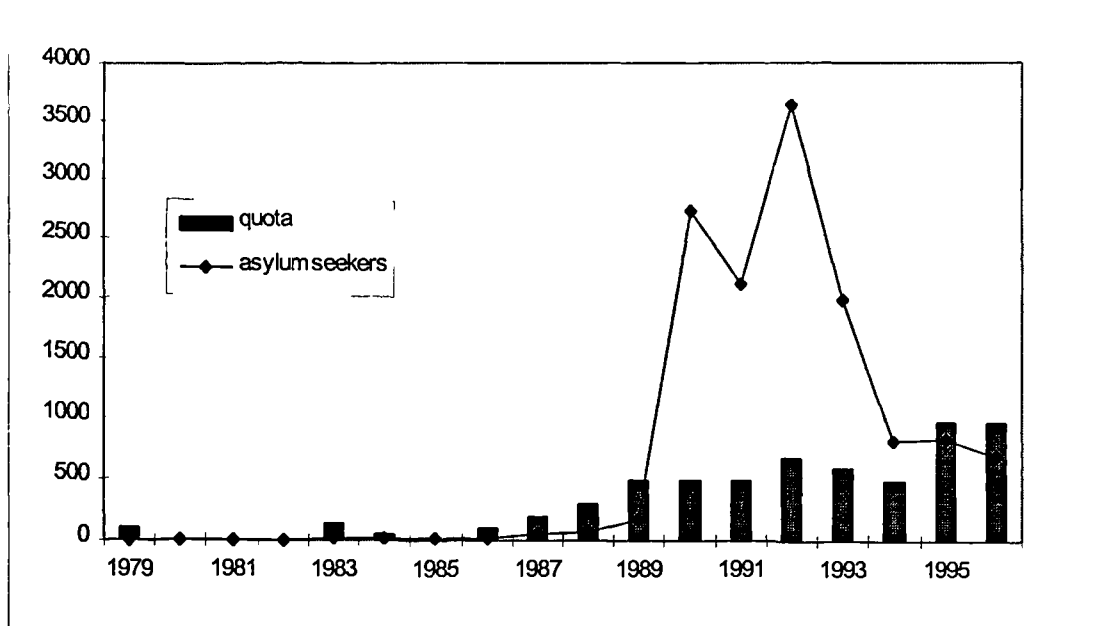


Figure 4. Asylum seekers and the refugee quota in Finland, 1979-1996. Sources: Statistics published in the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs' journals *Monitori* and *Pakolasinfo*. The annual quota does not correspond fully with the actual number of quota refugees arrived during the year.

The Ministry of Health and Social Affairs estimated at the end of 1994 that there were almost 12,000 refugees living in Finland, mainly from Somalia, Vietnam and former Yugoslavia. The exact number is not known since some refugees have already become naturalised Finns, and thus are no longer refugees.² A foreigner, including a refugee, who has been living permanently in Finland for five years may apply for Finnish citizenship. In addition, an applicant often has to wait for up to three years before a decision is given. "Naturalisation is conditional upon the alien being fluent in either Finnish or Swedish and being considered 'an honourable member of society', i.e. s/he should not have a criminal record or have incurred large debts" (ÉCRE 1994, 135).

Finland has had a clear policy to keep the number of refugees as small as possible and to discourage asylum seekers from spontaneously arriving in Finland. Clear proof of a strict refugee policy can be seen in the introduction of visa regulations for "refugee producing" countries. Furthermore, the legal procedure has been changed with the introduction of the notions of "safe countries" of origin and transit, whereby a negative

decision in certain cases can be made through a fast procedure. On the other hand there has been a support for a humanitarian resettlement of refugees in an orderly and controlled way. The future policies of the country are guided by the fact that Finland joined the European Union in 1995 and has to harmonise its immigration rules. Since other European countries today are closing their borders (July 1992, 1996) we might end up in a situation where Finland is closing its borders without ever having had them open.

Reception policies in Finland

Finnish society is largely based on the model of the Nordic welfare state, with an extensive public sector and a tradition of actively striving to remove social inequalities and differences. In the Nordic welfare states the state and civil society are often regarded as rather intertwined since the state has largely taken over functions from civil society and the voluntary organisations (Allardt 1994). Although the economic recession and the severe unemployment situation in recent years might change this feature, this model still had a fundamental impact on Finnish society during my fieldwork in 1994.

These features of Finnish society also have an impact on the refugee reception policies (cf. Söderling 1993). In the same way as other residents in Finland, refugees are provided with health services, social benefits and, if necessary, housing from the public sector. In addition there are extensive resettlement programmes for refugees organised within the public sector. Most refugees take part in orientation courses consisting of language training and occupational training for about one year. These extensive programmes are supposed to encourage a positive integration of the refugees into society. One major aim of the programmes is to find employment for the refugees. The introductory courses for immigrants include practical experience in various jobs and extensive guidance about career opportunities. In Finland, as elsewhere, employment is often seen as a key factor in the integration of refugees (cf. Ekholm 1994; Phillips 1989; Miles 1993). Although the resettlement of refugees is the object

of special consideration by the authorities, this is all happening within the framework of the normal structures of social welfare and public support. After the first-year training programmes, refugees are usually expected to make use of the normal public services available to all Finnish residents, and thus the reception system is clearly front-end loaded. In practice, the reception and resettlement of refugees are decentralised to the local municipalities since the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health disperse the refugees in small groups in municipalities all over the country.³

Cultural pluralism has not usually been regarded as a political issue in Finland, and there is a kind of multi-cultural ethos embedded in the official resettlement policies. However, the Finnish policy of refugee resettlement is, as Matinheikki-Kokko (1994) points out, contradictory. The government papers about refugee resettlement are based on liberal pluralist ideas, but the policy recommendations are still universalist. In other words, the Finnish authorities do not take into account cultural differences or communities in their practical work although the official policies are supposed to be multi-cultural. Of course, discrepancies between theory and practice also exist in the immigration policies of other Nordic countries. In the case of Sweden this is described by Ålund and Schierup (1991).

It can be argued that in practice Finnish resettlement policy is often based on rather unrealistic expectations of a quick integration or even assimilation of refugees. Finland, compared to Britain, is a relatively homogenous society with relatively small income differences and blurred boundaries between social classes. The egalitarian ideals which have traditionally been a part of Finnish society also support an assimilationist policy towards refugees. The notion of ethnic minorities living in their own insular communities within the larger society cannot easily be fitted into the traditional ideal of an egalitarian society.

Various humanitarian organisations and pressure groups have played a significant role in the development of Finnish refugee policy, and the whole resettlement of refugees has been profoundly influenced by humanitarian considerations. Refugees are regarded

as disadvantaged persons who, like other weak groups such as children, disabled people and alcoholics, need special support in order to be integrated into the society. Refugees are often seen as persons who have lost everything in terms of material, social and cultural capital. Furthermore, refugees are often understood as persons who must undergo a kind of re-socialisation into Finnish society, and consequently, they might even be treated in the same way as small children. It is often argued that there is a risk that the welfare system transforms active adult refugees into passive clients.⁴

There is also a policy of dispersal according to which refugees are resettled in small groups all over the country. This practice does not support any creation of cultural communities among the refugees; nor does it try to take into account the resources which exist within the refugees' own social networks. Furthermore, Liebkind (1993) has argued that the lack of cultural communities is a detrimental factor affecting the psychological well-being of refugees in Finland. Refugees are usually regarded as persons who have arrived in Finland to be permanently resettled, since they no longer have a home country. Accordingly, the Finnish resettlement system has not taken into account the transnational networks and the diasporic nature of the Kurdish refugees' experiences (which are discussed in chapter six and seven). Instead the resettlement system has been dominated by the Finnish authorities' preoccupation with "integration." Hence, this study argues that the Finnish resettlement policy, in practice, is relatively assimilationist and less multi-cultural than the resettlement policy in the United Kingdom.

Public opinion

The question of refugee admission is a highly debated issue in Finland, despite the fact that the number of refugees is relatively small. The arrival of Somali refugees in 1990 notably drew much attention from the mass media (cf. Aallas 1991), but also the arrival of other refugee groups has been widely debated. Although there are only a small number of refugees in Finland, clearly they often face greater hostility in Finland than they face in countries with more foreigners and refugees. During the end of the

1980s, when the number of refugees arriving in the country started to grow, the newspaper reports, especially in the evening papers, were often xenophobic and usually portrayed refugees as “problems.” Furthermore, the readers’ letters to the press often gave the impression that the Finnish people in general were very hostile towards refugees. In addition, the attitude of some politicians and the authorities’ official policies towards refugees might have further fuelled the xenophobic and exclusionary discourse. As a consequence, the word refugee today almost has a negative connotation in the Finnish language. The Finnish xenophobia and inhospitable attitudes towards foreigners were in the 1980s largely seen as consequence of the Finns’ lack of contacts with foreigners (cf. Jaakkola 1989; Liebkind 1988).

Finnish attitudes to refugees and immigration have been studied in two surveys undertaken by Magdalena Jaakkola (1989, 1995). According to Jaakkola (1989), only 16 per cent of the respondents in 1987 wanted Finland to receive fewer refugees, and the overall picture was less xenophobic than was expected. This study was also comparable to studies performed in Sweden and although the opinions in Finland were more negative, the differences between the countries were not very big. It can thus be suggested that the main difference was that the Finnish racist and xenophobic discourse was more vociferous and louder than the Swedish discourse during the end of the 1980s.

In 1993 Jaakkola repeated her earlier study, and it seemed that the Finns had become less willing to accept immigrants and refugees. This study was again comparable to a similar study in Sweden, and although there had been a similar change of opinions in Sweden, the changes in Finland were more dramatic. In 1993 the percentage of respondents who wanted Finland to receive fewer refugees had risen to 44 per cent (Jaakkola 1995). Consequently, for the refugees and foreigners in Finland, the situation had developed from bad to worse. Jaakkola (1995) argues that one major reason for the change in attitudes was the worsening economic recession in Finland. The unemployment rate rose to almost 20 per cent in the early 1990s. Immigrants and

refugees easily become scapegoats for economic problems, and immigration was widely perceived as a socio-economic threat.

Bearing in mind this change in attitudes, it is easy to understand the increase in xenophobic and racist attitudes as a consequence of increased immigration. However, this would be a crude oversimplification of a complex problem. It is obvious that there is no clear causal relation between the actual number of foreigners living in the country and the attitudes towards particular groups of immigrants. When discussing the racist and xenophobic discourse, one has to remember that not all immigrants are defined as "foreigners" or "problems." Although only a small part of the present immigration to Finland consists of refugees, the whole discussion about immigration control has been centred on the question of refugee admission. Refugee issues have been much more widely debated than issues related to the present immigration from the former Soviet Union. The number of Ingrian immigrants from Russia and Estonia has been at least as big as the immigration of refugees, but still the latter migration is perceived as a far bigger problem. A case in point is the availability of statistics and research. The refugees in Finland are the object of different controls and considerable interest on the part of the Finnish authorities. There is very exact and comprehensive information available on the few refugees living in Finland. When it comes to other immigrants, the availability of data is not as good, for example in the case of the Ingrian immigrants it is even difficult to find estimates of their exact number.

In Finland the discourse on asylum policies seems largely to have been based on a social construction in which refugees have generally been defined, first of all, as people who do not belong in the country, and secondly, as social problems. In this discourse there is no room for alternative interpretations which would see the similarities between the present refugee immigration and other both historical and contemporary migration movements in Finland. Despite the fact that the refugees are very few in number, the public discourse on immigration has defined especially refugees as a "problem." On the other hand, there is of course at the same time also a humanitarian discourse that advocates a more inclusionary refugee and asylum policy.

These competing arguments and discourses have been described, for example, by Laari (1994) and Wahlbeck (1992).

Kurds in Finland

It is impossible to know the exact number of Kurds in Finland since the available data indicate citizenship or mother tongue, and not ethnic identification. However, by comparing different sources it is possible to estimate the number of Kurds. A conservative estimate of the number of Kurds living in Finland by the end of 1994 is 1,250-2,000 persons (see Table 2). Of these persons, 300-550 are from Turkey, 550-800 from Iraq and 400-650 from Iran.⁵

Table 2. The estimated number of Kurds and citizens from Turkey, Iraq, and Iran living in Finland

| <i>Country of origin</i> | <i>Estimate of Kurds 1.1.1995</i> | <i>Citizens 1.1.1995</i> | <i>Citizens 1.1.1997</i> |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Turkey | 300-550 | 1,166 | 1,473 |
| Iraq | 550-800 | 989 | 1,773 |
| Iran | 400-650 | 1,114 | 1,394 |
| Total: | 1,250-2,000 | 3,269 | 4,640 |

Sources: Statistics published in *Monitori*.

The first Kurdish refugees who arrived in Finland were individual Iraqi students who through various coincidences ended up in Finland in the end of the 1970s. During the 1980s a few Kurds from Iraq also arrived as asylum seekers in Finland. However, most of the Kurds have arrived in Finland during the 1990s. Most of the Kurds from Iran and Iraq have arrived as quota refugees through UNHCR since 1990. Consequently, a majority of the Kurds in Finland have full refugee status in accordance with the UN convention, but there are also large numbers with other legal statuses. Most of the quota refugees have lived under the protection of UNHCR in Turkey, but some

refugees have lived in other refugee camps in the Middle East. The refugees are selected for resettlement in co-operation between the Finnish authorities and UNHCR.

During the 1990s the number of Kurdish asylum seekers in Finland has increased. Between 1990 and 1994 there were 233 asylum seekers from Iran and 403 asylum seekers from Iraq. It can be assumed, however, that only some of these persons were Kurds. In the same period 377 persons from Turkey applied for asylum, and it can be assumed that most of these persons were Kurds. Especially during 1991 Kurdish asylum seekers from Turkey arrived in Finland. However, in contrast to the asylum seekers from Iran and Iraq, a majority of the asylum seekers from Turkey have had difficulties in getting any protection from the Finnish state. During the period 1991 to 1994 in total 188 Turkish citizens received a negative decision on their asylum applications. (the figures are from statistics published in *Pakolaisinfo* and *Monitori*).

None of the Kurds in Finland, neither the quota refugees nor the asylum seekers, have arrived in a pattern of chain migration. The quota refugees have often arrived in groups whose members did not previously know each other. It seems that those who have arrived as asylum seekers have usually done so individually without any initial intention of going to Finland. Most of my interviewees had hardly heard of Finland before they entered the country.

Since most Kurds from Iran and Iraq have arrived as quota refugees, this gives a special character to the Kurdish community in Finland. 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. Therefore the quota refugees include many persons who had a background as *peshmergas* or farmers and did not have enough money to buy a plane ticket in Turkey. The Finnish authorities furthermore use a humanitarian selection among those who are accepted as refugees by the UNHCR. This means that the quota refugees include many families and children.

Those who arrive as asylum seekers are generally a different group of people. In particular, the asylum seekers from Turkey have been almost solely single young men. The official statistics support this observation, showing that 83 per cent of the Turkish citizens living in Finland in 1992 were men (Nieminen 1994).⁶ In some cases the wives and families have arrived some years later. It is also interesting that a relatively large number of male Kurds from Turkey have Finnish girlfriends and wives. This is perhaps not very surprising since most of the Kurds from Turkey are single young men and have often spent several years in Finland waiting for an asylum decision. Official statistics support this observation as well; according to the marriage statistics for the years 1990-1992 a total of 376 Turkish male citizens married Finnish women, which in fact is more than any other group of male foreigners (Nieminen 1994).⁷

Due to the resettlement practice in Finland, the Kurds are dispersed in small groups around the country. There is a tendency for the Kurds to move later either to the Helsinki capital area or to some of the regional centres. The Kurds from Turkey tend to live in the capital area. According to the official population statistics from 31 December 1995 published in *Monitori*, 58 per cent of the Turkish-speaking population and 45 per cent of the Kurdish-speaking population lived in the administrative province Uusimaa. Of the total population only 26 per cent lived in this province, which includes the capital area and the south coast.

Although the Finnish government is successfully trying to prevent asylum seekers from reaching Finland, it can be expected that the number of Kurdish refugees will grow. Kurdish refugees continue to be part of the annual quota. Several hundred Kurdish refugees from Iran, Iraq and Turkey have also arrived in Finland as family reunification cases. By the end of 1996 the number of Kurds living in Finland was probably between 2,000 and 3,000 persons.

United Kingdom

The well-known political history of Britain, including the country's history as a world leading colonial and political power, still gives the United Kingdom a world-wide cultural and political influence. This also has consequences for the migration flows to and from the country, as well as for British immigration and refugee policies. In fact, both immigration to Britain and emigration from Britain have been relatively extensive during the last centuries. Although there has been a large immigration to Britain, emigration from Britain has actually been bigger than immigration during most of the years since 1964 when statistics started to be collected through the International Passenger Survey (OPCS 1994).

The colonial history and the experiences of the British Empire still have a profound influence on ethnic relations in Britain. The United Kingdom has well established "ethnic minorities," largely originating from post-war migration movements from the so-called New Commonwealth. Until the 1990s, refugees have constituted only a very small part of the migration to Britain. Because of the long history of "ethnic minorities" and "race relations" in Britain, the whole question of refugee admission in Britain is connected to the constantly important political issues of immigration and "race" (Miles and Cleary 1993).

In the 1991 National Census of Population 5.5 per cent of the population indicated that they belonged to some of the ethnic minority groups in the UK, which is just over three million out of a total population of fifty-five million. The biggest category was "South Asian," including Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, and comprising 2.7 per cent of the UK population. "Black" ethnic groups accounted for a further 1.6 per cent followed by "Chinese and other ethnic groups" with 1.3 per cent (Owen 1994). In Britain there is an awareness and a large public discussion of issues related to what often is called "race relations." Britain has, for example, a comprehensive "race relations" legislation enforced by the Commission for Racial Equality.

Refugees in the UK

Britain is often seen as having a tradition of offering hospitality for refugees, beginning with the French Huguenots in the seventeenth century. Later, a small number of German revolutionaries, among them Karl Marx, lived as refugees in London in the mid-nineteenth century. Britain's liberal refugee policy in the Victorian years largely "rested upon its confidence as the greatest economic, imperial and naval power" (Panayi 1993, 110). However, the number of persons who fled to Britain did not become significant before the end of the nineteenth century and the arrival of Jews from eastern Europe. This also coincides with the first efforts to control the influx of refugees. Later, in the 1930s, many persons fled from Nazi Germany to Britain (Cohen 1994). The United Kingdom was among the initial signatories to the UN Refugee Convention in 1951 and also acceded to the Protocol in 1968 (United Nations 1995). However, until recently the number of asylum applicants has by international comparison been relatively small.

It is doubtful if there is any reason to talk about a hospitality towards refugees in Britain since the nineteenth century. For example, Steve Cohen (1988) argues that refugees in Britain, beginning with the Jews in the 1930s, have generally been mistreated. Despite the relatively small numbers of asylum seekers the British government has tried to keep the numbers as low as possible by a number of different measures. These measures include the introduction of visa restrictions for certain countries and new laws like the 1987 Immigration Act, which made airlines and shipping companies liable to a charge of £1,000 for each improperly documented passenger they bring to the UK. Furthermore, various measures discouraging asylum seekers from coming to Britain have been introduced, including the removal of social welfare benefits from certain groups of asylum seekers. A topical problem during 1996 was the new Asylum Bill which sought to cut the welfare benefits for asylum seekers who had not applied for asylum immediately upon arrival in Britain. Since many asylum seekers already experience huge practical problems in Britain such legislation can create a very extreme situation. There have also been changes in the

appeals procedure and, as described later, a radical increase in the number of negative decisions on asylum applications. Finally, there is also an extensive use of the inhumane practice of detention (cf. Cohen 1994). In Britain immigration authorities can detain an asylum seeker while his/her case is being considered despite the fact that the person has not broken any law. The Refugee Council (1994) estimates that immigration detention in the early 1990s annually affected about 10,000 persons, although most of these were detained for less than two weeks.

In the light of the changes mentioned above, the British official refugee policy has clearly lost much of the humanitarian values on which it was originally based. Today Britain is certainly not a country offering hospitality for refugees, and, according to Amnesty International (1996), recent developments have largely demolished the right to asylum in the UK. Most of the recent changes have obviously been introduced in order to discourage people from applying for asylum in Britain. This is explicitly stated by the British government in the following news item published in the *Financial Times* (8 March 1996):

Bogus asylum seekers are being attracted to the UK in increasing numbers because of the lure of its welfare system, the High Court was told yesterday. Many applicants had no proper claim to asylum and were "economic migrants", two judges heard. New regulations had been introduced "to make the UK less attractive and therefore reduce the burden on the taxpayers and the social security fund", said Mr Stephen Richards, appearing for the government. Mr Richards was defending Mr Peter Lilley, the social security secretary, against accusations by the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants that the refugee are unlawfully being deterred from seeking sanctuary in the UK by the regulations, introduced last month. ('Benefits lure fraudsters' 1996)

Until the 1990s the number of persons applying for asylum has not been very significant in comparison to other major European countries like Germany or France. Counted in terms of asylum seekers per inhabitants, the UK received fewer refugees than most other Western European countries in the 1980s (Cohen and Joly 1989). There was, however, a remarkable increase in the number of asylum seekers in the late 1980s and early 1990s (see Figure 5).

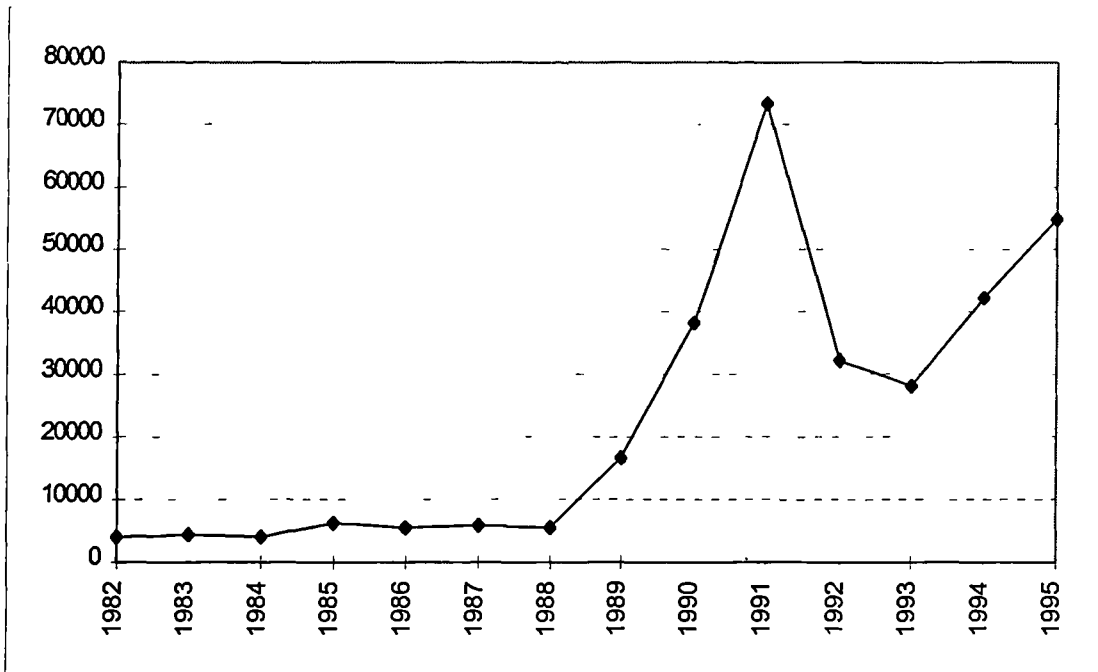


Figure 5. Asylum seekers in the United Kingdom, 1982 - 1995, including dependants. Sources: Statistics published by the Home Office.

During the early 1980s more than half of the applicants received full refugee status. However, in recent years the British asylum policy has become increasingly restrictive. Already during the 1980s the percentage of persons receiving refugee status decreased radically. This was initially compensated by an increase in the percentage of persons receiving the British "B-status" called Exceptional Leave to Remain (ELR). The ELR does, however, not entitle a person to the same rights and services as a full refugee status. For example, persons with an ELR do not have the right to family reunification. During the 1990s the refugee policy has become even more restrictive, and the proportion of persons receiving ELR has declined while more and more persons have received a totally negative decision on their asylum applications. This development is shown in Figure 6. The reason for the introduction of even more restrictive policies is undoubtedly the increased numbers of asylum seekers.

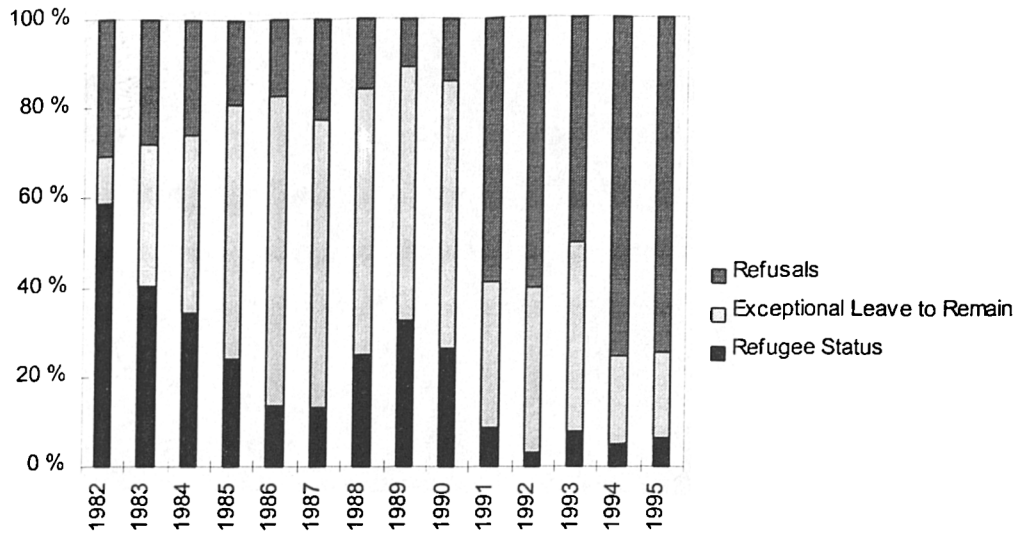


Figure 6. Decisions on asylum applications made in the United Kingdom, 1982-1995, including dependants. Sources: Statistics published by the Home Office.

It is possible to apply for British citizenship after five years of residence and settlement in Britain. The person needs to have indefinite leave to remain, and not exceptional leave to remain, at the date of application.⁸ In addition naturalisation requires sufficient knowledge of English, Welsh or Scottish Gaelic, a good character and the intention to live in the UK (JCWI 1995).

Reception and resettlement policies in the UK

In the UK the state has not taken over functions from civil society and the voluntary organisations to the same extent as in the Nordic countries. In British society the “local community” has to a larger extent been understood as an independent entity separate from the state. The British social welfare system has traditionally been taken care of to a large extent by voluntary organisations. The British system of refugee resettlement is of course connected to these more fundamental perceptions of the role and relations of the state and the civil society. Furthermore, one has to remember that British society is traditionally a class society. Immigrants are of course integrated into specific places in

this hierarchy. As Rex argues in his early writings on this subject (Rex and Tomlinson 1979), the immigrants largely have been integrated into the underclass of British society, and are disadvantaged in comparison with working-class whites (cf. Rex 1986b).

At least since the 1980s, the multi-culturalist discourse, which is discussed in chapter two, has been more dominant than assimilationist policies within social policy in Britain. Candappa and Joly describes British social policy practices in the eighties:

Cultural identity and difference became fully acknowledged as was the importance of consulting with communities. Following from this a more recent trend arose towards what is sometimes called 'self help', which is assisting communities and their associations to provide services to ethnic communities and to develop economic projects. (Candappa and Joly 1994, 17)

Because of the communitarian policies towards ethnic minorities in the UK, there is a tendency to regard the Kurdish refugees as one of many "ethnic minorities" in a multi-cultural society. However, the specific experiences of the Kurdish refugee communities in Britain are of course very different from the history of the British ethnic minorities, whose long history of settlement in Britain often has to be seen within a colonial context. Therefore, it can be argued that the British authorities' policies towards refugees are not always sensitive to refugees' specific social situation and problems.

On the other hand, in Britain the refugee reception is in practice largely organised within the voluntary sector and not by the British authorities. The National Health System and the Department of Social Security are of course providing their specific services, but in the case of more general advice and services there are a wide variety of non-governmental service providers. Although funding for refugee reception is to a large extent organised from public sources, the practical work is largely carried out by various charities and voluntary organisations. In a recent publication, the British refugee resettlement policy is described in the following way:

Central government responsibility for oversight of arrangements for the settlement of refugees rests with the Voluntary Service Unit (VSU), located in the Home Office. VSU's general policy is to provide the help and support needed by refugees through voluntary organisations and community groups, through local authorities, or through special programmes within existing statutory agencies. Compared to national statutory provision, such arrangements are intended to allow greater flexibility and sensitivity to local needs and consumers' voices. (Carey-Wood et al. 1995, 1)

In practice the British authorities have largely handed over the responsibility for the reception of refugees to organisations in the voluntary sector and to the "local community." The refugees can thus "choose" between a number of "competing" service providers, although in practice particular groups come under the care of particular bodies. Needless to say, there are many organisations whose activities are overlapping each other and there is often a lack of professionalism among the organisations within the voluntary sector (cf. Majka 1991).

In the cases of the Chilean, Vietnamese and Bosnian quota refugees there have been various official resettlement programmes, and it seems as if the British authorities have taken a more active role in these cases. However, in these programmes the British government has also funded different NGOs to take care of the practical work. The Kurdish refugees are not part of any special resettlement programme or given any special consideration by the authorities. In practice Kurdish refugees largely have to help themselves upon arrival in the UK. There is, however, a wide range of charities and community centres where they can seek support. These organisations are often directly funded by the authorities.

The first voluntary organisation which refugees encounter is often the Refugee Arrivals Project (RAP). After arrival at Heathrow most refugees are handed over from the Immigration Service to the RAP. In practice it is often the RAP which decides where people will live in London. Refugees are in the first instance expected to stay with relatives or friends after arrival in London. However, if a refugee does not know anybody, the RAP will send him/her to one of the local authorities in London. In practice refugees are often resettled in boroughs where the RAP case worker knows

that other persons who speak the same language live. However, housing is very scarce in London, and the local councils can only provide housing to those with special needs. Single refugees must largely fend for themselves and usually face acute housing problems.

The RAP is funded by the Home Office to provide the necessary service to refugees immediately after arrival in Britain, and is expected to be able to move people in to the community within a day or two of their arrival. Obviously, this task is almost impossible. The organisation writes in its Annual Report 1993 that “the task we face has become more complex and demanding and the project is stretched to breaking point by the additional pressures on us all” (RAP 1994, 7). Clearly, in this situation many refugees need help and advice from other sources. Perhaps the most important provider of practical help, after refugees have stayed in Britain for a few days, is the Refugee Council. The Refugee Council is a large organisation mainly funded by the Home Office, it has a wide variety of services, programmes and activities aimed at giving practical help to refugees and at promoting refugees’ rights both in Britain and abroad.

In addition to the Refugee Council there are many other smaller organisations which give valuable support to refugees. In the case of Kurdish refugees the various Kurdish community centres and organisations in London are of special importance. These will be examined more closely in chapter seven. There are also a number of British voluntary organisations doing very important work for refugees. For example, many of my interviewees were grateful for the help they had received from the Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture.

There is public funding available from a variety of sources for voluntary organisations working with refugees. The Home Office “section 11” funding, which is mainly used for supporting education in areas with a high proportion of ethnic minorities, recently became available for projects involving refugees. The competition for the Single Regeneration Budget is also open to refugee organisations. During my fieldwork,

funding from the London Borough Grants Unit was given to the Kurdish Cultural Centre, Kurdistan Workers Association and the Kurdish Information Centre (in Islington). There is usually also funding from local councils if the organisation serves a specific local community. There are also other public programmes and private trusts which support voluntary organisations working with refugees. Nevertheless, a lack of funding remains a serious problem for many voluntary organisations.

Kurds in Britain

Since the 1970s the UK has been a significant host for Kurdish students, and later refugees, from Iraq. The Kurds from Iraq were the first large group of Kurds in the UK, probably because of the historical ties between Iraq and the UK. Since many Kurds from Iraq have arrived as university students, they are today often well educated, and especially among the men one finds many persons with doctorates. Consequently, some Kurds from Iraq at present have well-established positions in British society. The Kurds from Iraq living in Britain are in this respect clearly different from the quota refugees in Finland.

In Britain the Kurds from Iraq have recently been outnumbered by Kurdish refugees from Turkey, who since 1989 have arrived in significant numbers and moved into the Turkish community in North London. A total of 4,650 Turkish citizens applied for asylum in the UK in 1989 (Home Office 1990), of whom a large number arrived during May and June. As a result of this major influx, visa requirements were imposed on 23 June 1989 for all Turkish citizens wanting to enter the UK. Home Secretary Douglas Hurd explained the decision in the following way: "These developments have placed strain on immigration control, creating long delays and inconvenience for the main body of passengers." According to him, many of the asylum seekers were "young men who have admitted to making their claim because of employment difficulties in Turkey" (Crisp 1989, 18).

Collinson (1990) has studied the legal and political framework of the arrival of the Kurdish asylum seekers, and she argues that there are doubts concerning the legality of some of the measures the authorities introduced to handle the influx. British Immigration Officers stationed themselves at Istanbul airport, and it is highly likely that this measure was introduced in order to prevent potential asylum seekers from boarding flights to Britain. There were also cases where asylum seekers seemed to have been prevented from applying for asylum upon arrival in Britain. Furthermore, many Kurdish asylum seekers were detained in British prisons pending the outcome of their applications for asylum (Collinson 1990).⁹

The sudden influx of a large number of Kurdish asylum seekers during the spring of 1989 ^acreated a dramatic situation in North London. The authorities did not have the necessary facilities or the ability to take care of this large group of people. Local authorities, voluntary organisations and churches in North London had to do whatever they could to help the newly arrived Kurdish refugees. The areas in London, the boroughs of Haringey and Hackney, where the asylum seekers arrived are largely deprived inner-city areas, and among other problems it was difficult to find proper accommodation for all asylum seekers (cf. Crisp 1989; Reilly 1991).

The Turkish community in North London was established by Turkish Cypriots who migrated to Britain from the 1950s onwards. There has also been a labour migration from Turkey, but by comparison with other European countries this has not been significant. Among the small number of Kurds from Turkey who arrived as labour migrants in the UK, many persons now regard themselves as refugees. The Kurdish refugees from Turkey today constitute a large part of the Kurdish/Turkish community in North London. The Kurdish refugee migration from Turkey seems largely to have happened as a chain migration. As explained in chapter four, many of the Kurds who have moved to North London during recent years are Alevis from the areas of Marash and Sivas in Turkey. The Kurds from Turkey often come from a rural background and many of them are poorly educated.

The Iranian Kurds in Britain have, together with a large number of other Iranians, mostly arrived as refugees since the revolution in Iran in 1979. It is difficult to estimate the number of Iranian Kurds in the UK. It is possible that many of the Kurds from Iran identify themselves primarily as Iranians and that they are not therefore part of the Kurdish community. My rough estimation is that there were between 20,000 and 30,000 Kurds living in the UK in 1995. The number is constantly growing and about two thirds of the Kurds are recently arrived refugees from Turkey. At least 90 per cent of the Kurds in the UK live in London.

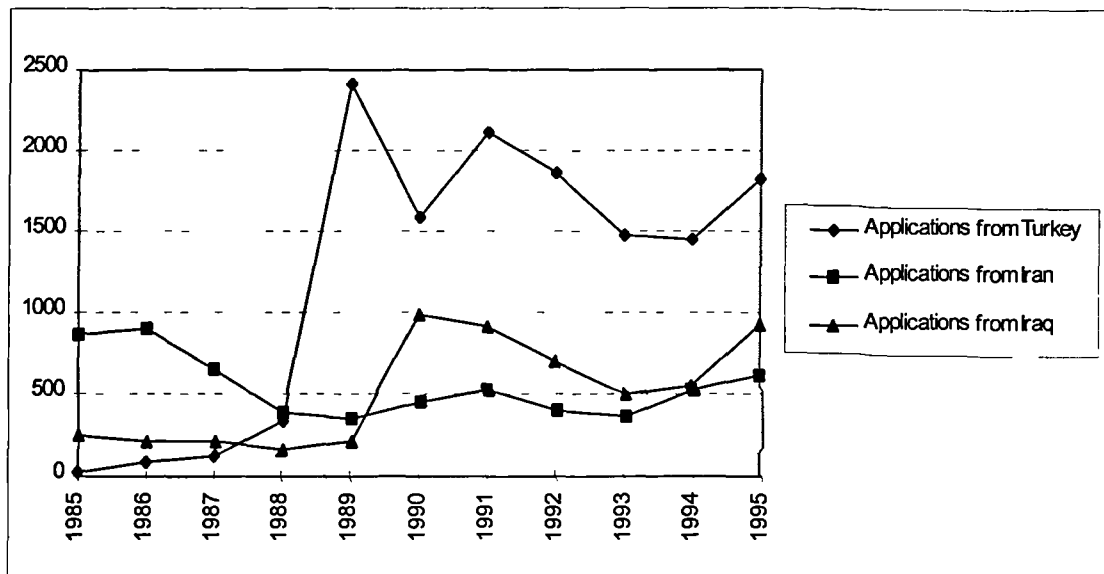


Figure 7. Asylum applications from Turkey, Iran and Iraq made in the United Kingdom, 1985-1995, excluding dependants. Sources: Statistics published by the Home Office.

In Figure 7 the numbers of asylum seekers (excluding dependants) from Turkey, Iraq and Iran are presented. The number of asylum seekers from Iran reached a peak immediately after the revolution in 1979 but the number of refugees has only slowly declined since then. On the other hand, the number of refugees from Turkey has increased dramatically since the 1980s. In the late 1980s asylum seekers from all three countries had the same statistical chance to get full refugee status. This has

dramatically changed in recent years. A surprising development is that, although during the 1990s the human rights situation in Turkey has not improved, it is refugees from Turkey who in the mid-1990s statistically had the least chance of getting refugee status or even ELR. This development can be observed by comparing Figure 8 and Figure 9.

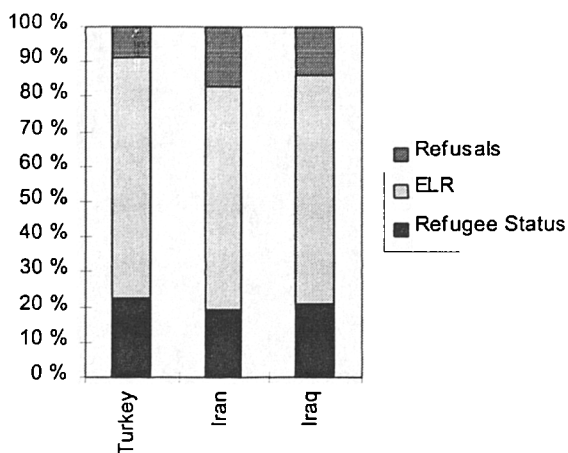


Figure 8. Decisions on asylum applications from Turkey, Iran and Iraq in the UK 1985 - 1990, excluding dependants. Source: Statistics published by the Home Office.

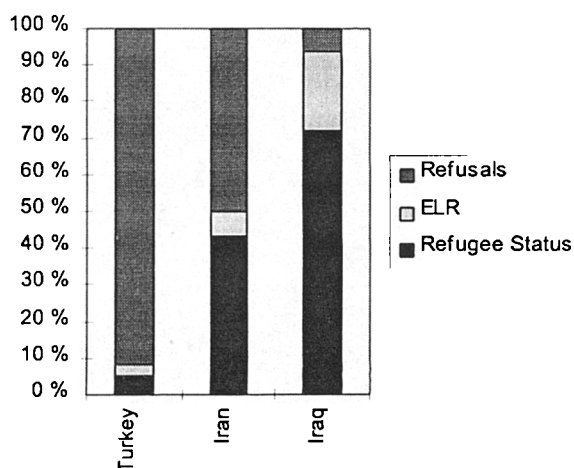


Figure 9. Decisions on asylum applications from Turkey, Iran and Iraq in the UK 1995, excluding dependants. Source: Statistics published by the Home Office.

Conclusion

International comparative studies are always connected with problems concerning the comparability of the phenomena under study. Different historical developments, different conceptual definitions, different political systems and different social structures often mean that the validity of observed similarities or differences between countries can be disputed (Lloyd 1993, 1994; Weiner 1996).

In the case of Finland and England, however, there are some indisputable differences. For example, the historical contexts in which ethnic relations have developed in Finland and in Britain could hardly be more different. Britain has a history as a major political power, being the centre of a major world empire. One feature of an empire is that it has outlying territories. This inevitably leads to contacts, as well as migration, between people in the periphery and in the centre. Initially, it was of course the centre which was the dominating force in these contacts. These contacts have also led to different models of multi-culturalism being adopted as part of everyday life.

In present-day Britain, where migration to and from other parts of the Commonwealth has been common for a long time, multi-culturalism is an intrinsic feature of life in cosmopolitan cities like London. In addition, British society has traditionally been a class society and a society where local communities are regarded as fundamental units of society. In these social structures of plurality and diversity it is easy to implement various communitarian and multi-cultural policies. Also the refugee reception policies largely revolve around the refugees' own communities. The arrival of refugees in Britain is also commonly misunderstood as a continuation of previous immigration to the country.

Finland, on the other hand, is a relatively recently independent state with a small population and a remote geographical location. Finnish society is characterised by the model of the "Nordic welfare state" with its extensive public sector and blurred borders between civil society and the state. This type of society actively strives to

integrate and equalise all its members. As argued in chapter two, the model of a multi-cultural society is, however, largely based on the acceptances of differences. Thus, although Finnish policies are often officially described as multi-cultural, the policies are in practice relatively assimilationist by comparison with British policies. This approach seldom takes into account the diasporic nature of the refugees' social relations in the country of settlement.

In addition, Finland has during the post-war period experienced very low levels of immigration. The sudden increase in immigration, which furthermore has largely occurred during an economic recession, has led to a xenophobic reaction among parts of the general public. This reaction has been fuelled by racism and biased mass-media reports, and has largely become focused on the refugees in the country. Thus, although the official reception policies are supporting an inclusion of the refugees into society at large, there are parts of the population who actively strive to exclude the refugees.

Consequently, when one talks about solving problems connected with ethnic relations and multi-culturalism, it would be easy to regard Finland as lagging behind other countries. As Lloyd (1993) points out, Britain is often wrongly seen as being ahead of other European countries in this respect. This kind of comparison of countries is not possible. Strictly speaking, countries are different and cannot be understood as being "ahead" of each other. Lloyd (1993) argues that different European countries have developed differently and that one cannot use an evolutionary perspective where countries are seen as going through a set procedure of developments. Furthermore, one has to remember that because of the differences, any theories and policies which are adopted in one country are not necessarily transferable to the other country.

Thus, any sweeping normative comparisons are avoided in this chapter and it is only established that the two countries are different. The refugee resettlement policies are heavily dependent on general social policies and are connected to more fundamental conceptions of the state, local communities and the civil society. The UK adopts a traditional communitarian and multi-cultural approach, while Finland in practice has a more assimilationist resettlement policy. It can also be argued that although they

approach the issue from different perspectives, neither country has fully understood the specific nature of refugee migration. Chapter six and seven describes the consequences which these different approaches have for the Kurdish refugees and how the different policies have influenced the social organisation of the Kurdish communities.

CHAPTER 6

THE REFUGEE EXPERIENCE

This chapter describes the Kurdish refugees' experiences in their new countries of settlement. These experiences were discussed during the interviews in Finland and England, and are here presented from the refugees' own point of view. Obviously, the Kurdish refugees have encountered a whole range of problems, and this chapter cannot deal with all of them. The aim of the chapter is to indicate and discuss the main problems refugees experienced, and thereby to present the framework in which the social relations of the Kurdish refugees were constructed in the two countries of reception. The research findings in this chapter form a basis for the discussion in chapter seven about the social organisation of the refugee communities.

Arrival

Refugees who arrive in a new country experience a variety of problems. For those who arrive as asylum seekers, the arrival can be a very traumatic experience. A widow from Iraq described her arrival at Heathrow Airport:

It was horrible, really horrible -- I cried so much and did not know what to do and I did not speak the language. I tried to explain that here I am with my two children and we do not know what to do. It was all really horrible, but the people at the airport were very friendly and helped me and told me not to cry.

The first obstacle refugees face is often the asylum application. Many interviewees told me that when they first arrived as asylum seekers they did not properly understand what the status of a refugee was. As explained in chapter four, few of the refugees

from Iran and Iraq had been able to plan their flight in advance. Most had only a very superficial knowledge of the country they were travelling to, and only a few had even a basic knowledge of English. Since many persons had been forced to obtain falsified travel documents in order to travel to Europe, there was the additional fear of how the authorities would react to this.

Many Kurds have great expectations of democracy in Europe when they arrive and they think that the European countries will welcome them warmly. They are not prepared for the bureaucratic procedures and all the other difficulties refugees encounter in Europe. Two young men from Turkey described their arrivals:

When I came to Finland it was between twelve and one o'clock in the night. I was really tired and I had a beard, I was totally exhausted. I did not know what I was doing here and what a refugee was. ... Then I just thought that I am a Kurd and I have problems in my own country, and there are human rights in Finland and a democracy, and so on. I thought that perhaps there is a possibility that I can stay in Finland. But then, when I myself saw what the real situation was like, it was completely different from what I had expected [t].

I planned all the time to go to England, tried to get here all the time. Because I trusted this country's democracy much more than any other European country, but after staying two years without decision and with the problem with family reunion, I understood what kind of democracy it was. I did not expect that these things would happen.

The real attitude towards refugees in Europe often comes as a total surprise for the refugees. A woman from Iraq who had been active in the Kurdish resistant movement told me the following about her expectations before arrival:

We really valued ourselves and our political struggle very highly when we arrived and thought that we would be warmly welcomed. We were surprised that this was not the case and that people did not care who we were. In Kurdistan, the United Nations and its refugee status is well known and people speak about it, so we thought that refugees were welcomed in Europe and that our fight for human rights would be highly appreciated.

Because of the situation in their countries of origin, many Kurds are very suspicious of authorities and afraid of the police. This leads to problems when asylum seekers are interviewed by the authorities in order to determine their legal status. Many refugees

are afraid of telling the truth since they believe that what they tell will ultimately end up with the authorities in their homeland. The refugees are afraid of what might happen to them if they have to return, and if they do not return, they have to be afraid of what might happen to their relatives. This understandable reluctance to tell the authorities the real reasons for their flight can seriously damage the refugees' chances of getting asylum. These problems were emphasised by many informants. For example, an Iranian man who subsequently got full refugee status said:

You know, it is difficult to describe the feelings that you have when you arrive. On the one hand, you are scared of what will happen. Maybe they will deport me. People from Kurdistan and from the third world in general have a different view of the police and the state. They are not seen as somebody who can help you in any way. You have to be scared of them, you see them as an enemy and not as somebody doing something for you.

In Britain many refugees do not apply for asylum at the border, and instead prefer to seek help first of all from people they trust. This is one reason why many applications for asylum are made when the applicant is already in the country and not at the border. Another reason for in-country applications is that many persons who have arrived as students in Britain might find that it is impossible to *return home because of political* changes in their country of origin during their stay in Britain. The pattern of in-country applications was common among those who came from Turkey and Iran. According to statistics from the Home Office (1994), a clear majority of the applications from Turkish and Iranian citizens between 1990 and 1993 were made in-country, while among Iraqi citizens around half of the applications were made in this way. In the Finnish case there are no comparable statistics, but it is likely that most persons had already applied for asylum at the border.

Unfortunately the refugees' fear of the authorities in the country of reception did not seem to be totally without reason. During this research I heard several stories of how the authorities often showed a surprising lack of confidentiality which might even have endangered the safety of the refugees themselves and their relatives back home. Furthermore, the interpreters used by the authorities were not always persons whom the refugees felt confident with.¹

Among the refugees from Turkey there is a common belief that there is co-operation between Turkish and European governments and police forces, a co-operation which is nurtured through contacts in NATO, the European Union and other international organisations. Once an application for asylum is made in Western Europe, it is assumed that sooner or later this will be known by the authorities in Turkey. Refugees from both Turkey and Iran told me about problems and threats experienced by their relatives back home after the refugees had left the country.

Anxieties and Psychological Problems

The psychological problems encountered by refugees in their new country of settlement have previously been well documented (e.g. Eitinger and Schwarz 1981; Liebkind 1993; Zwingmann and Pfister-Ammende 1973). Similar psychological problems are also experienced by Kurdish refugees. These problems can be connected to the Kurds' experiences in their countries of origin and/or can be connected to the process of waiting for a decision on their asylum applications.

Several respondents described traumatic memories from Kurdistan. It can be assumed that most of the Kurdish refugees have close relatives or friends who have been executed or killed in combat, have disappeared or have been imprisoned. Many Kurdish refugees have themselves experienced imprisonment and torture. These kinds of experiences often leave the refugees with serious mental health problems. The refugees were understandably not very eager to discuss these experiences, and since I did not usually ask about them directly, the traumatic memories were only mentioned incidentally in the interviews.

Because of the political and economic situation in Kurdistan many refugees in exile are inevitably worried about their relatives living in Kurdistan. Sometimes the whereabouts of the relatives is not known, or there is no possibility of getting in touch with them. A man from Turkey, who lived alone in London, told me about his tragedy:

I have not been in contact with my family since 1992. I am too scared of what will happen to them if I call. I have not been able to be in contact with my home village, and I do not know if it even exists any more. I am very worried for my family [t].

Waiting for a decision in the country of exile often becomes an additional problem. The quota refugees in Finland avoid this problem since they have had their refugee status defined by UNHCR before arrival, and thus they know that they can stay in the country and will get help from the authorities. The asylum seekers, on the other hand, have to live in uncertainty for a long time until they get a decision on their applications. Among the refugees in this study, up to three years was not an uncommon time to wait for a decision, both in Finland and in the UK. This long uncertainty aggravated all the practical and psychological problems experienced by refugees. An Iranian refugee who arrived in Britain in 1991 described the problems that most asylum seekers have experienced:

The immigration officers asked a lot of questions. Why did you come here, why did you not go to another place? And so on. I was actually scared all the time until I got my full refugee status. It is not a good feeling to be scared all the time. There was this uncertainty. It was a difficult time, and I was scared what will happen for the first two years here. Now it is different.

As long as the asylum seekers do not have a final decision, the uncertainty of their future makes it difficult for them to make any plans or to start a new life in the country of settlement. A young man from Turkey, who after almost four years in Finland had still not got any decision on his asylum application, described the help he had received from the authorities:

Personally I can say that Finland was like a prison to me; it really went badly for me here. ... Several times I have decided that I will leave this country, because of the authorities. Some of them, they do not know what they are doing. And when you complain about the situation, the person just tells you that they do not know, everything is a mess. ... When I look back I hate that three and a half years, almost four years has gone by and what have I seen? My youth has passed by, I have not studied, I did not get a decision, I did not get, I did not understand anything. All this time it has been so hard. Many times I went to the doctor, but that did not help either. It has been difficult, so difficult [t].

Obviously asylum seekers are living under much psychological stress which is directly related to their flight and refugee experiences. On the other hand, it is also obvious that the reception policies have a great impact on the kinds of difficulties that occur. A woman, who waited over two years for her decision, and who furthermore had the additional problem that she arrived in Britain without her child, described her experiences:

It was very difficult, particularly the last few months. It was just unbearable, to wait for the child, and nothing is happening in terms of whether they will accept you or not. What happens if they do not accept it. There is a risk of being deported, you know, and you cannot have your child unless there is a decision made, and I was hearing news like the grandparents are really ill and they cannot look after her any longer, ... It was growing very difficult and there was so much pressure in terms from home, saying we cannot look after the child any more; and there was not anything that I could do in this end, just to try to pressurise, and then you cannot do that because you do not know the system, you do not know the language to even make a phone call to the Home Office to say what is happening with my case. So, it is always up to others to help you, if they could, and sometimes getting help costs money, which we did not have, you know, even getting interpreter costs.

In the above quotation the interviewee mentions several practical problems that refugees face in Britain while they are waiting for their decision, which might aggravate the psychological stress they experience. Stress and uncertainty are difficulties that all refugees, regardless of their country of settlement or country of origin, have to face to some extent. However, as described in chapter five, the reception and resettlement of refugees are organised in different ways in England and Finland. Because of this, there are many practical problems that are specific to the country of reception. These different experiences will be discussed later in more detail.

Those who are probably in the worst situation in Britain are those who are imprisoned in the detention centres for asylum seekers. As mentioned in chapter five, detention is used relatively frequently in Britain. Among the refugees in this research there were, however, only two persons who had been kept in detention for around two weeks. In Finland there is an organised system whereby asylum seekers are accommodated in official reception centres while they wait for the outcome of their applications. Although these open institutions cannot be compared to British detention centres, they

are still depressing places. The long stays in these centres are often a traumatic experience. One asylum seeker who for a long time had stayed in a number of different reception centres told me the following:

It was really crowded and there were all kinds of psychological pressure and everything. Sometimes I thought that no other persons than refugees could stand this, because this life - in this life - because really it was difficult, it was not-- You can say that there were cultural problems, language problems, people were different, and then-- It is a miracle that people, or refugees, can stand such a life, live all the time in a camp. In [one centre] it was really difficult, and all the time many refugees were fighting [t].

Some of the reception centres in Finland were established hastily and experienced a number of problems. Some centres found it difficult to get suitable staff while others were situated in isolated locations, or otherwise had totally unsuitable facilities. All of the six interviewees who had arrived as asylum seekers in Finland told me about negative experiences during their stay at different reception centres.

Because of all their various problems and anxieties, the asylum seekers can easily get off to a very bad start to their stay in the country of resettlement. Furthermore, the very long processing times for asylum applications in both Finland and England aggravate all the problems that the refugees experience. In Finland there is the additional problem that since the asylum seekers and refugees are so few, refugees often find themselves isolated from their compatriots.

Safety and Gratitude

The experiences of the asylum seekers who are waiting for a decision are completely different from the initial experiences of the quota refugees in Finland. When the latter arrive in the country they are usually welcomed by the authorities at the airport and they can normally move into their new homes at once. The reception is usually well organised and the resettlement is prepared before their arrival. Of course, the quota refugees also experience difficulties, but their smooth arrival in their new country of

settlement has a positive impact on their experiences. An emotional attachment to the place where they first arrived and to Finland was described by many of the quota refugees. Although the following young man from Iran had moved to Helsinki, he still showed a great affection for the town where he arrived and where he lived for one and a half years:

In Smalltown [fictitious name], there I have known people, and it is the people and nature, Smalltown was the first place in Finland that I saw. I do like Smalltown more than Helsinki, it feels like it really was my home town, this kind of notion I got of the town [t].

Despite all the problems refugees experience upon arrival, there is reason to emphasise the sense of relief and security refugees feel after they have been allowed to stay in the country. There is also a huge gratitude felt towards the country that has accepted them as refugees. Not surprisingly, this is especially evident among those who arrive as quota refugees. The interviewees were asked to mention things that they regarded as positive in the country of asylum compared to their situation in Kurdistan. All refugees mentioned things like security, the fact that they no longer experienced war, and the democratic institutions *which meant that they no longer had to fear for their lives*. A large family from Iraq summarised the differences between Finland and Kurdistan as follows:

Father: One important difference is that there [in Kurdistan] you did not know what could happen in the next one hour for example, insecurity. Mother did not know when the children went out in the morning if they would return home and what would happen to them.

Son: Our life there was not a normal life for a normal person, we did not know what our future was.

ÖW: Is your life here in Finland more secure?

Whole family: Yes!

Daughter: Your stomach was full [in Kurdistan], but life was insecure.

...

Father: I was always afraid and upset for my children while we lived in Kurdistan, I was afraid for my own sake as well, but most afraid for my children. In economic terms life was OK in Kurdistan, we had our own house and owned land. If it had not been for the regime, it would have been good for us, but they destroyed everything [t].

For those refugees from Iraq or Iran who have spent several years as displaced persons within Kurdistan, the ultimate reason for their flight has often been the safety of their children. A woman from Iraq had lived in refugee camps within Kurdistan for several years until her large family fled to Turkey, from where UNHCR resettled them in Finland:

ÖW: In what way do you think that your life has changed since you moved to Finland?

R: It is a little bit easier now, not war and problems here in Finland. In Iraq we have many problems and much war. I think we had a lot of problems, really a lot of problems. Here now my children can live and my children can attend school. This is why I came here, so that my children could live and my children could attend school, this is why I came here. In Iraq there is war, but I was not hungry and did not come here because I was hungry. Sometimes Finnish people perhaps, not all but some, are angry or say that many refugees get much money and buy many things. But I also had a house in Iraq and I had a car, I had many things. It was only because I wanted to live that I came here. And I did not come here on my own, Finnish people came and talked to us and after that we came here.

ÖW: So, it was largely for the sake of the children that you made the decision to come here?

R: Yes, my husband wants to go back to Iraq. It was only for the sake of the children that we came here, so the children could live and attend school.

ÖW: So if you did not have children you would perhaps never have moved?

R: In that case I would not mind going back [t].

Education and Language Skills

Refugees arriving in Europe in general tend to come from the affluent parts of the population in their countries of origin. Since refugees are often well educated, they can become an asset for the receiving society.² In Britain this has been revealed for example by Carey-Wood et al. (1995). Among Kurdish refugees this argument is particularly true for men from Iraq living in England. Many male Kurds from Iraq arrived in Britain as students and are today very well educated. There are also highly educated Kurds from Turkey and Iran, but an interest in studying and a very high level of formal education, including numerous persons with doctorates, seems to be especially evident among male Kurds from Iraq living in Britain. There is also a

difference between different cohorts of refugees from Kurdistan. The more recent refugees from Iraq and Turkey often come from a more humble background and often have a poorer school education than earlier refugees from Iraq.

Regardless of their level of formal education, Kurds generally have extensive language skills, with the possible exception of Kurds from Turkey who seem to master fewer languages. It is not uncommon for a man from southern Kurdistan to speak four or five languages, usually some combination of Kurdish, Arabic, Turkish, Azerbaijani and Farsi. Unfortunately none of the languages used in Kurdistan is very useful in Europe, and only those who have attended secondary school or university have any knowledge of English. However, the extensive language skills many Kurdish refugees possess might make it easier for them to learn additional languages.

Kurds from Turkey living in London seemed to have particularly weak linguistic skills. This observation is supported by the Kurdish Workers Association in London which estimated that only 7 per cent of the newly arrived Kurds in North London had a fair or good knowledge of English while 92 per cent knew very little or no English at all (Refugee Council 1993). In Britain refugees from Iran and Iraq generally seemed to have a better knowledge of English than the Kurds from Turkey. The level of education and language skills are also clearly connected to gender. Kurdish women have usually received less formal education and might not speak as many languages as Kurdish men. It is common in all parts of Kurdistan for women to be illiterate, and among recent refugees from Kurdistan there are many women who have never attended school.

A clear majority of the informants felt that in the beginning language was their biggest problem (Of those who did not mention language, several persons both in Finland and Britain emphasised problems with the asylum application; one asylum seeker in Britain mentioned that he had not been able to find a doctor for his son; and in Finland one family complained about the isolated location of their flat). The knowledge of the country's language was regarded by the refugees as a resource that could solve many

of their other problems. A woman from Iran living in London gave a typical answer to the question about her first major problems:

Unfamiliarity with the society - everything was strange at that time - and language. Language was the biggest problem, because when you know the language, getting contact is easier, and you can discover anything by yourself. You know, you know how to contact. Language really suffered a long time ... I am not such a person sitting asking others to do everything for me. I can cope with my self anywhere, but if you do not have language, how can you help yourself?

My results indicate that the refugees, somewhat surprisingly, experienced worse language problems in England than they did in Finland. However, there were also very big individual differences within the communities. The language tuition given to refugees in Finland has been successful, and most Kurdish refugees can already speak some Finnish after one year in the country (or the language is Swedish, if they live in a Swedish-speaking area of Finland). Therefore the Kurds in Finland generally seemed to have a better knowledge of the majority language than the Kurds in England. Also the availability of interpretation services during contacts with authorities seemed to be relatively well organised in Finland.

The Kurds in London, especially in the Turkish community, often had very little knowledge of English. In Britain the language tuition given to refugees often seemed to be inadequate, sporadic and sometimes inefficient, largely because of a lack of funding (cf. WUS 1991; Ali 1990). Furthermore, there was often no interpretation service available during contacts with the authorities. For example, the refugees usually had to organise interpretation themselves during visits to the Department of Social Security (DSS).

Practical Problems

The flight from Kurdistan is usually financed through contributions and loans from relatives. Even those who are resettled by UNHCR have usually been forced to borrow

money from relatives. Kurdish refugees, with few exceptions, are thus penniless when they arrive in the country of asylum, and therefore refugees usually have to rely on social benefits. Although the situations in the two countries are not totally comparable, one can say that the social benefits are generally more generous in Finland, while refugees in Britain often face huge problems making ends meet. An additional burden is that refugees are supposed to pay back the money they have borrowed from their relatives when they have established themselves in Europe. Furthermore, they often feel that they have an obligation to send contributions to needy relatives in Kurdistan.

The Kurds who manage to seek asylum in Europe have often previously belonged to the more affluent parts of the Kurdish population, although there have been some changes in the demographic characteristics of the refugees in recent years. Thus there is clearly a downward economic mobility for many refugees, which is discussed in more detail later in the section dealing with refugees' employment situation. One thing which has improved is the range of public services available in European countries, but in other respects refugees tend to face far bigger economic problems in exile than they did in Kurdistan. An older man in London told me about his property in Turkey:

In Kurdistan I owned a lot of land, I was rich and lived comfortably. This was a good thing in Turkey. All the rest was bad because Kurds do not have any rights in Turkey. You can never imagine how big my land was. I had so much land that you could not see the end of it. But there was no safety, so we had to flee [t].

The downward economic mobility of many refugees questions the popular misconception of refugees as economic migrants. Many refugees would in fact have had a more secure economic future in the country of origin. A man who had been a *peshmerga* in Iraq speculated about what kind of future he would have had in that country:

If I had not been political in my country, I would not have come here, because I did not come to Britain because I am hungry, or for a job or hunger. Because in my country we have more jobs, and my country is not poor. Yes, it has many companies and many things. If I had finished my [studies] and worked in a petrol company I would have had a very good job, yes, and good money, but the political took me and I ran away.

Closely connected to the economic problems are a number of other practical problems experienced by refugees. The differences in the reception and resettlement policies become very evident when looking at the practical problems experienced by the refugees. The refugees had widely different experiences in the two countries.

Finland

In Finland refugees generally found that the social benefits and other support they received from the authorities were sufficient. Nor was housing perceived as a big problem. The local municipalities were usually able to provide all refugees with flats. Housing in Finland is generally of a good standard, but on the other hand the flats which the refugees rent are often smaller than the homes the families have been used to in Kurdistan. Some refugees also felt that their flats were poorly situated. Most respondents were very pleased with the social services they received from the Finnish authorities, but there were of course still other problems and conflicts which occurred in relations with the authorities. In the words of a man from Iran:

Oh yes, [the authorities have helped me] during the first months after we came to the country, and in a very positive way, except for some things that we did not understand. It was because of culture, and living here-- How to behave. Because we did not know very much about the system here and you had to quickly transfer one life into this life. It was very hard. We almost got a kind of -- mental problem, not totally mad but that is perhaps what it is anyway, and tired and angry all the time because *everything is new* [t].

In any event, none of the interviewees in Finland felt that they had been discriminated against by the authorities in the area of social services and benefits. A refugee from Turkey, who had also helped other Kurdish refugees with their practical problems, told me about the variety of difficulties asylum seekers experienced, but still found that things had worked well in one respect:

In the social sector the Kurds have received everything they need in Finland. Kurds and Finns have been treated in the same way, and you cannot say that one has got a better service than the other. The rights of the Kurds have been the same as those of Finnish people [t].

However, the public support offered to refugees is not always only a positive thing. It includes a power relationship which supports a “clientelisation” of the refugees so that refugees are regarded as more helpless than they actually are. The outcome can be a kind of declaration of incapacity of the refugees. According to a man from Iran, there is a hidden racism which can even be part of actions that have the best intentions:

For example, there are people who want to help you more, but that is not good either. They think that you are disabled, you do not have this or that. Usually we are disabled since we do not know the language, but we can learn the language. But some people want to help you so much like you do not know anything and cannot learn anything, which is bad [t].

The supportive and active resettlement policies in Finland are supposed to give a good basis for a positive integration of the refugees into Finnish society. The refugees have generally been pleased with these policies and the resettlement programmes have undoubtedly led to positive results. However, as is shown in other parts of this thesis, positive integration has not taken place. The shortcomings in the integration of refugees should despite this not be blamed solely on the resettlement policies. Rather, the major reasons for the shortcomings in the resettlement of refugees are to be found in the more general structures in Finnish society. These structural issues are discussed in more detail in later parts of this thesis.

England

Since, in Britain, there is no structured official resettlement programmes for Kurdish refugees, their life situation is initially very chaotic. These issues were discussed with a woman from Iran:

ÖW: ... Do you think that you got the help you needed? Or I mean, if you could now decide yourself, how refugees in this country should be taken care of --

R: I would change everything. It is very strong bureaucracy system here. If you speak English, maybe it is better, maybe you can face it much better, but if you do not speak English it is horrible. I had horrible days, unforgettable, but with the situation we had - I was ill, and then no English, no house, no money, no work - everything was complicated when we arrived.

The housing situation in London can not be described as anything other than horrendous. The local councils and charities do not have enough accommodation for all homeless refugees, and the prices on the private market are very high. The houses and flats that are available are generally of a low standard and are usually smaller than those the families have been used to in Kurdistan. Furthermore, the refugee associations only have very limited resources to alleviate these problems (cf. HACT 1994).

Many refugees are forced to live with relatives for a long time until they manage to find a place of their own. Some single persons live at hostels provided by charities, for example by the Refugee Council, until they manage to rent a place from a private landlord. One of the refugees interviewed had even been forced to live in an occupied house for about one year. To find enough money for the rent is a serious problem for many refugees, since the housing benefit does not cover the prices they have to pay for privately rented flats. However, families with children generally manage to get a roof over their heads through the local council or some housing association.

One issue which aggravates the practical problems in Britain is that there is no system by which the refugees automatically get the benefits to which they are entitled. The refugees have to apply for the benefits themselves. If you are totally unfamiliar with the language and how society works, this is not very easy. A man from Iraq who had lived in Britain for nine years reflected on this problem:

My experience of the UK is that you have to fight your way in, find your way by yourself. If you do not find it by yourself, you will not be granted any help. For example housing benefits, people get neglected if they do not find their way on their own, you have to do it yourself.

It is difficult to make any normative comparisons of the different resettlement policies in England and Finland. However, there were some informants with experience of both the British system and the system in some of the Nordic countries (which tend to have fairly similar policies). The sample includes one refugee who had two sisters in Sweden with whom he had close contacts. This is how he compared the Swedish and British policies:

ÖW: Now, when you look back at this time when you arrived and the problems you had, how would you organise the reception of refugees, if you could decide exactly how things should be done?

R: I think that the system that they have in Sweden, as you probably know, seems to be better. The Swedish system is more relaxation, while here you have to be worried when you arrive. But on the other hand the English system helps you more to manage yourself, to be able to do things on your own. So there are advantages and disadvantages in both systems. But some people need more help, for example when people come from a small village in Kurdistan, they have problems. So for those people the Swedish system is better. But I do not want to put the systems side by side and say that this is better than that. Some people do, but I do not want to compare. But still, some people do need help and this is why I think that perhaps the Swedish system is better.

The Swedish resettlement system is similar to the Finnish system. Obviously, as is indicated in the above quotation, one advantage with the resettlement policies in these Nordic countries is the equal treatment they also guarantee to refugees with less skills and resources to find their way on their own. It appears that the British resettlement policies do not fully recognise the refugees' specific problems and experiences. In the words of a man from Iraq:

When looking back at my own experiences, generally speaking, I think that the authorities to a bigger extent have to take into account that they are dealing with political refugees and not usual migrants. Refugees have a lot of problems on arrival that have to do with their connections back home, and they are in a very difficult situation upon arrival in the UK. There should be some provision to help refugees psychologically, now there is nothing. Genuine political refugees may have experienced a very difficult time before arrival. Treating them as ordinary migrants and giving them no relaxation time is a big mistake. I think that refugees might need something like a couple of months relaxation time.

The British authorities have not fully recognised the specific nature of the refugee migration, and they seem to deal with it in the same way as they dealt with earlier immigration to the country. As pointed out in chapter five, the British government's view has been that many asylum seekers are illegal immigrants who arrive in Britain in order to use British welfare benefits. On the contrary, however, my research findings indicate that at the moment refugees and other legal immigrants face huge problems even in getting the limited public services to which they are legally entitled. On the other hand, the strong local communities in Britain can provide refugees with many

advantages. The Kurdish associations and ethnic networks are able to play a far bigger positive role in Britain than they do in Finland. The functions and importance of the Kurdish associations and informal networks are discussed in more detail in the next chapter.

To summarise, the Kurdish refugees in Finland experience relatively few practical problems connected to housing, income support, education, interpretation services and other aspects of the social services. This is in contrast to the Kurds in England, who often experience a number of practical problems in their contacts with the authorities. Obviously, the resettlement policies in the country of settlement have a decisive influence on the practical problems refugees experience.

The Experience of Displacement

In addition to the practical problems which refugees experience upon arrival, there are other problems which in practice cannot be solved and which the refugees have to live with. In particular, there is a sense of displacement, alienation and uprootedness which is common for all refugees. To be a refugee means that you have been forced to flee from your home and that you are living in a country to which you never wanted to move. The feelings refugees have are not easily understood by people who have not experienced exile themselves. The best way to describe these feelings is through quotations from my interviews. For example, a woman from Turkey recalled her experiences upon arrival in Britain:

Because you do not know even what it means to even be a refugee, you know, what does it mean? You feel, you come, it is kind of a shock. You feel like you will never go back again to your country, the feeling is so bad, because it makes you more vulnerable, if you like, in terms of, you know, going back home and seeing family and all that, so that is quite serious. And they [advice workers at the community centre] did explain what it does mean to be a refugee under international law and what happens, and in practical terms also what happens and all that for the person. The first time you become a refugee, the first thing that shocked me was that I cannot go back to my country, unless of course all the political things will be solved. I can travel anywhere in the world once I have a passport except for Turkey or Kurdistan, it even says so in your travel document,

and it is just so-- I think it is the same for everybody, but it is just so bad, that you cannot go back.

It is also clear that nothing in the new country of settlement can compensate for the social relations one has lost. In the words of a young woman from Iraq who had lived in Finland for two years:

I feel safe here and it is a convenient place here, and I live in peace and tranquillity here, but still I am all the time longing for my relatives in Kurdistan [t].

To be a refugee not only means that you have been forced to leave your home, but since you never wanted to move to the country of exile, there is an additional feeling of alienation in the place where you are living. This sense of alienation was clearly evident in most interviews. A woman from Turkey stated:

I do not definitely consider this country as my country, and I do not really feel like home, but I do not sort of allow myself to be a guest either. I try to be involved as much as I can, within the community and with the people that I -- I feel that I have to be involved with British people, with the public, but I also know the fact that this is not my country. I am a refugee. The word refugee is itself -- something. And I still have the ultimate goal of going back.

For political refugees the sense of loss is also closely connected to the political struggle in Kurdistan. This has previously taken up a large part of their lives, and in exile it is no longer possible to be active in the same way. Thus many refugees feel that they have lost the meaning and sense of purpose in life. A woman from Iran described the differences between her life in the Kurdish mountains and her life in London:

A lot of things [have changed in my life since I left Kurdistan]. I used to have a very hard life, always bombardments, fighting, these things. But I was very active, I was in other ways very happy, I had many many friends. I do not know, I was happy, I was really happy, I thought that I was doing in that community, something like useful. But when I came here, things changed a lot, I did not do anything, I did not have any work, I just had to stay at home. This studying helped me a little bit. I lost all my activities, there was nothing to do in this country, I could not get involved in their society, it was so difficult to be accepted by them, language difference, culture difference, and so on. It is not the same, everything has changed.

It can also be argued that refugees do not relate to the country of settlement in the same way as labour migrants. Many refugees wanted to stress the specific refugee experience. A young man who had lived in Finland for almost three years explained:

The biggest problem here is how to mentally or ideologically relate to this. If my country would be free, if my people would be a free people, I would not have to be worried, about anything. Instead I would be very satisfied with wherever I am and whatever I do, I would not notice that at all. But because Iran is very different, and I have been fighting for freedom, and I still feel like I am part of that, so I still feel I have an obligation to myself, I should go back there again. You would not expect this to be the case because for example the things I am doing today are different from what I did before, but still it is the case. I am very -- every day I live with it, because for example in the night when I sleep, perhaps five, six times I see dreams about it, about my own people, my own life and other things [t].

Another Iranian man who had lived in Finland for more than three years tried to explain more clearly the difference between himself and labour migrants:

Really I am speaking about political refugees, not about migrants or others, it is only because of politics that he/she³ has left his or her country. Because he/she cannot live in that country and he/she does not want to die. ... He/she is waiting for something, for example if a president leaves a country as a refugee, he/she does not want to become for example a Finn, he/she wants to go back to his or her country some day, to his or her own land. And also we are the same, the only difference is that I was only part of the youth section [of my party], but at this time I did not think that I would stay in Finland or in the UK or in whatever country, I did not think anything else than that I would like to continue my fight against that government, if necessary from here. ... When I am involved in politics I want a political party and I could for example do my own radio programmes and journals and so on. And then I want that the country [of reception] accepts me and helps me in my fight. Because if I am here I want to live, and I have a right to live, and the political life is part of my life. I should have the possibility to live for politics, ... I am a political person, I am not labour, there is so often this misunderstanding. Somebody should tell the people why we are here [t].

However, the alienation refugees feel is not only related to the political struggle in which they have been involved in. Ultimately this alienation is also related to the fact that although they have moved to a new place, they will still carry with them their old identity and culture for the rest of their life. A man from Iraq pointed out that he thought that he could never become truly assimilated.

ÖW: What do you think about Finnish people, do you think that they want you to become as Finnish as possible, or do you think that they want you to preserve your own culture?

R: It depends actually from person to person. What I would say is that some Finnish people would not accept that I in any way would become a member. Some others, they have something to do with these cultural issues and foreigner's affairs, in many instances they unfortunately are trying to force you to become Finnish, and that I have rejected and rejected continuously, because I cannot become Finnish when somebody wants me to. I will never become Finnish because I have lived twenty-four years in another country, and I have grown up in another culture and now I have arrived here and it is true that I can learn a lot of things and behave like a Finnish person, but I am not thinking like one. Because I know a lot of things that Finnish people do not know because I have knowledge of, in addition to the Finnish culture, also my own, which the Finnish people do not have any knowledge of [t].

The refugees' relation to their societies of origin is not only a matter of looking back at their earlier lives; it is an ongoing and continuous relation. The refugees continue to be influenced by contemporary developments in Kurdistan. Especially the political developments play a large role for the refugees. A woman from Turkey said:

I think all Kurdish refugees have the problems in Kurdistan still inside them although they are away from there. They still think about Kurdistan and have it with them here, they have relatives still living there and hear news from Kurdistan. When they hear that villages have been destroyed it affects them directly although they are living here.

All refugees continue to relate to, and identify themselves with, Kurdistan. After several years in exile refugees continue to feel alienated from the receiving society. This section has thus shown that refugees feel partly alienated and insulated from the their country of reception. Furthermore, refugees continue to relate to their country of origin in several different ways. However, the connection with Kurdistan has not only a psychological aspect; there are also quite tangible flows of information, ideas, capital and people between the countries of origin and the countries of settlement. These transnational networks are described in more detail in chapter seven.

The Wish to Return

Related to refugees' sense of displacement and alienation is a feeling that their stay in the countries of reception is only temporary. The refugees look forward to the day when they can return and everything will become normal again.⁴ All respondents, with only two exceptions, stated that they wanted to move back to Kurdistan as soon as possible. (The two respondents who did not want to return were a woman from Iran and a woman from Iraq who had lived respectively for six and ten years in Britain, and who were both afraid that they would have problems in moving back and adjusting themselves to traditional gender roles in Kurdistan.) A man from Turkey living in London and a man from Iraq living in Finland expressed typical opinions about their wish to return:

It is not just me. All of the Kurdish people, all over the world, not just in England or Britain or Europe, all over the world, they all want to go back to their country [t].

I would like to return to Kurdistan, I think that I am the first family that will move back when Kurdistan becomes free. If there would be a democratic leader, and peace and safety, after that I would go back. That is why I am now here, because there is no security. I think that some day I will go back, it is impossible for me to imagine that I would stay here. If that happens it is not my fault but because of life. Now we live in Finland but we do not know what will happen in the future [t].

The circumstances that most respondents mentioned as necessary for a return included the change of government in the country of origin, the introduction of democracy and human rights and some kind of autonomy for Kurdistan. Despite their wish to return to Kurdistan all interviewees told me that they found it very hard to plan anything for the future. The political future of Kurdistan was regarded as very unclear and some refugees pointed out that they did not know if it would ever be possible for them to return. Many of the refugees from Iran and Iraq thought that, although they would like to return, this was very unlikely to happen within the near future. However, the refugees from Turkey were more likely to regard their stay as temporary and were

more optimistic about the possibility of a political change. The following quotation is typical of the optimism and hope that many refugees from Turkey expressed in 1995:

I do not really hope [to stay in Britain]. Only while we are waiting for a free Kurdistan. But for me personally I do not think that we are going to stay in England for the rest of our life. My personal feeling is that in a couple of years, two or three years, a kind of solution will be found between the Kurds and the Turks, so that actually we can return and be in our country, in a free environment.

Contrasting with this is the alienation from politics that could be found among refugees from Iraq. A man living in Finland reflected on the problems in Iraq:

One does not know, Kurdistan lies between Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria. You do not know what can happen. I do not believe in Kurdish politics any more, but perhaps the USA or the United Nations can do something. There are local problems as well between the two parties which have to be solved. I remember 1974, when the USA did not support the Kurdish revolution. One does not know, but I do not believe in the future and cannot see how changes could happen. Perhaps you can ask some of the Kurdish politicians who live in London what they say about it, they know better than I do. ... But I will stay here until the situation gets better [t].

In the case of the Iranian refugees, the hopes for a political solution were at least as pessimistic. A man from Iran considered it unlikely that he would be able to return within the near future:

You know, it depends. If things change in the way that there will be a new dictator, in that case I will be forced out again and I would not like to. But if Iran will be a free country, and Iran lets me study, get a job and live as a human being. But if I now go there and I see a new dictator I have to react again, and my life will be in danger, and I will end up in jail and it will be difficult, I will not get a job, I will not have the right to express my opinion, all these kinds of things. But if I get what is normal for a human being, the things I can do here in the Nordic countries. But that will not happen very fast, because in Iran there is not a very well organised opposition at the moment [t].

One has to remember that for some refugees a return is unlikely even if the political situation in Kurdistan suddenly changes. Many refugees have lost everything they had in Kurdistan. Their villages have been destroyed, their land has been confiscated, and their relatives and friends might have been killed or have disappeared. This was the

case for refugees from all of the three countries concerned. An older couple from Iraq living in Finland described their situation:

Husband: We cannot move back as long as there is no democratic rule there and human rights are not respected. Personally I could stay here because I have nothing left in Kurdistan and it is not so different here.

Wife: Yes, I agree with my husband [t].

In Finland it is relatively common for young Kurdish men to have relationships with, and marry, Finnish women. This of course has a decisive influence on the future plans of the Kurdish men, especially if the couple has children. As several young men told me, children and marriage would probably mean that they must give up their plans to return.

To sum up, almost all refugees wish to return to Kurdistan when conditions are appropriate, but when this will be is not yet clear. However, the Kurds from Turkey were generally more optimistic about the chance of returning and were more inclined to see their stay as temporary. The Kurds from Iran and Iraq, however, did not think that a return would be possible within the near future. Obviously, the political developments in the country of origin have a profound influence on the refugees' plans for the future.

Future Plans in the Country of Settlement

Although most refugees would like to return to Kurdistan, it is a fact that they must continue to live in exile for a long time, perhaps for ever. As a man from Iraq who had lived in Britain for five years said, "Many people say that they are going back, but very few have actually done this. Many people speak about it but nobody goes back." Thus, all refugees need to make some plans for their future in the country of settlement in case a return migration remains impossible. A woman from Iraq living in Britain and a man from Iran living in Finland described their plans for the future should they not be able to return :

I would like to go back. But now it is impossible to go back, and if I have to stay here I will do my best and follow British laws and be thankful and live as a Kurd in Britain.

In the first place I hope that we would have our own country, but if it is not possible to return to Kurdistan we would like to participate in Finnish society and also become citizens.

The refugees want to return, but they also want to establish a life in their new country of settlement. How these conflicting plans for the future can be reconciled is a common dilemma. A young man from Turkey who had lived in Britain for four years described his thoughts:

ÖW: What is bad [in Britain compared to Kurdistan] then?

R: Bad is, in any case, you know you feel yourself, something-- that in any case probably you will go back to your country, or you do not think of establishing a life here, a family you know, and in any case it is not your country.

ÖW: So it is still some kind of -- some kind of alienation?

R: Yes, yes, it is yes. But I think for much more, for many people they are establishing a community here, or Kurdish or Turkish, you know, a closed community, and they do not feel-- to be living in a foreign country. How can I say -- statistically if you ask a lot of people they can say, here I want to go back actually, but, in fact, actually, the reality is different actually. But I can say that in any case as an example, you want your one leg to be in your country and your other leg to be in this country, if you see what I mean. It is very difficult.

Clearly, many refugees wish to take advantage of their lives in exile in order to further political and personal goals that are related to their countries of origin. Lundberg (1989), in his study of Latin American refugees, argues that it is possible to understand the refugees' life in exile as a career during which the refugees are trying to prepare themselves for their ultimate goal which is a return to the country of origin. For example, many refugees spend their time studying and gaining knowledge which they can utilise after they have returned. A young man from Iran hoped to become a teacher in Kurdistan:

At least now I will study, and when my studies are concluded I would like to study even more. To get knowledge, although you never can get enough knowledge, but to get relatively good knowledge. And if some day it happens that I will return, in that case I can work as a teacher for my people. The people who are there surely need it more than the people who are here. And this is my whole future, but I do not know if I live so long or not [t].

Almost all refugees considered it possible that in the future they would apply for citizenship in the country of settlement. Dual citizenship is possible in both England and Finland (however, if refugees are given full refugee status they are not allowed to keep their original passports, and will instead be given the Refugee Convention travel document). Three of the interviewees in Britain already had British citizenship. Those who did not want to apply for citizenship thought that they would soon return home, and that they would thus not need a new citizenship. Many refugees indicated that there were largely practical reasons behind their wish for a new citizenship. It was felt that Finnish or British citizenship would make their life easier, and in particular, it was mentioned that travelling abroad would be facilitated. Although travelling with the Refugee Convention travel document is possible, some interviewees found it embarrassing to use this document while others were afraid of more serious difficulties during trips abroad. As other studies also have shown (e.g. Ekholm 1994; Icduygu 1996), an application for citizenship is largely a practical question and does not necessarily indicate a person's attachment to the country of settlement or his or her wish to return to the country of origin. In the words of a man from Iran:

I might get a Finnish citizenship in order to facilitate travel and avoid problems in the future, but I will not psychologically become Finnish. But does it make any difference? If I want to work here and do my best here, if I can do something positive, what difference does it make if I am Finnish or not, if I do my work in a responsible way? ... On the other hand I am not the same person as I was before, but I cannot become part of the Finnish people because I am still mentally in Iran and you have all your memories there, you have your life there, your family and parents live there, all kinds of things, so -- When you think of it, one cannot change the people you belong to, I belong to this people. Nobody can decide what they want to be, it is not possible to change it, which is the reason why. You can work here, but mentally and in your thoughts you are the same [t].

Many refugees hoped that citizenship would make it easier to find a job and would reduce the discrimination they experienced in the labour market. However, some refugees were afraid that a new citizenship would not lead to any difference in the majority populations' opinions. A man from Iraq was pessimistic about his chances of being accepted as a member of Finnish society:

I would like to be [a Finnish citizen]. It would make things easier for me, at least officially in this country. But as I told you, not even that would help me mentally in any way, psychologically as long as I am regarded an outsider in this country.

On the other hand it is clear that the Kurds, as a persecuted minority, do not necessarily have a strong emotional bond to their original citizenship. This was stressed by some refugees from Iraq who said that since they were Kurds, they did not have any attachment to the Iraqi state, and that they therefore wanted to get rid of their citizenship as soon as possible. A few persons also mentioned that their application for citizenship would be made because of gratitude towards the country that had given them asylum. An Iranian man who had arrived in Finland as a quota refugee felt that he owed a debt of gratitude to Finland:

I feel that I owe Finland and the Finnish people, Finnish society a lot. Because Finland has given me asylum and security and given me an opportunity to study, and I think I have to pay back a little bit of this debt. That is why I will participate in Finnish society, although in that sense that I can be a Kurd, a Kurd in Finland, or no problem to be a Finnish Kurd. And I think that I can somehow unite these things [t].

All refugees stressed that they wanted to combine the good parts from the Kurdish culture with the good parts of the culture of the receiving society. Obviously, all persons have multiple identities and in multi-cultural societies it is possible for immigrants to combine different cultures and identities (cf. Rex. 1994, 1996). However, as some of the quotations in this chapter indicate, some refugees also felt that the process of integration into the receiving society was connected with various psychological problems.

Although the ultimate goal of the refugees is to return, there is at the same time a clear wish to be integrated into the society of reception. These contradictory future plans are not in conflict with each other since at present a return to Kurdistan is not possible, and nor is it very plausible in the near future. The wish to integrate is seen for example in the fact that all refugees express a desire to participate in their new society of settlement. This issue will also be discussed later in the section about refugees' employment situation. Obviously, integration is a goal among the Kurdish refugees.

However, assimilation is not a goal and not even regarded as a possible outcome of their lives in exile, and this fact clearly relates to the question of refugees' ethnic identification.

Ethnic Identification

This study has not made any attempt to examine the issues of the Kurdish refugees' identity in any detail. However, some questions about the refugees' identification were included in the interviews. For example, all interviewees were asked how they would describe themselves to a person they had not met before, and, depending on the countries of origin and settlement, they were given the following alternatives: British/Finnish, Iranian/Turkish/Iraqi or Kurdish. This question about identification was also asked in order to identify the interview sample, which only included persons who defined themselves as Kurds.

Not surprisingly, none of the interviewees wanted to call themselves British or Finnish. All refugees said that they would present themselves as Kurdish. However, there were still some differences related to their country of origin. The Kurds from Iraq were most likely to only present themselves as Kurdish, rather than use any other description of themselves. In fact some of them even found my question very strange, if not offensive, and asked me how I could question their Kurdish identity. Many Kurds from Turkey added that they could also use the labels Kurd from Turkey and Turkish Kurd. Most of the Kurds from Iran, however, found that the terms Iranian Kurdish and even Iranian were accurate. This probably reflects the fact that "Iranian" signifies citizenship in a more ethnically neutral way than for example "Turkish." Especially those Iranians who had been active in leftist parties seemed to avoid emphasising a separate Kurdish identification. The Kurds from Iraq and Turkey, on the other hand, generally wanted to stress their Kurdish identification. A man from Iraq told me that he had always defended his right to a separate Kurdish identity:

No, this has not changed, I have always, always said that I am a Kurd. Wherever I have gone and whoever I have spoken to, I always tell them that I am Kurdish.

And this is the reason why I am a refugee today. Because I have fought for my right to be Kurdish, which is why I am a refugee. That is why there are Kurdish refugees, because we are not allowed to be Kurdish and live in Kurdistan [t].

Most interviewees said that their identification had not changed during the time they had spent in their new countries of settlement. In those cases where the identification had changed, the refugees felt that they had started to feel *more* Kurdish since they moved to Europe. The news from Kurdistan had greatly affected a man from Iraq who had lived in Britain for nine years:

I have actually changed the way I am looking at this. I am today more aware of my identity, because of the things that you hear that have happened in Kurdistan, since the oppression against the Kurds started ten years ago, before that I was not aware in the same way. So, I have been influenced by the oppression, and there has been a gradual change -- I have had both relatives and friends who have been killed and to hear about this has influenced me.

In Turkey the Kurds have largely been denied the right to exist as a separate ethnic group. Therefore it is not surprising that the refugees in exile might feel more "Kurdish." An activist in a Kurdish organisation told me:

Let me tell you, the Kurds in Turkey have been so discriminated that they have not even known who they are. They were so discriminated that they had forgotten that they were Kurdish. Until the PKK came we did not understand this. That is why we have to educate ourselves and learn of our history and tell other people who we are [t].

One interesting aspect of Kurdish refugee identity has to do with the widespread practice of ethnic monitoring in Britain. The whole idea of ethnic monitoring was questioned by many of the interviewees. A woman from Iran described her dilemma:

Oh yes, it is horrible, I do not know, do you ask me do I fill it in? I have to do it - - I have to do it, but I think it is very racism. I do not know why they do that, and sometimes I cannot feel myself in any column, because there is no column for me, and I write only "Other" ... I do not know why they ask these. I rejected to fill it in last year, and then I spoke with the management of the college, and he told me they do this to make a balance between the students, but I did not accept that.

The terms used in ethnic monitoring (the most common categories are “White,” “Black,” “Asian” and “Other”) have a rather specific meaning in Britain. A few persons told me that they used to state that they were Asians, since Kurdistan lies in Asia, until somebody told them that in Britain Asian usually refers to persons originating from the Indian subcontinent. Most had to opt for the “Other” category and explain on the forms that they were Kurdish. None of the interviewees chose the category “White.”

“Black,” although a controversial and debated term, is often used in Britain as a broad political term referring to all persons experiencing racism, and is widely considered as a relevant category around which resistance to racism can be organised. Of the twenty-eight interviewees in Britain, only two declared that they as well as being Kurdish, they could also describe themselves as “Black.” Both persons had lived in Britain for a relatively long time and had been involved in community work with ethnic minorities, and both considered the term “Black” to include all ethnic minorities in Britain. This would suggest that the Kurdish communities, over time, might start to feel part of, and be integrated into, the wider category of “Black” or “ethnic minorities” in Britain. However, this is a development that is far removed from the present situation, where the Kurdish refugees tend to identify themselves as Kurds rather than anything else.

Actually, many interviewees had problems in understanding the question when asked if they felt that they were an “ethnic minority” in Britain. Because of the continuing relationship which most refugees have to their countries of origin, they wanted to think of themselves within this framework and not within the framework of British ethnic relations. A refugee from Turkey who had lived for seven years in Britain clearly understood the meaning of the term “ethnic minority,” but still found it incomprehensible to think of the refugee community in these terms:

ÖW: Do you consider yourself to belong to an ethnic minority then, because people in Britain sometimes talk about ethnic minorities?

R: No, I get really angry when they say Kurdish minority. I do not. Kurdish people, Kurdish nation I would say.

ÖW: But I mean in England, an ethnic minority in England?

R: In England?

ÖW: Yes, in England.

R: Hmm-- Maybe we are a minority, but I do not know ethnic minority, I do not like the word minority.

ÖW: OK, it has to do with--

R: It is sort of like discrimination, in a way, one way of --

ÖW: Yes. So you do not like the word minority because it has to do with that you do not feel like you are a minority in Turkey. OK.

R: How they can call twenty million people a minority is just amazing. There are nations which are smaller than that, what is for example the population of Holland or Luxembourg?

Consequently, the Kurdish refugees predominantly choose to define themselves as Kurds rather than using any other ethnic or national label. The strong identification as Kurds therefore makes a fast assimilation impossible, since assimilation into the society of exile would mean that the refugees would give up their previous identity. On the other hand, a social and structural integration is of course still possible and is also regarded as a goal by the refugees.

Ethnicity is always defined in terms of a relation between social groups. The Kurdish refugees' ethnicity is primarily defined within the context of social relations in the countries of origin. Because of this orientation towards Kurdistan, it is difficult to regard the Kurdish refugees as an ethnic minority within the framework of the countries of exile. This supports the argument in chapter two that theories of ethnic relations are not easily applied to refugee situations (cf. Bousquet 1991).

Gender Issues and Family Values

Although many of the problems refugees experience are the same for both men and women, female refugees are in some respects especially disadvantaged. This section briefly describes refugees' gender-specific problems. In order to understand these problems, this section also very briefly discusses some issues pertaining to gender roles and family values among Kurdish refugees.

All interviewees pointed out that the social relations in Kurdistan and in the two societies of resettlement work in completely different ways. A woman from Iraq described the differences between Britain and Kurdistan:

Yes, in Kurdistan there is-- people around you. When you live in Kurdistan all the neighbours, all your family, friends, you do not feel that you are on your own in Kurdistan. If you have any problem all the friends and families and all the neighbours are like your family, they come to help you, and they visit you-- it is not like here [in England] really.

These differences between the social relations in Kurdistan and in the countries of origin were in various ways pointed out by all interviewees. When asked to give examples of positive and negative things in the country of settlement in comparison with the situation in Kurdistan, most people chose to speak about family values. A woman from Iran explained:

Iranian people are close together, they are very good to each other. If you have some problems you can go to any of your neighbours or friends and they will help you. In England nobody helps you and you cannot get help or talk to your neighbour, you just say hello and that is all. In Iran things are better. ... Iranian families are very close together and we look after each other. In England parents are not responsible for their children, they are not close together and do not take care of each other. Brothers do not help their sisters and men do not help their wives. In Iran we do not know this, this is what I think. You have to be careful with your children, you have to give them advice. You have to give them advice not to take drugs and not to drink. I am responsible for my children. In this country it is different, people are not responsible for each other.

Many of the interviewees, both men and women, had serious doubts about the way the family works in Europe. Divorce and the general breakdown of families in Europe were mentioned by many persons as negative aspects of life in exile. The commitment to the institution of marriage and the family in general seems to be a fundamental part of the Kurdish culture (cf. Songur 1992), and this was expressed in various ways in most interviews.

Without exaggerating the importance of cultural differences it has to be acknowledged that it is possible to argue that there are cultural differences between contemporary northern European societies (including Finland and England) and the traditional

Kurdish society. However, what should be remembered is that these differences do not by themselves lead to problems or conflicts, which are instead determined by other factors. However, it can be argued that because of the cultural differences, the refugees might feel more disoriented and might experience more misunderstandings than they would otherwise do. This in turn might aggravate all the problems refugees experience. As Sheikmous argues, "For somebody coming from a social background like Kurdistan (which is mainly agrarian), with its intensive social contacts in the framework of the extended family, neighbours and friends, the experience [of exile] becomes even more dramatic" (Sheikmous 1990, 103).

An issue closely related to Kurdish family values is that of gender roles. In traditional Kurdish society there is a clear division of labour between men and women, with both having specific roles determined by gender, age and marital status (cf. Songur 1992). Men are traditionally dominant in the public sphere of life, while women are confined to the private sphere of life. It is sometimes argued that traditionally Kurdish women have more freedom than women living in other traditional cultures in the Middle East. Proofs of this is seen in the fact that Kurdish women traditionally do not wear veils and are often allowed to speak with unacquainted men. However, whether or not it is true that the Kurdish women, relatively speaking, are more emancipated, it is a fact that traditional Kurdish society and public life largely are dominated by men (cf. Laizer 1996a). Some of the interviewees, both male and female, even regarded traditional Kurdish society as a very sexist society in which women are discriminated against. On the other hand, many women also strongly defended traditional gender roles and family values and argued that the freedom of women in Europe is illusory. Some persons even argued that individual freedom in Europe amounted to nothing else than loneliness and irresponsibility.

This section is not able to give a full picture of gender roles in Kurdistan. The important issue for the purpose of this thesis is that although diverse opinions were expressed about gender roles, all interviewees experienced that there were significant differences between the gender roles in Kurdistan and those in the societies of settlement. A man from Iran summarised his view of the differences:

There are really, really big differences [in the gender roles in Kurdish society compared to Finnish society]. For example, I mentioned before about illiteracy, and then when there is no freedom. And then when the official law of the country [Iran] only gives rights to men, so the women do not really have any rights at all. Although usually in the Kurdish areas the Kurds do not follow those rules so strictly, the women there are perhaps more free than in other places, and in the economy they might perhaps to some extent have a share. But in decision-making they do not have a very strong place, they can give advice but they can not decide [t].

Often the two concepts of honour and shame are used to describe two fundamental virtues in Kurdish culture (cf. Songur 1992). In particular, the life of Kurdish women is traditionally ruled by the importance of honour and shame. Sheri Laizer describes the importance of these traditional customs among the Kurds in Turkey:

The motivating factor for most Kurds continues to be their sense of honour. A family's honour is all-important and is usually seen as residing in the purity and fidelity of its women.... A woman's infidelity to her husband - even when the marriage is an arranged and possibly loveless union - brings disgrace to both families. (Laizer 1991, 44)

Some of the female interviewees explained that still in exile the concept of the family's honour has a profound influence on the relations between the sexes in the Kurdish communities. A woman from Turkey argued that young female refugees in particular experience many problems in England:

Kurdish women's situation is quite difficult here, since they live in a totally different culture. Especially young women, ... because here the Kurdish community puts a big pressure on women, especially on girls, because they believe English culture is a culture where you can have free sex, and they do not want their children to be like them, especially their daughters. And there are still arranged marriages here, they either get women from Kurdistan, for their boys, or they send their daughters back to Kurdistan for marriage.

ÖW: So, this is done to protect the women--

R: Yes, to protect from the other side.

ÖW: --from the terrible English culture?

R: Yes, to protect their family.

Of all the problems refugees experience, some are obviously gender-specific. Kurdish women often have a poorer education and less language skills than men. Actually,

many of the female informants emphasised that the possibility of studying was one of the positive things about living in Europe. Since Kurdish women have traditionally been confined to the private sphere of life, female refugees often have limited personal contacts with the society of settlement. In the European countries services and resources are mainly available within the public sphere of life, and therefore they are often not as accessible for Kurdish women as they are for men. Consequently, some Kurdish women in Europe have to rely on their men, who have to take care of the whole family's contacts with the authorities and other public institutions. A woman from Turkey gave a description of the problems facing refugee women in London:

Men are more open to the changes, if you like, to the outside world, because of the society back in Kurdistan. Whereas women are more used to a more closed environment, you know, and when you come to a country like this and there is a culture shock, it is more striking for women than it is for men, I would say. Women need a lot of encouragement and confidence because throughout history because of the treatment of women, women lost self-confidence and they do not see a role for themselves in the society, they do not see any position and they feel like they cannot really do much in that sense. So problems for women here, either you get more closed, you know, between four walls at home. For example you look around you and you do not see many women around you trying to learn the language, but you see more men going to colleges, young or middle-age men trying to learn the language. But women mostly choose to stay at home, and do not get out much. Because they feel like they cannot cope with the changes. It is more difficult for them to understand the society, they just let men do it.

Among the first refugees from Iraq, many women had a good educational and professional background, but among the recent arrivals from Iraq and Turkey the women's disadvantaged position has become even clearer. Furthermore, the women from Turkey living in London are in a special situation since they are living in their own close community. Although this has its own advantages, it also means that women tend to become isolated from British society. In addition, some of them work in factories as well as taking care of their families. Consequently, they have very limited chances to take part in language courses or to learn English through personal contacts.

Women's issues are not always taken into account sufficiently in the refugee community. Some female interviewees felt that Kurdish associations are not really

able to help women enough with their specific problems. The impression given during various discussions was that the emancipation of women was seen by many persons as only a subordinate part of the larger Kurdish national project of liberating Kurdistan from oppression by the states in the region.

To summarise, Kurdish refugee women are in many ways disadvantaged compared with Kurdish men. Since the public sphere of life in Kurdistan is largely reserved for men, women are not used to taking part in public life in a way that is customary in European societies. Women are often also deprived of their traditional support networks in the extended families that exist in Kurdistan. Kurdish women often have a lack of formal education and work experience as well as a high frequency of illiteracy. Kurdish female refugees also have to take care of their traditional duties as housewives and mothers, and are thus often prevented from taking part in educational courses and language training. All these factors contribute to the specific problems that female refugees face in their new countries of settlement. This exemplifies the fact that it is important to take into account a gender perspective in discussing refugees' problems. As Kay (1987) argues, this gender perspective is often forgotten in refugee studies, which tend to concentrate on the public domain and not the private domain of life.

Employment

This section describes the integration of the Kurdish refugees in terms of the refugees' integration into the labour market. The Kurdish refugees' diasporic consciousness and their continuous relations with the country of origin should not divert attention from the fact that refugees do want to integrate into their new countries of settlement. Although refugees do not want to, and feel that they cannot, totally assimilate, there is a clear wish among them to play an active social and economic role in their new societies. As argued earlier in this chapter, regardless of their plans for the future or their feelings of alienation, all the interviewees expressed a clear wish to become integrated and participate in their new society of settlement. To find employment was

obviously regarded as one of the most important ways to participate in society. A woman from Iran told me:

I am not working, I am a student, studying English. I would like to work but I cannot find work. I would like to do something with my own hands, not just get help from others all the time. I feel really bad every time I go to the DSS, I think that it now is enough, I have been here five years now and I should be able to do something on my own and not just rely on others.

Clearly, all refugees would like to find a job or some other meaningful employment in the country of reception. As a man from Iraq said, "To sit like this, doing nothing, in Kurdistan it would be regarded as a disease." To have a job is clearly not only an economic issue. This also would solve many of the psychological and social problems which the refugees experience. A family from Iran said that their wish was to return to Kurdistan, but if they had to stay in Finland, they did have plans for the future:

We are trying to be useful persons in any possible way. Our first goal is to establish our own business so we could stand on our own feet, in this way we also would get rid of the psychological pressure and we will secure our future [t].

The concept of integration is often measured through the migrant's position in the labour market (cf. Ekholm 1994; Miles 1993; Phillips 1989). As the quotations above illustrate, the Kurdish refugees in both countries want to become integrated into the receiving society in this sense of the term. Many refugees are not part of the economically active population since, for example, they are students or housewives; but among those who are a part of the labour market one can find a clear difference between the way they are integrated in the two countries.

Finland

During the fieldwork in Finland the employment situation was extremely bad. Ekholm (1994) has used official statistics to calculate the exact unemployment rate for refugees. The rate was 61.4 per cent of the economically active refugees in 1992, when the national average was 13.1 per cent. Since the national average unemployment rate grew to 18.4 per cent in 1994 (Statistics Finland 1995), one can assume that

unemployment among refugees was even worse in the autumn of 1994 when this research was carried out.

A few Kurds arrived in Finland before the economic recession, and some of them managed to get jobs. However, among the main group who arrived in the 1990s, the employment situation remained very bad. A few Kurdish refugees have been employed as interpreters and Kurdish language teachers, while others are self-employed in fast food outlets and shops selling oriental foodstuffs. The “start money” for unemployed persons who establish businesses (a scheme administered by the Employment Offices) has been of great help to many Kurds. Nonetheless, those who have managed to become self-employed are exceptions, and during the fieldwork it became clear that most Kurdish refugees are unemployed.

As described in chapter five, the Finnish refugee resettlement programme is clearly oriented towards integrating refugees into the labour market. The programmes include practice in different jobs and extensive guidance about career opportunities. The aim is also to avoid the kind of integration that tends to occur in England, where refugees end up doing the most menial and poorly paid jobs (cf. Steen 1992). In Finland there is a minimum wage and also labour legislation which to some extent prevents the refugees from being discriminated against in the labour market.⁵ However, it has to be stressed that Finnish resettlement policies have not been adjusted for the present employment situation. During the current economic recession most refugees have not been able to find any kind of employment. Instead, the integration of refugees has been into the vast army of alienated and marginalised unemployed. Clearly, the relatively high unemployment among refugees can only be seen as a failure of the Finnish resettlement programmes. It also appears that the refugees are not given a fair chance to compete for the few available jobs. A young man from Iran, who spoke rather good Finnish, told me:

Once it happened, in the Employment Office, there was this thought that the worker there had found a job for me as a cleaner. I said that I wanted to have a job, even if it was a job as a cleaner. But then he showed me that it said in the advert that the employer had written that you had to speak Finnish.

This was, however, the only occasion when I heard about somebody even having a remote chance of getting a job through the Employment Offices. Instead, the unemployment situation in Finland has created a situation in which the refugees are so marginalised that they cannot even experience the luxury of being discriminated against in the labour market.

England

The employment situation for refugees in Britain is not good. In 1995 the national rate of unemployment in Britain was around 8 per cent. However, among refugees the percentage is probably considerably higher. Carey-Wood et al. (1995) recorded an unemployment rate of 57 per cent among refugees in their sample in 1992. However, as they point out, there are of course other ways of making economic contributions besides having a "job." Their research showed, for example, that 36.5 per cent of their respondents had done some kind of voluntary work.

Britain has a comprehensive race relations legislation which among other things aims at preventing discrimination in the labour market. Although the efficiency of this legislation can be debated, it can be argued that the British legislation, compared with the situation in Finland, has been relatively efficient in preventing *open* racism and discrimination in the labour market. Despite this, there is still a clear ethnic segmentation in the labour market. London is a multi-cultural city including many communities established by persons originating in the Middle East. These communities can provide some of the Kurdish refugees with an opportunity to get jobs. Since Britain does not have any minimum wage, these jobs are often very poorly paid. In this study this is particularly clear in the case of the Turkish/Kurdish community in North London. The Kurdish refugees here have an opportunity to be employed in some of the "sweatshops" in the area. Refugees are often forced to work in the poorly paid black market because the DSS money is not enough to live on and sufficiently well paid "legal" jobs are not available.

The estimates of the unemployment of the Kurds in London show great variations. The 1993/1994 Annual Report of the Kurdistan Workers Association (KWA) estimates that 95 per cent of the Kurds in North London were unemployed, while many of those in employment were “exploited by the factory ‘sweat shops’ that run in the area, and perform menial, unrewarding work” (KWA 1994, 7). A report from Hackney Council (1993) estimates that unemployment in the “Turkish community” in Hackney was 35-40 per cent, while 20-30 per cent of the Turkish/Kurdish community were self-employed. The report furthermore states that “Hackney entertains the greatest amount of ‘black’ economy and the Turkish/Kurdish community appear to rely heavily on this opportunity” (Hackney Council 1993, 10). There were estimated to be around 800 clothing manufacturing units in Hackney alone. The report criticises the fact that there are not enough facilities to integrate most members of the community into the national economy, and advocates better incentives and guidance for those active in the garment factories. Other significant economic activities in the Borough’s Turkish/Kurdish community were cafes (around 400 establishments), restaurants and different shops (Hackney Council 1993).

In this research, five respondents have had temporary jobs in Turkish/Kurdish textile “sweatshops” in North London. These jobs were sometimes part of a black economy where no taxes were paid. The wages in these “sweatshops” are low and are paid according to results. Needless to say, these jobs provide no social security and give no protection against illness, accidents or unreliable employers. A refugee from Turkey described the working conditions:

Usually you work like twelve hours a day. And you do not have any kind of security. If you are ill that is it, they sack you. They do not care about you at all, and there is a big market here. Most of the Kurdish people, Kurdish refugees, work without a National Insurance Number. I worked in a factory for one month ago but it was unbearable for me and I left it. It is again twelve hours, or it is not twelve hours, you start and you do not know when you are going to finish it. They do not let you, allow you to go out unless the job finishes, and sometimes you work like seven days a week like twenty hours.

...

There are so many people, they are on Income Support and Housing Benefit, and they cannot afford to cut it, so they have to find illegal jobs, and since there are so many people looking for jobs, they do not care, if they sack you the next day, or even the same day, they can find somebody else.

These jobs usually mean that the Kurdish refugees are integrated into the labour market at the lowest possible level, occasionally working in low wage jobs and occasionally being unemployed. Even the highly skilled refugees are experiencing a dramatic downward economic mobility (cf. Carey-Wood et al. 1995; Rasheed 1992; Hackney Council 1993). There is, however, some chance that over time the refugees might improve their situation in the labour market. Carey-Wood et al. regard duration of stay in the UK as one of the factors affecting refugees' career status in Britain. A large number of the Kurdish refugees are actually students who might improve their status on the labour market in the future. In fact many well-educated men from Iraq can already be found in very good positions in Britain, but these persons are of course only a small minority of the Kurds in Britain.

To sum up, there are differences and similarities between the employment situations of Kurds in Finland and in England. In both countries the refugees find themselves integrated at the lowest possible level of the labour market. In Finland the Kurds are mostly unemployed, while in Britain they might take poorly paid jobs in different "sweatshops." The resettlement programmes in Finland have clearly failed in their goal to achieve a positive integration for refugees, while the lack of resettlement programmes in Britain almost automatically excludes refugees from the better jobs. However, in Britain the Kurds can use their own informal networks to create and find jobs. For example, in North London there is a separate Turkish/Kurdish ethnic labour market in which the Kurdish refugees can find employment.

All refugees want to get jobs and achieve integration into the labour market. They might not always have the necessary skills for the labour market, but still many of them are highly educated. Taking this into account, the relatively high unemployment rate among refugees suggests that they face serious discrimination. As has repeatedly been proved in Britain, ethnic minorities are disadvantaged and face discrimination in the labour market, and there is no reason why refugees should not face the same, or even worse, discrimination. In fact, in both countries the refugees experienced many different kinds of discrimination and racism.

Racism and Discrimination

Finland

The findings of this study are rather depressing concerning the extent of racism and xenophobia in Finland. A majority of the interviewees had several experiences of various kinds of xenophobia or racism, and the situation cannot be described as anything else than alarming. What was especially appalling was that most of the single men had experienced racially motivated and vicious, violent attacks. Two young male persons had even been attacked by youth gangs in the middle of the day. The female and older male refugees had mostly experienced vocal expressions of xenophobia and racism. Most interviewees had been insulted by drunken Finns.

Even if only some of the refugees have experienced actual racist attacks or discrimination, all of them have been affected by the racist and xenophobic attitudes which many Finns display. This of course has a profound effect on the refugees' relations with Finnish people. An older man from Iraq described how his family's contacts with Finns were influenced by these experiences:

Yes, all the time when you walk on the street you think that perhaps that person hates me. Because it happens some times, which is why you have it with you all the time. We respect Finland and what they have done for us, but we do not know who is against us here. In Kurdistan we knew who was the enemy [t].

The fear of racist attacks has also led to the fact that some refugees are living a more isolated life than they would otherwise wish to do. Most refugees avoid restaurants, pubs and other places where it is possible that problems might occur.⁶ A man from Iraq told me that he usually had no problem apart from encounters with drunken persons:

On Saturdays and Sundays we do not usually go out very much because they [drunken persons] insult us in the street. For example, we cannot go to any bar, disco or hotel if we want to drink something, because they bother us. That is why we avoid places like that [t].

Similar experiences of racism in Finland have also been documented by other authors studying refugees (e.g. Alitolppa-Niitamo 1994; Ekholm 1994), but unfortunately no official statistics of racist attacks are available. However, as I also will discuss later, one still has to remember that not all Finns are hostile towards refugees, and that it is only a minority who create problems. In any event, the extent of racism and xenophobia in Finland came as a surprise to the refugees, especially to the quota refugees who in a way have been invited to Finland.

Surprisingly, many interviewees still did not regard racism and xenophobia as a major problem in their lives. Many of the interviewees said that they did not think that the incidents of racism and discrimination which they had experienced were very significant. Taking into account the extent of open racism in Finland, this is rather extraordinary. One reason might be that, compared to the experiences of discrimination and civil war in Kurdistan, these racist attacks were regarded as only minor incidents. Furthermore, the refugees have not experienced any discrimination from the Finnish authorities, only from certain individuals. The refugees' opinions can also be partly explained by the fact that refugees might see their stay in Finland as only temporary, since they still hope to move back to Kurdistan within a few years. Another possible reason, why the interviewees did not want to make a big issue out of these incidents, might be that they wanted to give me as good picture as possible about their experiences in Finland. Complaining about racism would seem to be ungrateful after they had received asylum in the country.

Personally, I find that the extent of *open* racism and racist attacks in Finland cannot be described as anything else than alarming. However, in some cases the *hidden* xenophobia and discrimination is experienced as an even worse problem. A man from Iran did not regard the overt racist attacks as racism, and argued that the real racism in Finland was a hidden cultural racism towards people from the third world:

Really I cannot say that someone who attacks me is racist. The person is hostile towards foreigners, which is not racism. A person who makes a difference between cultures, this is real racism according to me, because that person wants to say that something is better, and he/she wants to put people in different

classes. ... It might happen [that Finns have disagreements with each other] but that is person against person. I have this idea, if a foreigner comes against you and he/she is from a different culture. You will blame everything on this person's culture. It is because of your culture that you did this and that. This would not happen between Finns, nobody will tell you that you have a different culture and are a foreigner. This term "foreigner," it means that the person is different from the rest. But if you have problems with another Finn, will anybody tell you that it is because of your culture? Nobody will tell you this, they will say that it is because of your personality. But if somebody blames your culture, says that it is bad or good. ... This is in my opinion racism [t].

The above quotation is clearly related to the notion of new racism which is discussed in chapter two. Furthermore, this Iranian man argued that the differential treatment which refugees experience arises because refugees are seen to come from inferior and poor countries and cultures. A man from Iraq described his experiences of racism in Finland:

R: Towards me personally nothing serious has happened, but the most serious thing for me is the mentality of the Finnish people, I can give you a lot of examples.

ÖW: Yes. That is fine.

R: For example, when you see my face now, I do not look like an African. People believe that I am from Spain or Italy or so on. They have treated me so good, and after that when they notice I am a refugee and from Kurdistan, this is not shown very clearly but I am sensitive about this, and I immediately notice that people treat me differently. This mentality is a problem. Even if he would notice that I am not an Italian or Spanish, he would not start calling me names, but I notice anyway that his voice changes in some way and I know that something has happened inside him.

Finnish xenophobia can take a variety of forms. For example, one refugee living in Helsinki had repeatedly noticed that people avoided to sit next to him on the bus. In addition to the fact that people felt excluded because they were identified as foreigners from the third world, some felt that it was an additional disadvantage to be identified as a refugee. The stigmatisation connected to refugee status seemed to be common in Finland. A man from Iraq told me:

It is a big misunderstanding here in Finland, but I am not saying that all Finnish people say this or think this way. I do not want to generalise, because I am always talking in a relative way about these things. The big misunderstanding is that about refugees, people think that you have to be poor, you have to be without any knowledge, you have to be this and that. But people do not realise

that a real refugee is something different from a person who is here because of starvation.

The quotations above suggest that there are hidden racist ideas at play which are not as obvious as open racism and racist attacks, but which are still serious problems. However, at the same time very few of the refugees in Finland experienced actual discrimination. In particular, the authorities were regarded as giving a fair and equal treatment to everybody. A man from Iraq who had experienced a lot of racism among the general public was still able to tell me that:

The authorities' behaviour is good, I think. At least they do not show their-- If they have something against you, they do not show it to us. And all things go without any problems, and on the other hand even sometimes they help us more than they help Finnish people.

England

London is a large multi-cultural city and its human diversity seems to mean that Kurdish refugees feel more easily at home. A woman who lived in the borough of Kensington and Chelsea in London described her experiences:

ÖW: Have you experienced any racism in Britain?

R: Not myself, no. But, you know, it is different because the area I have live in, have you seen it? It is not many English people live in this area. It is all African and Asian people live here, and I really never have seen any [racism]. And I do not feel I live in England, you know. When I go outside [London], it is more like England. But here it is so different, mixed up all peoples and cultures. But I like it, I like it very much, it is more like home.

In a large multi-cultural city with many persons regarded as "foreigners," there is also less risk of being personally singled out for racist attacks or insult. Among the interviewees, one male refugee had once experienced a racist attack and some of the female refugees had experienced insulting comments from British persons. Although racist attacks and racism are still a serious problem in London, the extent of this fades in comparison with the situation in Finland. During the fieldwork I also had the opportunity to meet a refugee who had stayed in Denmark for some time. He argued

that although people in Britain talked about racism all the time, he actually felt that the situation was worse in the Nordic countries. These issues were also discussed with a Kurd who had moved from Finland to England, and who was largely able to confirm my interpretation of the differences between the two countries:

You know, in Finland I felt like a stranger, I do not feel in the same way here. I am of course a stranger also here, but I do not feel in the same way. You know this street where we live, there are many foreign people here, my next door neighbour is Chinese. In Finland we were the only foreigners, I felt that people thought I was a stranger and looked at me, although everybody was very nice. But actually I liked Finland better than England. Everybody was very nice to me in Finland and I will never forget that and always be grateful for what people did for me, the problem was only that I felt as a stranger there and felt that I cannot live there. I do not feel in the same way here. In Finland I did not know what I was doing there and felt as if I was going mad, I feel much better here in London although there are a lot of problems here. But I feel much more comfortable here and do not want to move back.

Obviously, the refugees in Britain do not experience as much *open* racism as in Finland. However, it can be argued that racism in Britain is more hidden and structural. The immigrants in Britain are integrated into the society at the lowest possible socio-economic level. Furthermore, there is often a lack of services for the refugees and they face a lot of obstacles in their contacts with British authorities. As research has shown (cf. Wrench and Solomos, 1993), the existence of racial discrimination in Britain cannot be denied. However, the discriminatory and racist structures in British society are, however, not always very obvious since they not necessarily manifest themselves in the personal relations of refugees' daily lives in the multi-cultural inner city boroughs of London. The situation in Britain is in this respect almost the opposite to the Finnish situation. In Finland there is an obvious and crude racism and xenophobia which the refugees experience in their daily lives, but on the other hand relatively few of the refugees had experiences of systematic discrimination and none felt that they had been discriminated against by the authorities.

Conclusion

This chapter has described the Kurdish refugees' own experiences upon arrival in Finland and Britain. The psychological problems, experiences of displacement and many practical problems seem to be the same for all Kurdish refugee groups, regardless of their country of origin and country of settlement. Furthermore, Kurdish refugees in general have similar experiences to those of other refugee groups, and this study thus largely confirms results from previous studies discussing refugee resettlement. However, this thesis seeks discuss these issues within a slightly different conceptual framework.

This chapter has shown that three more of Safran's characteristics of a diaspora are evident among the Kurdish refugees. First, there is a feeling of alienation among the refugees. Clearly, "they believe they are not - and perhaps cannot be - fully accepted by their host society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it" (Safran 1991, 83). This feeling of alienation has to do both with the refugees' feeling of displacement and their experiences of racism and discrimination. Secondly, there is a wish to return among the refugees, since "they regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return - when conditions are appropriate" (Safran 1991, 83-84). Clearly, at the moment a return is impossible, and, depending on country of origin as well as political convictions, there were different assumptions of when and how the conditions would be appropriate for a return. Thirdly, the refugees can be seen to have a continuous relation with their homeland. This entails that "they continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another, and their ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship" (Safran 1991, 84). This is indicated by the feeling of displacement among the refugees. The next chapter will return to this last characteristic and look more closely at the transnational social networks in the Kurdish refugee communities.

It is obvious that the Kurdish refugees have a diasporic consciousness. This indicates that the diaspora concept might be a useful concept for describing the specific refugee experience. The diasporic relations in the refugee communities mean that theories of ethnic relations are difficult to apply to the community. The Kurds do not regard themselves as a minority within the context of the country of exile; instead their ethnicity is defined within social relations in the country of origin. Consequently, any fast assimilation of the refugees is obviously out of the question. Despite this diasporic consciousness and the impossibility of a fast assimilation, the refugees strive to become integrated into their new society of settlement. All refugees wish to find employment, learn the language and culture and in all possible ways settle down and have well-functioning social relations with the majority. The refugees actively strive to combine their Kurdish culture with the culture of their society of settlement.

This dual orientation towards both the country of origin and the country of resettlement is not as contradictory and paradoxical as it seems. In the refugees' own experiences their country of origin and their country of exile, as well as the time before and the time after migration, constitute a continuous and coherent lived experience. The separation between before and after migration, as well as the separation between the country of origin and country of exile, is largely forced on the refugees' experiences by the outside observer. The concept of diaspora can help the researcher to rethink these issues and to understand the transnational reality in which the refugees are forced to live. The concept can bridge the often artificial duality in which the refugee experience is conceptualised.

All the Kurdish refugees shared the experiences discussed above, but there were also other significant differences between the various groups of refugees. First of all, there is a gender perspective which has to be taken into account. Among the Kurdish refugees, men and women often have the use of very different means and resources to handle their problems. There are also significant differences between the experiences of the refugees in Finland and in England. The refugees in England experienced more practical problems and language difficulties while the refugees in Finland seemed to suffer more from isolation and various mental problems. The employment situation

and type of integration into the labour market were not the same in the two countries. The experiences of racism and discrimination were also diametrically different, in Finland the authorities and resettlement programmes supported equality but the refugees still confronted an obvious everyday racism, while in the multi-cultural British society racism and discrimination seemed to be more structural and subtle.

These differences between the two countries indicate that the resettlement policies and social structures in the country of settlement have a big impact on how the refugees will be integrated and what kind of problems they will experience. Thus, although the refugees have a diasporic consciousness and remain oriented towards their countries of origin, this should not divert attention from the important role played by the social structures in the countries of settlement. The integration into the wider society seems to be largely dependent on the exclusionary and inclusionary policies of the country of settlement and not on the degree of diasporic feelings amongst the refugees. These issues are also discussed in chapter seven.

Clearly, there are both advantages and disadvantages in the way the reception and resettlement of refugees is organised in the two countries. The Finnish resettlement policies provide a good base for positive integration, although this is not the actual outcome because of unemployment and racism, amongst other factors. The British resettlement systems do not provide equal and similar services for all refugees in the same way as the more egalitarian public support systems in Finland. On the other hand the well-established Kurdish communities in London also provide a good base for a positive integration through the support networks and resources within a strong community and voluntary associations. Unfortunately, however, integration into British society has largely been into the lowest socio-economic positions. In a perfect world one would of course be able to combine the positive aspects from both countries: Public support in combination with strong ethnic communities in both an egalitarian and a truly multi-cultural society.

CHAPTER 7

THE KURDISH REFUGEE COMMUNITY

This chapter describes the social organisation of the Kurdish refugee communities and thus follows on directly from the previous chapter, which described the refugees' personal experiences. To begin with, the focus is on what can be called the "social integration" of the Kurdish refugees. In the previous chapter a structural dimension of integration is discussed from the point of view of the refugees' integration on the labour market. Here the analysis of integration is developed further through the study of the refugees' interpersonal relations. Later parts of this present chapter describe how the refugee communities have adapted to the different social situations in the two countries of reception. The Kurdish associations in both countries are presented and the positive roles of associations and informal networks are examined. Finally, attention is given to the diasporic political activities of the refugee communities.

In chapter two it was pointed out that the concept of integration, although frequently used, is problematic. Raymond Breton (1964) points out that the integration of immigrants is possible in at least three different directions: within the majority community, within another ethnic minority group, or within the immigrants' own ethnic group. As made clear in chapter two, this framework is clearly an oversimplification of a complex process. Nevertheless, Breton's classification can serve as a useful way to structure the research findings presented in the first parts of this chapter. Thus, the following sections describe the interpersonal relations of the Kurdish refugees with the ethnic majority, with other ethnic groups, and finally with fellow Kurds. This description will introduce a critical discussion of the concept of integration and suggest a rethinking of the process of refugee resettlement.

Integration into the Society of Reception

Finland and England are of course not unitary and homogenous societies. If one wants to study immigrants' social integration into these complex societies, it is not clear which parts of these societies that the immigrants are supposed to integrate into and how this process can be studied. Thus, instead of describing integration in absolute terms, this section describes the refugees' experiences of personal relations with the majority from the refugees' own point of view. It is argued that the relations with the majority populations are quite different in the two countries.

Finland

The small number of refugees and migrants in Finland, in combination with the official resettlement policy based on refugee dispersal, often creates situations where the refugees have little opportunities to socialise with persons other than Finns. There is also a considerable interest on the part of many Finns in the few migrants in their country. Furthermore, the refugee resettlement in Finland often engages many persons in the local community where the refugees live. To be the object of curiosity and charitable concern is of course not part of normal social relations, but these contacts might later develop into more conventional relations and lasting friendships.

During the semi-structured interviews the refugees were asked about their social contacts with the majority population. All interviewees had some - and in many cases they had several - Finnish friends. On the other hand, most of the interviewees still had a larger number of Kurdish friends. One way of finding Finnish friends was through the system of being introduced to Finnish "friend families" by the Finnish Red Cross. All the quota refugees I met had been provided with "friend families" upon arrival in Finland. This system has been functioning relatively well,¹ and several interviewees still have regular contacts with these families or persons. Clearly these relations have been important for many refugees, and I was often told how helpful these families had been. A man from Iraq spoke about his family's Finnish friends:

Yes, we have a Finnish friend family. They have really helped us a lot. So we have some Finnish friends, although much more Kurdish friends. My wife only has two Finnish friends, but our children have many friends [t].

In Finland it is relatively common for young male Kurdish refugees to have Finnish girlfriends, and some Kurdish men are married to Finnish women. The only exceptions are Kurdish men from Iraq who in the mid-1990s were able to travel back to Iraq in order to get married. However, that a Kurdish woman would marry a Finnish man was unheard of. One can only speculate about the reasons for this. On the one hand, there are more single men than women among the Kurdish refugees in Finland, especially among the Kurds from Turkey. On the other hand, cultural factors in both the Finnish and the Kurdish cultures may be of significance.

The level of social contacts between Finns and Kurds seems to be rather surprising in the light of the discussions of Finnish xenophobia and racism in the previous chapter. The xenophobia and racism the refugees met might be seen as a detrimental factor in terms of the social integration of refugees into Finnish society. However, it is important not to generalise; not all Finns are xenophobic. Several interviewees explained that it is only a minority who are a problem. This was emphasised by a man from Iraq who had lived in Finland for several years:

I think that it is obvious that there are different attitudes and behaviour in Finland. Those who behave in a different way, they do not hide their feeling for themselves, but I have not had any experience [of racist attacks]. I have not confronted any such situation.

The relationship between the Kurds and the majority in Finland was thus a rather ambivalent one. On one hand, there were friendships between Finns and Kurds; but on the other hand, racism and xenophobia were often serious impediments to personal relationships. It is possible that since immigration in Finland is a new experience, there have been two distinct approaches among some Finns; while some persons are openly hostile towards “foreigners,” others are very interested in meeting and befriending them.

Since most of the Kurdish refugees do have Finnish friends, it can be argued that the Finnish resettlement programme has been fairly successful in this respect. However, in other respects the policy seems to have been a failure. For example, the extent of open racism in Finland remains a serious hindrance to more spontaneous relationships. Furthermore, the high unemployment rate among the refugees has also diminished the possibilities for social contacts with Finns.²

Although there are social contacts with Finns, these relations cannot replace the very close social relations which characterise Kurdish society. The issue of isolation remains a serious problem for many refugees. The initial migration from Kurdistan and the official dispersal policy in Finland mean that the Kurds in Finland are largely isolated from personal contacts with compatriots. They are thus in a completely different situation compared to that of the Kurds living in London. Most interviewees in Finland emphasised that isolation was a major problem. A family from Iraq who travelled via Turkey to Finland described their problems:

Mother: I am the one who suffers most of living isolated, but I do not want to talk about it, it is so difficult to talk about it.

Son: It is really difficult for old people. It is difficult for young people, for us for example, but it is twice as bad for old people. It is difficult to be used to this environment.

ÖW: Is the isolation the most difficult thing?

Son: I think the reason is that you cannot make contact. To have contact is for us an important thing. It is the language, and for example my mother cannot speak at all.

Mother: It is social questions. In Turkey, although it was very difficult financially for us, the social there it was much better, in a social sense.

Son: For young people it is better, you can find something to do, to study or to work, but it is difficult for older people.

ÖW: Do you think it would be better for you if there were more Kurds living here?

Mother: What can you do, where are there more Kurds?

Son: We have been talking to the authorities about moving.

Mother: For example, if you are sick you use to get visits, but here, if I get sick nobody will arrive to visit me [t].

England

In England the integration of refugees into the receiving society displayed quite different features from the Finnish case. The Kurds from Turkey were living in a Turkish/Kurdish community which in many ways was insulated from English society. The boroughs of Hackney and Haringey, where the Turkish/Kurdish community in North London is situated, are areas with a high proportion of ethnic minority populations. According to the 1991 census, the ethnic minorities accounted for 33.6 per cent of the total population in Hackney and 29.0 per cent in Haringey (Owen 1994). The situation for Kurds from Iran and Iraq is slightly different, since they are not concentrated to the same extent in particular geographical areas in London. On the other hand, these groups also tend to live in areas with a high proportion of ethnic minorities, although not necessarily with other Kurds or compatriots. Consequently, the possibilities for the Kurds to have contacts with the ethnic majority tend to be fewer in multi-cultural London than they are in Finland.

In the sample in England, sixteen out of twenty-eight persons felt that they did not have any English friends at all, although some of the interviewees had friends from other refugee groups and British ethnic minorities. Also, marriage between Kurds and persons from the ethnic majority seemed to be relatively uncommon, although it was not totally exceptional for Kurdish men to have English or British girlfriends. A middle-aged Kurdish man from Turkey described his contacts with the ethnic majority:

I have mostly Kurdish friends, because English people do not have the same culture. If you do not go to pubs you do not meet any. Especially in Hackney and Haringey there are many Kurds and you do not meet English people. Especially I went outside London once to a small town, and then I realised that I cannot speak English, because I did not give enough attention. But in London you can see every kind of race and people [t].

Since the Kurds from Turkey live in their own community in North London they are relatively insulated from the ethnic majority. Furthermore, the poor linguistic skills and educational background among many Kurds from Turkey might be a hindrance to

social contacts with British people. Those who had English or British friends often met them through activities in the Kurdish associations or through Kurdish solidarity work. A Kurdish woman explained how she had met her British friends:

I have more Kurdish friends definitely, I know a few English, it is quite difficult to have any relation with English people here. And because of the language, most of the people do not speak English. And the ones who speak English like me, it is quite typical to have some kind of friendship. I had a friend. She was learning Kurdish ..., so she is quite aware of the Kurdish question. She wants to help, that is why we could get a relation with her. And the other English people I know, they are most of them interested in the Kurdish question. Either they work with the Kurdish community or they are doing research on the Kurdish community. ... But apart from that, as a kind of friends I do not have any, and most of Kurdish women and men, you know, we have each other actually, as a support group. There are some parties, revolutionary parties, English revolutionary parties, like SWP, Socialist Workers Party, and Anti-Nazi League, and Spartacus, these kinds of organisations, you know, you could have friends from these organisations as well.

As in Finland, the contacts with the ethnic majority in England can in no way compensate for the close personal contacts the refugees are used to in Kurdistan. A woman from Turkey described her impression of English people:

They do not bother, they say it is not my business. Even in Turkey and Kurdistan it is not like that, your next door [neighbours] are like your best and closest family friends. And you know everything, problems or whatever. But here it is not like that. I lived in a place where there were about ten flats in one block, and nobody knew each other, you just smile some time at each other, when you see each other in the corridor.

The extent of contacts between Kurds and the majority population also became apparent during the *Newroz* celebrations (the Kurdish New Year). Kurds often invite their friends to these parties. In the small parties I attended in Finland it was not uncommon for almost half of those present to be Finns. In Britain I visited several large parties in London, and no more than 5% of those at the parties appeared to be non-Kurdish. It is of course difficult to compare the small celebrations in Finland with those in London which attract at least ten times more participants. Nevertheless, these figures give an indication of the levels of contact between the majority population and the Kurds in the two countries.

To sum up, the Kurds in Finland usually had at least a few friends among the Finnish population, while the Kurds in England were sometimes totally without social contact with British people, although it has to be added that there also were huge individual variations. However, the new friendships could seldom replace the close social relations the refugees had had in Kurdistan. Consequently, isolation remains a major problem for refugees, especially in Finland, where refugees often live far away from other compatriots. Furthermore, these findings suggest that although the Kurds are living in a diaspora, they can be socially integrated into the receiving society and they do not wish to become insulated from the majority. However, how this social integration occurs does depend largely on the receiving society and its social structures. The differences in these structures are the main reason for the differences in the integration achieved in the two countries of settlement

Integration into another Minority Group

What are the Kurdish refugees' social relations with, and integration into, other ethnic minority groups in the countries of settlement? In the case of the Kurds, one could perhaps expect that they would become integrated into some larger Middle Eastern or Islamic community. In Britain one could even imagine that the Kurds would be part of a larger "black" ethnic minority. Clearly, none of this has happened. The Kurdish refugees are not part of any new ethnic entity in the countries of settlement. However, there is still reason to discuss the Kurdish refugees' social relations with Turkish, Iranian and Iraqi ethnic groups. When discussing this issue, one must again bear in mind the different situations in Finland and in England.

In Finland there are only a few social groups that can be regarded as ethnic minorities (Pentikäinen and Hiltunen 1995), and the few immigrants in the country do not constitute well-organised communities. The Kurdish refugees in Finland did socialise with other refugees and foreigners whom they had met through resettlement and

training courses, but for none of the interviewees were these relationships more extensive than their relationships with either Kurdish or Finnish friends.

In England, and especially in London, there are several well-established communities of “ethnic minorities” and there has been a relatively large immigration from countries in the Middle East. Not surprisingly, compared with the Finnish case, the Kurdish refugees in England had more extensive social contacts with other ethnic minorities. The Kurds in Britain, however, were not a unitary community and the differences between the Kurds from Iran, Iraq and Turkey were very clear when it came to their relations with, and integration into, other ethnic minority groups. The Iranian Kurds in Britain could be seen as largely constituting a part of the broader Iranian community. In the same way the Kurds from Turkey were an almost inseparable part of the Turkish/Kurdish community in North London. The Kurds from Iraq, however, were a different case. Among them only very few persons had any kind of contacts with Arabs from Iraq.

The relations between the Turks and the Kurds in the Turkish/Kurdish community in North London presents an interesting issue. Turks and Kurds have lived side by side both in Turkey and in North London, and on a personal level this has usually not been regarded as a problem. However, in London there are also persons and organisations with strong Turkish nationalistic sympathies. This can lead to potential conflicts within the community. Thus some of the Kurdish refugees living in London might continue to fear for their own security.

Despite this possibility for conflicts within the community in North London, the interviewees repeatedly emphasised that there was no conflict between Turks and Kurds as such, but only between the Kurds and the Turkish government. For example, during a discussion at one of the Kurdish community centres in North London this was emphasised by a man from Marash in Turkey:

I want to make a very important point here, we do not have any problem, any contradictions, with the Turkish people, with the Turkish nation. The only problem we have with Turkey is with the system of the Turkish state, with the government of the Turkish state, but we have always been brothers with the

Turkish people, and have never had any problem with them. Only problem is the system of the Turkish state [t].

On the other hand, it was clear that the ongoing conflicts in eastern Turkey created tensions in the Turkish/Kurdish community in North London. In this way the social integration of that community was related to the situation in the country of origin. Political changes in Turkey can have an immediate effect on the relations between the Kurds and Turks in exile.

In summary, in England the Kurds did have extensive social interaction with other ethnic minorities, mainly with groups from the Kurds' respective countries of origin. In fact the Kurds from Turkey and Iran were largely parts of the wider Turkish and Iranian communities respectively. In Finland, on the other hand, there was not much contact with any other ethnic minority. This difference generally follows Breton's (1964) theory that the institutional completeness of the community largely decides in what direction immigrants will integrate themselves. Nevertheless, it is clear that the Kurds are not integrated into any new ethnic minorities in the countries of settlement. The interpersonal relations which the Kurds have are only continuations of the same social relations the Kurds have had in their respective countries of origin. In this sense the Kurds have not changed their ethnic affiliation or identification upon arrival in the country of reception.

Integration within the Kurdish Community

This section describes the degree of integration among the Kurds themselves through a discussion of the refugees' personal relations with other Kurds. Two important questions are: to what extent is it possible to talk about one Kurdish community, and to what extent do the Kurds from Iran, Iraq and Turkey form their own separate Kurdish communities?

When refugees leave Kurdistan, they do not know where they will finally end up. Therefore it is common for them to bring with them addresses of friends and relatives all over the world. In exile the Kurdish refugees use these social networks from Kurdistan in order to create new social networks. The family and networks of relatives are important social institutions in Kurdish society, and they continue to be important also in exile. A young man from Turkey living in Finland described his Kurdish friends:

I have more in common with Kurds from Turkey [compared to Kurds from other parts of Kurdistan], because I know persons who have arrived from the same area as I have. And if I do not know them personally, at least I know their family and relatives [t].

Hence, already upon arrival in the country of settlement the Kurdish refugees were part of a wider Kurdish community which could provide the refugees with help and advice. The social networks that the refugees thus became part of were based on social relations in the country of origin. There is a salience of pre-migration social networks within the Kurdish community. This clearly indicates that, to a large extent, the social relations in the Kurdish refugee communities could be said to be transnational (in accordance with the previously mentioned definition in Basch et al. 1994). These transnational social networks are described in more detail in a later section.

Although the Kurdish communities are largely extensions of communities in the countries of origin, it is still important to remember that there are many factors in the society of settlement which influence the internal integration and social organisation of the refugee communities. The social structures in the society of reception, the resettlement policies, and the extent and forms of racism and discrimination all have an impact on the social organisation of the Kurdish communities. For example, in Finland the Kurdish refugees have been resettled in very small groups in municipalities all over the country. Therefore it is difficult for the Kurdish refugees to keep in touch and to give help and advice to each other. Furthermore, the quota refugees often arrive in groups whose members did not previously know each other. In these cases the resettlement courses provide an opportunity for the refugees to create new informal networks, and these contacts usually continue after the courses have ended. However,

there is nothing that can alleviate the fact that the Kurdish refugees in Finland are often geographically isolated from their compatriots, friends and relatives. In Britain the concentration of the refugees to London together with other policies creates a totally different situation where the Kurds can establish their own strong communities. But rather than creating one united Kurdish community in London, the refugees are divided into several smaller communities.

Community Divisions

There are some clear differences in the social networks between Kurds from the different countries of origin. Refugees from different parts of Kurdistan do not have much in common, and it can be argued that a united Kurdish community does not exist. The Kurds from Turkey socialised mainly with other Kurds from Turkey, although some of them might have known some Kurds from Iraq. The Kurds from Iraq mostly had contacts with other Kurds from Iraq, but many of them also had Kurdish friends from both Turkey and Iran. The Iranian Kurds usually knew some Kurds from Iraq, but many of them said that they did not know anybody from Turkey. In the same way some Kurds from Turkey stated that they had never actually met anybody from Iran. These divisions of the Kurdish community clearly followed the linguistic differences among the Kurds. Furthermore, some Kurds pointed out that the borders between their different countries had been closed, and that there had never been any possibility for Kurds from different countries to meet before they moved to Europe.

Despite the divisions in the Kurdish community, which are very tangible, it must be emphasised that there does exist a feeling of unity among the Kurds, which is based on a common Kurdish ethnicity and nationalism. The Kurdish national project has largely created an imagined community in the same sense as the nationalism described by Anderson (1983). Although, to a large extent, the unity of the Kurds is only theoretical, it still has an impact on interpersonal relations among Kurds. This feeling of belonging together was mentioned in many interviews. A young man from Turkey compared his relationship with Kurds from other parts of Kurdistan to his relationship with Turks in the following way:

Probably we have much more common things with Turkish people in Turkey, but I can say that year by year this is decreasing, as much as the war in Kurdistan is becoming more serious and dangerous. Otherwise... You know, Iranian Kurds are bit different you know, but Iraqi Kurds, actually I have much more common things with Iraqi Kurds. But if you say Iranian Kurds, Iranian Kurds are a bit different, but if you say Iraqi Kurds I can see much more common things. You know, I do not know, this question is a little bit complicated. Maybe you can say this question as, how do you feel yourself when you are with Iraqi Kurds or with Turkish people from Turkey? I can say that I feel much more comfortable with Iraqi Kurds, I can speak comfortably, I can speak everything easily. But when speaking to a Turkish friend or people you just feel something... not comfortably, something like, you try to keep yourself not to talk a lot of things, or not to talk for example about politics, because you know that in any case it is going to get separate ways.

It looks as though political divisions are the main basis of the divisions in the Kurdish community. The allegiances to different political parties in the countries of origin were closely related to the refugees' interpersonal relations. An Iranian man found it hard to establish social relations with other Kurds because of potential political disagreements:

I think I am a different case because of politics. There are no persons from my party here, ... I have problems both with other Iranians and with Kurds. There are Kurds here and Iranians but I am not a very close to them. Because I am still afraid of other Iranians, because it can be dangerous. ... There are some Iranians who were on the side of the Shah and from bourgeoisie parties, and that is difficult because that is different. Because we have very important political opinions and wishes [t].

In fact, this person was not a different case. Almost all refugees I met had the same feelings about the influence of Kurdish politics on their social relations. This political dimension is perhaps not very surprising since most Kurds in Finland and England were political refugees. A young man from Turkey seemed to avoid the original question but still had an interesting answer:

ÖW: Who do you have more in common with, Kurds from other countries or Turkish people?

R: What I think is interesting, in my opinion it depends on the political party and not our situation. For example around this party [PKK] we are friends, we know each other and we speak to each other because today the Kurds do not have anything else to speak about than about the Kurdish question. The PKK, because of that Iraqi and Iranians, Syrian and Turkish Kurds, with all people we have in common. But there are persons, they are not at all interested in Kurdistan, or

they do not want to think and do not want to know. But we still would like to be friends with them, we would like to tell them why we are here in Finland, why, and what forced us to come to Finland, we want to help them. But at present we have more in common with Kurds from Turkey [t].

The influence of politics varies according to the refugee's country of origin. The refugees from Iran and Iraq often felt that politics divided their communities. Many felt alienated and isolated from their own communities because of the political disagreements with other Kurds. Among the refugees from Turkey, this feeling was not as common and many persons felt that politics united the Kurds. Undoubtedly this has to do with the specific political situations in the countries of origin. The Kurdish parties in Iran and Iraq are divided and have not managed to achieve their political goals. In Iraq the Kurdish national movement is torn apart by internal fighting, while in Iran the divided opposition has largely lost its fight against the government. In Turkey, on the contrary, there has been a strong ethnic revival during recent years and the Kurdish refugees seem to be largely united behind one political movement. These political developments clearly influence the social relations among Kurds in exile. How these divergent political developments might influence the refugees' relation to the society of settlement is discussed in a later section discussing diasporic politics.

Transnational Communities

The previous section's discussion of the Kurdish refugees' social networks clearly shows that the social organisation of the refugee communities follows the various patterns from the countries of origin. In addition, already in chapter six it was emphasised that the Kurdish refugees continue to relate to their countries of origin emotionally and psychologically in various ways. However, the Kurds not only keep up a psychological relationship to the country of origin and try to recreate their social networks in the country of exile, but they also quite tangibly continue to keep in touch with their old friends and relatives in Kurdistan and in other countries all over the world.

There are various social relations and networks between the diaspora and Kurdistan, as well as between the countries in the diaspora. There are personal contacts through telephone calls, letters and personal visits. In addition the refugees continue to have a connection with Kurdistan through the mass media, including newspapers, radio and satellite-television. During recent years fax machines and the internet have also been used as channels through which Kurds in the diaspora can keep in touch with each other. Modern technology has clearly made it easier to sustain transnational social networks. However, modern technology is expensive and most Kurdish refugees cannot afford much else besides radio, letters and occasional phone calls to their relatives. To follow the latest news from Kurdistan sometimes takes up a large part of the day for the refugees. This was the case for a refugee from Iran who lived in a provincial town in Finland:

I am following news in foreign languages, all the day I am listening. The French radio in the Persian language, Voice of America in Kurdish, and also news from the German radio. It is important to follow what is going on. ... From France we are also sent the newspaper of Kurdistan Democratic Party, and from Helsinki and from Sweden I get newspapers. Our cultural organisation has a newspaper as well [t].

Besides radio and newspapers, television is also an important source of information. A young man from Iraq living in Finland explained how he got information from Kurdistan:

I follow the Finnish television and radio, but I do not have any Kurdish newspapers. I do listen to Voice of America as well as Arabian radio programmes. However, where we live there are no Kurdish or Arabian newspapers available. My wife's brother has a satellite dish and we follow Arabian programmes on his television. They will start a Kurdish channel in Holland soon and we are thinking about buying a satellite dish ourselves [t].

It was obvious that satellite dishes were seen as an important investment, although only few could afford it. The man quoted above was obviously talking about the Kurdish satellite channel MED-TV. The interviews in Finland were all made before MED-TV started its broadcasts, but during the fieldwork in England the importance of this channel became clear in many interviews. Besides MED-TV many Kurds, especially from Iraq, followed satellite programmes from various Arabic-speaking

countries. Before MED-TV, the only international broadcast in the Kurdish language was the weekly news on short-wave radio sent by Voice of America in both Sorani and Kurmanji. Almost all interviewees said that they had followed these radio programmes.

The Kurds living in exile also keep up personal relations with relatives both in Kurdistan and in other countries in the diaspora. It is not uncommon that Kurdish refugees, in order to keep in touch with friends and relatives, make trips all over Europe. The UK and Finland are situated at the periphery of the European Kurdish diaspora, and are furthermore situated at almost opposite sides of Europe. Despite this, there were a lot of contacts between the Kurdish refugees in these two countries. The same political journals and newspapers (published in Kurdistan, Germany and Sweden) were read by refugees in Finland and in England. Exactly the same posters that the Kurdistan Information Centre in Helsinki had on its walls were found along Stoke Newington Road in North London. There are also a number of semi-professional Kurdish musicians touring all over Europe. For example, I heard the same musicians perform at parties in Finland and in England. The extent of personal contacts between these two countries was amazing. For example, while doing fieldwork in Finland, I was given addresses of persons and organisations to contact in Britain.

To keep in touch with relatives in the Middle East often gives rise to problems. In the case of Northern Iraq, this requires special ingenuity since there are no telephone and postal services in operation. A middle-aged man living in Finland explained:

[Information about] Kurdistan one mostly gets through the radio or Voice of America, this is the main source of information and the fresh information, otherwise you do not get it. Unless somebody comes back from Kurdistan, but usually their information is old, but still one is interested But most of the letters which I have sent at least and most of the people send it through friend who go there, and just for instance last week somebody went there back to visit his family, so I sent a letter with him. This is a normal way, more open way of sending letters.

The Kurds from Iraq have had the opportunity to visit Northern Iraq since the introduction of the “safe haven” protected by the United Nations. In autumn 1994 a woman from Iraq spoke about her future plans:

R: We have travelled to Kurdistan twice, but it is not enough, we will travel there again next summer.

ÖW: Will you travel every summer to Kurdistan?

R: Yes, every summer. If I can afford it I will travel again next summer [t].

During the summers from 1992 to 1994 many Kurds living in exile visited Northern Iraq. However, because of the unstable political situation any permanent return migration was out of the question. At the time of writing it looks as if it is no longer possible to travel to Northern Iraq because of the violent conflicts in the area.

Rethinking Integration

If we return to Breton’s three different directions in which the immigrants can be integrated, it can be concluded that the Kurds are first and foremost integrated into their own ethnic communities which consist of Kurds originating in the same country of origin. In Finland, and to a lesser extent in England, there are also some contacts with the ethnic majority. In England, Kurds might also have contacts with other ethnic minorities. There are also some Kurds who remain isolated and socially “unintegrated” to any group. This happens especially in Finland and particularly among those who have political disagreements with other Kurds.

However, an additional perspective is suggested by this thesis. It has repeatedly been demonstrated that the refugees, although they are living in exile, have a continuous relation with Kurdistan and their countries of origin. It can be argued that this not is a case of “being unintegrated” since the refugees remain “integrated” within their previous Kurdish social networks. These social relations create a transnational community not bound by the geographical borders of either the countries of origin or the countries of settlement (cf. Basch et al. 1994). This type of transnational social organisation, described in the previous section, is clearly something for which there is no room in most existing theories discussing integration.

The creation of transnational social networks is today less difficult because of various aspects of the process of globalisation. For example, with the help of modern technology it is now easy to retain personal relationships over vast geographical distances. The findings in this study largely support those theories which argue that the process of globalisation has a profound impact on social relations in the contemporary world.

One form of transnational social organisation is the diaspora. However, the whole idea of diasporas challenges conventional ways of understanding integration. Clearly, in a transnational and de-territorialised social reality it is not possible to see “integration” as something which happens at a specific geographical location. This adds further to the confusion surrounding the concept of integration. Therefore, there is reason to go beyond any simplistic integrationist or assimilationist discourse and rethink the whole process of refugee integration.

It can be suggested that the concept of diaspora solves some of the theoretical problems connected with the term integration. On the one hand, the social organisation of the Kurdish community in exile follows the patterns in Kurdistan, but on the other hand these patterns are influenced by the social structures in the country of settlement. The diaspora concept can relate to both the country of origin and the country of reception, and can bridge the gap between the periods before and after migration. Thus the diaspora concept, with its connection to both the country of origin and the country of settlement, is useful for understanding the duality of the social organisation of the Kurdish communities. However, for the refugees themselves there is of course no duality, since the diaspora is one real and lived experience. The findings in this thesis thus support an understanding of migration as continuous process. This clearly relates to the concept of “migrancy,” advocated by Schierup and Ålund (1986), which describes the migrants’ total “social field” of experiences, in which emigration, immigration, integration, etc. cannot be separated from each other. It also relates to the arguments presented by Edward Said according to which:

For an exile, habits of life, expressions of activity in the new environment inevitably occur against the memory of these things in another environment. Thus both the new and the old environments are vivid, actual, occurring together contrapuntally. (Said 1990, 366)

Associations

The patterns of social networks and interpersonal relations in the Kurdish community have already been described. These social networks might be expressed in institutionalised forms when specific formal organisations are established. This section describes the formal Kurdish associations in the Kurdish communities in Finland and England.

This study includes all associations in Britain and Finland which explicitly identified themselves as Kurdish and were working with, or for, Kurdish refugees. Apart from the Kurdish associations there were especially in London, many British as well as Iranian and Turkish organisations which gave valuable help to Kurdish refugees. However, this research concentrates on the Kurdish communities, and therefore only the organisations which regarded themselves as Kurdish are included.

Finland

Although, in Finland, there are only a small number of Kurds originating in Turkey, they are well organised, thanks largely to the activities of the Kurdish Organisation in Finland (Suomen Kurdiyhdistys r.y.) and the Kurdistan Information Centre in Helsinki. These organisations were officially founded in 1992 and 1993 respectively and in practice they shared the same office in central Helsinki. The organisations had good connections to other Kurdish committees around Europe. The premises also functioned as a meeting-point for many of the Kurds living in the Helsinki area. In early 1995 an official Information Centre of ERNK (*Enîya Rizgarîya Netewa Kurdistan*, National Liberation Front of Kurdistan) replaced the previous Information Centre. Because of linguistic and sometimes political differences, the contacts with

Kurdish refugees from other parts of Kurdistan are quite limited, but not totally lacking.

In Finland the Kurds from Iraq and Iran had several loosely organised local groups around the country, and there were also attempts to become better organised. There was a registered nation-wide “cultural organisation” called *Ekgertin* (or *Yekgirtin*, meaning “unity” in Kurdish). Another organisation was The Kurdistan National Peace and Solidarity Committee, which had an intellectual emphasis and international connections. There was also a Kurdish-Finnish solidarity organisation (*Kurdien ystävyysseura - Suomen Kurdistanyhdistys r.y.*) with mainly Finnish members.

Since there were so few Kurdish organisations in Finland, not all refugees could find an organisation that would sympathise with their own political opinions. One Iranian refugee explained that for political reasons he avoided the organisations in Finland, and instead had contacts with organisations in Sweden in order to keep in touch with his political party.

The activities of all the Kurdish organisations in Finland were rather limited. The Information Centre’s aim was, of course, to distribute information about Kurdistan, but otherwise the Kurdish associations in Finland concentrated on cultural and social activities for Kurds and their Finnish friends. The *Newroz* celebration was one of the most important of these activities. The Kurdish organisations were usually not involved in giving practical help or advice to newly arrived refugees. Most practical problems were taken care of by the Finnish authorities, and therefore there was no need for the Kurdish organisations to provide this service.

The Kurdish organisations in Finland had to struggle with a number of problems. First, there was the geographical dispersal of the refugees. The Kurdish refugees were resettled in a number of different municipalities almost all over the country. This dispersal made it difficult for the Kurds to sustain nation-wide organisations. Usually the Kurdish organisations in Finland were small local organisations which had more contacts with organisations in other countries than with each other. Consequently, the

organisations tended to become both locally and globally based, instead of working on a nation-wide basis.

A second problem was the funding of the organisations. The refugee associations could apply for money for cultural activities (e.g. *Newroz* parties or Kurdish publications) from the municipalities and from some of the ministries, but there was no clear structured way of supporting refugee associations and the money available has generally been very limited. Furthermore it seems that neither the refugees nor the authorities always knew what opportunities there were and whose responsibility it was to support the organisations.

An additional problem seemed to exist as a consequence of the Finnish authorities' selection of quota refugees. Kurdish refugees have been resettled in a third country after UNHCR has granted them refugee status. A Finnish delegation has interviewed the prospective candidates for the annual Finnish refugee quota. The selection of refugees has mainly been made on humanitarian grounds,³ but in addition to this it looks as if Finland has chosen refugees who declare that they will not continue to work politically in Finland. This is of course a rather contradictory policy. Finland agrees to resettle refugees who have been politically active, but at the same time wants to avoid to resettle those who wish to continue to be politically active. One quota refugee recalled his experiences from the interview situation in Turkey:

R: But what it was like, when they asked me why I had left and what I had done, what usually is asked, there was a kind of -- you got the feeling that they wanted you to promise that we must not work politically there. Because what they asked was that do you still work politically, or do you still want to bring up the Kurdish issue there as well.

ÖW: What they wanted was that you were supposed to answer no to that question?

R: You should answer no to the question, or you had to roll it around a little bit [t].

How dominant this selection criterion has been is difficult to say. Among the refugees from Iran and Iraq, the quota refugees in Finland were more likely than the refugees in England to be persons who were alienated from the political struggle and their former

parties. Although all still supported a free Kurdistan, there were many who explained that they were no longer active in politics. Some persons even said that they no longer believed in the politics of the Kurdish parties. This often led to the refugees also avoiding the Kurdish organisations in Finland. As explained in chapter four, all organisations in Kurdistan tend to be connected to the political parties. Therefore refugees in exile might still connect all organisations with politics. By selecting refugees who do not want to continue to work politically, the Finnish authorities seem indirectly to have chosen persons who are largely sceptical of all attempts to become organised. In addition, there are only a few persons who have any experience of working in organisations. A man from Iran who had been active in various associations in Finland described the refugees' ordeal with organisations:

The problem is that the Kurds do not have experience of organisations, we do not have this organisational background that is necessary. We have to function on our own background, we simply cannot change. This is one reason why there sometimes are problems with the authorities ... There is a lack of familiarity with democracy in Kurdistan, this is why Kurds associate organisations with politics, and politics is associated with power and oppression [t].

However, if you are a Kurdish refugee, it is difficult to stay away from politics even if you want to. Even those refugees and organisations who try to be non-political might find it hard to avoid Kurdish politics. As a man from Iraq who had been involved in starting a non-political local cultural association told me:

ÖW: Your organisation has mostly cultural activities for local Kurdish refugees, but has there been any discussion that you also would work as an interest organisation in order to improve the situation for refugees?

R: Yes, this is true. This is difficult with Kurdish issues when you try to do some cultural activities to keep in touch and learn to know each other, to do something for Kurdish culture and language and things like that. But still, when you are a Kurd, you are political, you are active.

ÖW: So you think that it is difficult to make a distinction then?

R: No, it still becomes, the whole life is politics. I do not know how it is in the Nordic countries, how you can separate these. But for us Kurds, we cannot separate these issues when things like these are happening in Kurdistan [t].

England

In England the picture is much more diverse and complex. There were about fifteen community organisations and advice centres in London with Kurdish members and clients (the number was not totally clear because at least four of these community centres were visited by both Turks and Kurds). The community centres often provided a very wide range of services for their members and clients. Their activities included advice on welfare, housing and asylum issues, language and training courses as well as various social and cultural activities. The biggest community centres had bookshops and restaurants on their premises.

The oldest Kurdish community centre in London is the Kurdish Cultural Centre (KCC), founded in 1985 and situated in Lambeth. Its members were mainly from Kurdistan in Iraq. Because of the proximity of the dialects, some Kurds from Iran visited the centre as well, especially since there was no organisation in England specifically for Iranian Kurds. As one of the biggest and oldest Kurdish associations in Britain, KCC has also tried to be an umbrella organisation for other local Kurdish organisations in the UK. In recent years the tendency has been to establish new local associations (Greenwich Kurdish Community Association, Kurdish Community in Ealing, Kurdish Information Centre in Islington and West London Kurdish Association in Hammersmith) as well as more specialised organisations (Kurdish Housing Association, Kurdish Disability Organisation, Kurdish Scientific and Medical Association and a separate organisation for Faili Kurds). This development, together with the alienation from Kurdish politics among Kurdish refugees from Iran and Iraq, has led to a decline of the activities of KCC. This has happened despite the fact that KCC, at least in 1995, was not officially aligned to any specific Kurdish party.

The biggest community centres were found in the Turkish and Kurdish communities in North London. The Kurdistan Workers Association (KWA) in Haringey had between 3,000 and 5,000 Kurdish members and clients from North-West Kurdistan (Turkey) while the Turkish and Kurdish Community Centre Halkevi in Hackney had about 4,500 members, of whom most were Kurds. Halkevi, established in 1984, was at first

called a Turkish community centre and only during the 1990s has it emphasised its Kurdishness. Both KWA and Halkevi seem to be very vital organisations with many different activities. During the first half of the 1990s, both centres had elected management committees which were sympathetic to the Kurdish national struggle in North-West Kurdistan (i.e. Turkey).

The election of a management committee with sympathies for the PKK happened for the first time in the Kurdistan Workers Association in 1990, when candidates sympathetic to the PKK won an overwhelming victory. The elections had been preceded by conflicts between different political parties, conflicts which are described in detail by Rachael Reilly (1991). After the election, the persons sympathetic to the Turkish Kurdistan Socialist Party left the KWA and started what later became the Kurdish Advice Centre situated in Tottenham.

In addition to the community and advice centres, there were several other Kurdish organisations in London. These were usually oriented more towards the situation in Kurdistan, and they were engaged in campaigning, publishing, collecting information, political lobbying and fund-raising for the Kurdish cause. Often both Kurdish and British volunteers could be found in these organisations. During the spring 1995 the following organisations were well-established and active: Hawkarani Kurdistan, Kurdish Human Rights Committee, Kurdistan Human Rights Project, Kurdistan Information Centre and Kurdistan Solidarity Committee.

There might be also some small local Kurdish organisations outside London (at least, there has been one in Manchester), but otherwise all Kurdish organisations in the UK have been concentrated in the capital area. One problem in identifying the Kurdish organisations was that new organisations were started and old ones disappeared at a bewildering speed.

Usually, newly arrived refugees first found the organisations through their friends and relatives, but some of the big and established organisations in London were even known in Kurdistan. It should also be noted that some Kurds chose to organise

themselves in associations that were not wholly Kurdish. Kurdish refugees from Iran were mostly active in Iranian political organisations and community centres, and, as mentioned earlier, there were many community centres for both Turkish and Kurdish refugees and migrants (Day-Mer, Turkish Education Group and numerous other organisations in North London).

As explained in chapter five, in practice refugee resettlement in Britain is largely taken care of by various voluntary organisations working within the “community.” There is funding available from a variety of sources for the Kurdish community centres and other organisations working with refugees. Therefore many Kurdish associations were able to offer a large number of activities aimed at helping newly arrived refugees. In addition to paid staff, there were usually also many volunteers, both Kurdish and British, working in the different organisations. Despite these activities, the services provided by the associations were often hampered by inadequate funding and a piecemeal structure. Hence, for obvious reasons, the services available in Britain were usually not comparable to the more structured and professional resettlement programmes organised within the public sector in Finland. For example the language and training courses organised by the associations in England often had problems in getting enough funding. Additional problems for the course organisers in North London were that many Kurds got jobs in “sweatshops” and therefore left the courses because they no longer had the time or interest to learn English. In addition, some women were not able to attend the courses because of their family commitments.

Among all Kurdish organisations in England there was an often expressed indirect support for the “Kurdish cause” and the struggle of the Kurdish people. This was most clearly expressed by the organisations of the Kurds from Turkey, which often explicitly supported certain Kurdish political parties. The Kurds from Iraq and Iran often tried to keep their organisations more neutral *vis-à-vis* the political parties and their disagreements in Kurdistan. A worker in one organisation in London explained the political affiliation of Kurdish organisations in the following way:

You know, we are not a football team, or some English organisation like that. We are political refugees. There is a specific reason why we came here, and that

reason is political and of course one still wants to continue with something that earlier has taken up your whole life.

In London the only associations not connected with Kurdish political parties were small organisations with a very clear and narrow purpose and which have struggled hard to keep themselves out of politics. These “non-aligned” organisations included small local organisations and a few highly specialised and professional organisations. The political character of the Kurdish community in North London is also described by Reilly (1991). Although the Kurdish associations themselves agreed that they were associated with certain political parties, the people interviewed at the organisations usually emphasised strongly that the organisations were open for all and that most of their activities had a practical orientation. However, this did not prevent other Kurds from describing organisations according to their political affiliation.

It should be made clear that this politicisation of the community did not mean that the Kurdish community centres in Britain were run by political parties. The connection was more complex than this. The community centres had an elected management committee, and even if persons sympathetic to a certain political party were elected to the management committee, it did not mean that the party ran the community centre. The Kurdish political parties' main cause is the liberation of Kurdistan, and they are hardly interested in running community centres in foreign countries, particularly since they are unlikely to be in favour of people leaving Kurdistan in the first place. In fact, some of the Kurdish parties, at least the PUK and the KDP, have their own representatives in London. These small party organisations are independent from the community centres and are not involved in practical work with, or for, refugees in Britain.

The politicisation of the Kurdish associations

What the Kurds in Finland and England have in common is the high politicisation of all the refugee associations. With few exceptions, the Kurdish associations in both countries were associated with certain political groups in the country of origin. The same political allegiances and boundaries that can be found in Kurdistan were thus

recreated in exile. Upon arrival in the country of exile, Kurdish refugees actively looked for organisations which shared their political views.

The politicisation of the Kurdish community is a continuation of social networks in Kurdistan. All organisations in Kurdistan tend to be connected to some of the political parties. Thus, when the political refugees in exile recreate their social networks and associations, it would be surprising if these did not continue to be associated with political parties. This very high politicisation of the Kurdish refugee communities replicated the political divisions in Kurdistan and divided the Kurds in the diaspora. Problems frequently arose in the co-ordination of activities among competing organisations.

The ongoing support for the liberation of Kurdistan was clearly expressed through different symbols: political posters, pictures of political leaders and the flags of different political parties. These symbols were found in prominent places in the refugees' homes, in the community centres, at demonstrations and at the *Newroz* celebrations. However, it is important to understand that although refugee associations are strongly influenced by Kurdish politics, they are not necessarily directly connected to the political parties in Kurdistan. The politicisation of the Kurdish communities in the diaspora can mainly be understood as a process whereby people who are sympathetic to a certain party want to be together with people they feel comfortable with and who agree with them on political issues. Thus, the politicisation of the exile communities should not be seen as something planned and directed by the parties in Kurdistan. Of course, the associations in the diaspora would like to be active and play an important role in Kurdish politics, but this is difficult to do from Europe. Therefore the associations' support for the "Kurdish cause" is often more symbolic than real.⁴

One problem connected with the dominance of the political features of the Kurdish associations is that not politically organised groups, as well as non-political or anti-political individuals, will easily become marginalised in the Kurdish community. This is the case for example with Kurdish women, who undoubtedly have a problem in getting their voice heard in the public sphere. In fact, some of the female informants

wanted to emphasise that the Kurdish associations are not doing enough to improve the refugee women's situation. Also Kurdish men who wanted to avoid politics found that the politicisation of the associations was a problem. As a refugee in London told me:

For example KCC, it is dominated by a couple of political parties. Also other organisations have their own political background. Exile communities have strong rules, strong rules of how you should behave. The organisations give you help, but they also manipulate refugees, or perhaps not manipulate, but at least influence them in a certain way. You have to take part in their way of thinking and in their activities. A lot of people avoid the organisations because of this.

Clearly, the politicisation of the associations divides the community. Since some persons choose to avoid the associations, this marginalises parts of the community. This leads inadvertently to the associations not being able to provide equal services to all refugees. Thus, the British policy of giving a large responsibility for the resettlement of refugees to ethnic associations within the community cannot be seen as a good way to provide equal services to all refugees. The problem here is not that the associations are mobilised around politics. Rather, the problem is connected to the community-centred policies in Britain, which will always experience problems in providing equal services to all individuals, regardless of the particular basis of mobilisation within the communities.

Nevertheless, in the same way as politicisation divides the communities, it is also a powerful mobilising force which can be an important resource for smaller groups within the wider community. In addition to politics, it is also plausible that religion and kinship could be used as a mobilising force by the associations. These two issues are discussed in the next sections.

The importance of religion

Ethnic mobilisation is often based on a common religious tradition. Among the Kurds one would thus assume that Islam could be a powerful force around which social networks and associations are built, or that the Kurds would use existing wider Muslim

networks and associations as a resource to solve the problems they experience in their new countries of settlement. However, this has not happened in the Kurdish refugee communities. There were no Kurdish associations using religion as a mobilising force. Few of the persons interviewed, although they declared that they were Muslims, had any contacts with mosques or religious organisations. This does not mean, however, that Kurds are not religious. On the contrary, many interviewees said that people in Kurdistan in general are deeply religious.

It might be that Kurdish religiosity is mainly a private issue which cannot be used as a mobilising force. For example, none of the main parties in Kurdistan is an explicitly religious party.⁵ Another issue is that Kurdish refugees in Europe cannot be regarded as representative of Kurds in general. It is not impossible that the political refugees are less religious than people in general in Kurdistan. Actually, among the interviewees the women often seemed to be more religious than the politically active men.

The Kurds from Turkey living in London are mostly Alevis, and therefore do not follow the same religious traditions as Shia or Sunni Muslims. For example, the Alevis do not have any mosques. This might contribute to the Kurdish community's detachment from Muslim organisations. However, what is surprising is that not even the Alevi belief seemed to be used in the mobilisation of the community. Taking into account the hostility between Sunnis and Alevis in Turkey (McDowall 1992) one would assume that this would still in exile have an impact on the social organisation of the community. At least in the Kurdish community in North London this distinction was not a very relevant one. I was repeatedly told that the Alevi - Sunni distinction was not important. As I was interrupted by an activist in the Kurdistan Workers Association when I tried to ask him about Alevis: "This is not important, what is important is that we all are Kurds here."

Among the Iranian and Iraqi refugees we might find different reasons for their reluctance to join Muslim organisations or use religion as a resource for mobilisation. The Iranians have fled from persecution by a religious government. Not surprisingly, many Iranian refugees remain deeply suspicious of religious organisations and in

practice avoid organisations that are mobilised around Islam. The Kurds from Iraq might have a complex relationship with religious institutions since Islam and Arab culture are often associated with each other. The Kurds in Iraq are in conflict with the predominantly Arab government in Baghdad, and therefore also religious institutions might be associated indirectly with the persecution faced by the Kurds in Iraq. An additional factor in all parts of Kurdistan is the influence of Marxist ideologies, which might make some Kurds suspicious of all religions. However, all these suggestions are highly speculative, and within the scope of this research it is not possible fully to investigate the role of religion among Kurdish refugees and in Kurdish society at large.

A further issue which complicates the analysis of the religious influence in the Kurdish community is that deeply religious persons might not identify themselves as Kurds. These persons might regard Kurdish nationalism as something that divides Muslims. A similar issue was that also some of the Kurds who had communist or Marxist sympathies had an ambivalent relation with Kurdish identification. Kurdish nationalism was seen by some persons as something which potentially divided the working class and its united struggle. Therefore it is possible that persons of Kurdish ancestry who are either religious Muslims or convinced communists prefer not to identify themselves primarily as Kurds.

The importance of traditional social networks

As explained in chapter four, the traditional social organisation of Kurdistan is largely based on tribal allegiances. One could thus assume that these traditional kinship networks would still have an impact on the social organisation of the community in the diaspora. For example, studies of Vietnamese refugees have shown that the traditional extended families of Vietnamese culture are recreated in exile. These new extended families are made up of persons who are not necessarily related, but still the families will fulfil the same functions as the traditional extended families in Vietnam (Gold 1992; Valtonen 1994).

As explained in chapter six, among Kurds the family is a very important social unit in the private sphere of life. Not surprisingly, individual refugees' social networks are largely based on family allegiances. However, despite this, the traditional tribal networks do not play a prominent role in the public sphere of life. The research showed that there were no Kurdish associations which would be mobilised on the basis of what could be perceived as tribal networks. Instead, the social organisation of the Kurdish communities is dominated by political allegiances. One can perhaps argue that the tribal networks continue to influence the diaspora indirectly, since it might be argued that some of the political parties in Kurdistan are largely based on traditional tribal loyalties. However, to study the extent to which the political parties in Kurdistan are based on tribal allegiances is totally outside the scope of this research. As Bruinessen (1992) points out, the tribal structure in Kurdistan has given way over time to allegiances based on nationalist and socialist discourses. The latter political allegiances seem to be those which in recent years have also dominated the social organisation of the diaspora. Consequently, it is evident that politics has been a far stronger mobilising force than either religion or kinship.

In summary, the previous sections of this chapter show that the Kurdish refugee associations have a transnational and diasporic character. The social organisation of the refugee communities is not only on an interpersonal level, but also on the formal level, a continuation of social and political allegiances in Kurdistan. Although this divides the communities, these allegiances can also be a useful resource for the refugees, which is an issue discussed in the following section.

The Role of Social Networks and Associations

Chapter six identified a number of different problems that refugees faced upon arrival in their new countries of settlement. This section looks more closely at how the refugees try to solve these problems and discusses the positive functions of social networks and formal associations.

In Finland the practical problems were largely taken care of by the authorities. The refugees' worst problems were instead social and psychological, including issues like exclusion, isolation, alienation and feelings of displacement. For a variety of reasons which have been presented earlier, the Kurds in Finland had not developed strong communities within the country and there were only a few active Kurdish associations. Not surprisingly, Kurdish associations did not play a decisive role in solving practical problems for the refugees; they had neither the need nor the resources to do this. However, the refugees tried instead to use their associations and informal networks to solve their social and psychological problems. The Kurdish associations were therefore mainly active in providing cultural activities and social gatherings, although also this was to a relatively limited extent. Nevertheless, these activities indicate that the social networks and formal associations among the Kurds can be used as resources to alleviate the social and psychological problems refugees experience in Finland. Obviously, for the refugees it is important to continue to have contact with friends, relatives and compatriots. One way of doing this is to become active in the Kurdish associations. A young man from Turkey found that his contacts with other Kurdish refugees and their collective political activities related to their country of origin helped him to overcome his own problems in Finland:

It was very good [that there were other Kurds in the reception centre in Finland]. And in my opinion, these Kurds, when we were together, it helped me a lot. Because it could have been really very difficult for me. I could have become mad or something. But when I was together with other Kurds, it helped me a lot. I was more interested in the Kurdish issue, and slowly, when I worked together with other Kurds for the independence of Kurdistan, you could say that I after a while totally forgot about my own problems and application for asylum, because the problems in Kurdistan were more important than my problems in Finland. There was a war, a really terrible war. When I listened to the BBC radio from London and when we called to Kurdistan they told us about the situation. This was all more interesting to us than our own life in Finland, because our family was there and all our relatives and our whole life. Part of our life was there and we ourselves were here. It was really difficult [t].

Clearly, presenting the opportunity to continue to work politically is one function which the Kurdish organisations and networks can fulfil. However, this diasporic political activity also alleviates many other problems related to isolation and other psychological problems. Political activism might also serve the function of reinforcing

an identity and a sense of order and purpose in the fragmented lives of the refugees. A man from Turkey explained how important it was to have an opportunity to meet people with the same political opinions:

I am extremely satisfied with the fact that in every place there are supporters of the PKK. And I believe that if this information centre did not exist in Finland, in that case it could happen that the Kurds would all become mentally ill. But with the information centre, and when we are working and we are getting information about our own country, this helps us a lot. It is like morality, our life. For example, without this party I am nothing. And with the Kurds, with the PKK, we have contact. This is because of the party, in the name of the party. If there were no party, no PKK, we could not perhaps even say hello to the Kurds. But because of the PKK, because this PKK is the key, and this key opens the door to all us Kurds, and that is how, with the name of the PKK and with the support of the PKK [t].⁶

There were significant differences between the two countries in terms of the more practical functions of the associations. The informal social networks and associations in Finland could not fulfil the same functions as in England, where the Kurds lived geographically close to each other and had strong and efficient organisations. Associations in England performed a wide range of functions and there was also extensive public funding available for these functions. The Kurdish refugees were able to use their associations and their informal networks to overcome their practical problems. The difficulties refugees encountered upon arrival and the lack of organised support for refugees in the UK presented the associations with considerable challenges. The Kurdish community centres in London often had specific workers who gave advice to newly arrived refugees. A large number of Kurds received most of their initial advice at some of the community centres. The Kurdish associations in London had to shoulder a particularly heavy burden during the influx of a large number of Kurds from Turkey in 1989. A man from Turkey who arrived in the spring 1989 told me:

The Kurdistan Workers Association helped me. The administration office where they help Kurds who needs help and advice and cannot speak English, I came straight away here At the airport, somebody was in charge of Kurdish people, and they brought us straight away here. They gathered the Kurdish people together, perhaps 30 persons, and brought us to the Kurdistan Workers Association [t].

Friends and relatives also played a major role in helping newly arrived refugees with their problems in England. In fact, the importance of informal networks in giving practical help seemed to be bigger than that of the associations' role. A woman from Iran received most of her help from friends who had arrived some years earlier in Britain:

I do not know if you know, but there is a custom between refugees towards that those who have been here earlier they help newly arrived, and every individual among them works as an association. They were so helpful, they were really so helpful.

The social networks based on social relations in the country of origin are obviously an important source of help and advice. In particular, relatives play an important role for newly arrived Kurdish refugees. Although larger networks and associations based on "tribal" allegiances are non-existent, the extended family remains very important. A man who had travelled through the Soviet Union and finally ended up in London told me:

R: My uncle helped me, the first year, just my relative helped me, to do my work, for example social security or other things, but after that I have done it myself.

ÖW: What about, you know, the local council and social security and these things? Do you think that you have received the help that you needed when you arrived here?

R: No, because I arrived here without accommodation, I just lived in my uncle's house, so nobody helped me, not the government or something, only the social security, I got income support.

Hospitality is in general highly valued among the Kurds (as I myself frequently experienced). Many refugees explained that if another Kurd asked for a favour, it would be unthinkable not to provide help. Nevertheless, one has to remember that the resources as well as the ability to give help and advice are limited within the Kurdish community.

One very tangible role of the informal social networks in Britain is that of giving help to refugees looking for a job. Especially in the large Turkish/Kurdish community in

North London relatives and friends can help each other to find employment and start businesses. A refugee who had repeatedly worked in the garment factories in North London explained how to find these jobs:

There is a network, there is a big network. And if you work people come and ask you about your friends whether you have friends who can work in that place with you In factories, you do not have to know English, and most of the refugees they work in factories.

All the issues mentioned in this section indicate that although the Kurdish community is largely a divided community, there are still well-functioning networks and associations. The Kurdish refugees tried to use their associations and networks as a resource to solve the different problems they encountered in their new countries of settlement. Even though the Kurdish refugee associations were based mainly on political allegiances in Kurdistan, these associations and networks served totally new and additional functions in the diaspora.

Many studies of refugees emphasise how the communities are characterised by political divisions (e.g. Bousquet 1991; Gold 1992; Kay 1987; Luciuk 1986; Lundberg 1989; Steen 1992; Valtonen 1996). However, although this is generally true, it is not the whole truth. Although a community as a whole may be politically divided, the same politically based networks can unite smaller groups within the community. These smaller groups and associations are an important resource for the refugees.

In summary, the refugees used their social networks as a resource when they tried to solve the problems they encountered in their new country of settlement. However, the associations and networks in Finland are not as efficient and well-organised as the ones in London. Since the situations in Finland and England are different, the networks also worked differently. In England the refugees used their networks and associations to overcome the practical problems they experienced. In Finland the refugees used their networks and associations to overcome their social and psychological problems. Thus, although the social networks were based on the distinct patterns in the countries of origin these networks remain a useful resource for the refugees in their new countries of settlement. In this way the social networks can actually facilitate the

refugees' integration into the country of settlement. As this thesis repeatedly argues, the Kurdish community can be regarded as a diaspora. However, contrary to what one might expect, this does not lead to non-integration. The various social networks which constitute the diaspora might be useful resources for the refugees. These networks are used to solve different problems and might facilitate integration into the new country of settlement. The process of integration and the formation of a diaspora are not connected in a simple causal relationship. Hence, to live in a diaspora is not an obstacle to a positive integration into the society of settlement.

Diasporic Politics

Since politics plays such an important role in the social organisation of the Kurdish exile communities, there is reason to look a bit closer at the political activism of the Kurdish refugees. As for example Sheffer (1986 1995) and Shain (1995) point out, the political activism of diasporas is a topical issue within the area of international politics. Diasporas can in various ways influence, and be influenced by, the international political relations between the country of settlement and the country of origin.

The three countries of origin in this study have quite different relations to Western Europe. Under their present regimes Iran and Iraq are not regarded as the best friends of the Western world. Turkey, on the other hand, has close relations with the European Union, NATO and the USA. These relations also have an impact on the Kurdish refugees' situation in Europe. A refugee from Iran or Iraq might have a less problematic political relationship with the country of asylum since there is a common adversary in the government of the refugees' country of origin. On the other hand, the close relations between Turkey and Western European countries might have negative consequences for Kurdish refugees from Turkey. The complicated political relations between country of origin, country of settlement and the diaspora might influence each other in different ways. As the smallest and weakest of these three political entities, the diaspora is the one which most clearly is influenced by the other two.

Kurdish political activism

As has been repeatedly pointed out, refugees in many ways continue to be oriented towards the country of origin. Politics is one of the areas of life where this is most obvious. As the European representative of ERNK, Kani Yilmaz, puts it, "Even though we are here, every hour we are living in Kurdistan" (Rugman and Hutchings 1996, 92). The Kurdish refugees' political activism in exile takes different forms. Although all Kurds tend to be political, the activism of the Kurds from Turkey has recently been especially evident.

During the fieldwork, there were both in Finland and England demonstrations organised by Kurdish refugees. Mostly the demonstrations are organised by only one or two organisations. However, the Kurds are not always divided. The Turkish army's attacks on Kurdish guerrillas in Northern Iraq in 1995 led both in Finland and in Britain to a united condemnation from all the major Kurdish organisations. In both countries the Kurdish organisations agreed to sign a common petition demanding an end to the invasion. A demonstration on 9 April 1995 in London against the Turkish invasion was supported by twenty different organisations and was attended by Kurds from all parts of Kurdistan. This exemplifies the fact that the diaspora also provides an opportunity for Kurds from different parts of Kurdistan to get together despite their diverse backgrounds. It should be pointed out that political activism is not necessarily oriented either towards the country of origin or towards the country of settlement. Some interviewees emphasised that the struggle to make other Kurdish refugees aware of the Kurdish national issue is an important part of the Kurdish struggle.⁷

The *Newroz* celebration was another way of demonstrating support for the Kurdish cause. This ancient spring celebration among the Kurds and the Persians is now often a political manifestation celebrating Kurdish identity and culture. The biggest Kurdish associations organise their own *Newroz* celebrations. The music, speeches and dances at these parties often have a strong symbolic meaning for the participants. The banners displayed at the parties I visited carried phrases like "down with the Turkish state terrorism" and "stop genocide in Kurdistan" (I find it illustrative of the political

priorities of the refugees that these political banners did not carry phrases such as “fight unemployment among refugees” or “fight racism in the neighbourhood”). A young man from Turkey who used to visit several parties in London said:

Actually, *Newroz* celebration nowadays is much more political. It is not something like cultural, maybe much more it is political thing, or this celebration has been politicised. Because in the *Newroz* celebration, if you have noticed, all these people express political messages. Singers, you know, players or other performers, actors, they all always express political messages: unity, identity, struggle.

Among all Kurds *Newroz* is an important celebration. The parties organised by the Kurdish associations are often very popular. In London, some of the interviewees had visited several different organisations’ parties. These gatherings were important occasions during which Kurds from different organisations, backgrounds and countries could meet and enjoy themselves. My own impression is that the emotional and political character of the celebration was most intense at the parties organised by Kurds from Turkey. This is perhaps not very surprising since the celebration has officially been banned in Turkey. After years of denial of their ethnicity in Turkey, all Kurdish cultural expressions achieve a greater importance in exile. Ethnicity becomes by necessity a political and not a private issue because of the oppression experienced by the Kurds in Turkey.

The extent of transnational political activism among the Kurdish communities is indicated by the density of international contacts that the Kurdish organisations have. For example, the Kurds from North-West Kurdistan (Turkey) had a well-organised and well-established network of contacts through committees and information offices all over the world. The journal *Kurdistan Report*, published jointly by the Kurdistan Solidarity Committee and the Kurdistan Information Centre in London, publishes the addresses of contact organisations in no less than 18 countries. Other recent examples of transnational co-operation include the Kurdistan Parliament in Exile, which held its first meeting in The Hague in the Netherlands in 1995. The Parliament was elected by Kurds in Europe, the former Soviet Union and North America. Although the

Parliament aims to represent all Kurds, it is mainly persons from northern Kurdistan who have been involved in its work.

Another interesting form of transnational co-operation with international political repercussions is the Kurdish television station MED-TV, which started its broadcasts in the spring 1995. This station produces its programmes in different European countries and distributes them all over Europe, the Middle East and northern Africa, thanks to a contract with a British satellite provider using a French satellite. The station is financially supported by private benefactors in the Kurdish communities all over Europe. The economic contributions are mainly collected among Kurds from Turkey. According to a brochure published in London, MED-TV “evolved in response to calls over recent years, particularly from the Europe-wide Kurdish diaspora, for a television station of its own” (Hassanpour 1995, 6). The name MED-TV comes from the name of the Medes, who are regarded as ancient ancestors of the Kurds.

During the spring of 1995 the daily programmes on MED-TV were mostly in the northern Kurdish dialect Kurmanji or in Turkish, but occasionally other Kurdish dialects were used. The programmes I have seen did not seem to be very political and included children programmes, documentaries, news and discussions. Despite this, the whole project has enraged the Turkish government, which is perhaps not surprising bearing in mind the Turkish authorities’ reaction to any Kurdish cultural expression. According to the Turkish government, the station is a PKK organ and they demand that the station should be closed down. As Hassanpour (1995) writes, the Turkish government’s actions against the station have been both national and international. In Turkey there are reports that satellite dishes have been smashed in the Kurdish provinces. In Europe the Turkish authorities launched an intensive diplomatic pressure against MED-TV. A good example of the relations between the Turkish and the British governments is the fact that John Major allegedly promised Tancu Ciller that his government, “would do ‘everything within their power’ against MED-TV” (Imset 1996, 35). The Turkish diplomatic campaign has been partly successful; there have been serious disruptions in the production of programmes and problems for the station

in securing its licence. However, since MED-TV is working legally, the Turkish government, at least at the time of writing, has not been able to totally close it.

Within the Kurdish communities the importance of MED-TV can hardly be overestimated. In the interviews during the spring of 1995, it was clear that most interviewees wanted to follow the programmes. Although there have been Kurdish-speaking radio programmes distributed by Voice of America which have been very popular among Kurds in exile, this is the first Kurdish television station in Europe. Kurds from Turkey were particularly enthusiastic about MED-TV, but also Kurds from other parts of Kurdistan tried to follow it. To watch the programmes also seemed to be a political statement. Even Turkish speaking Kurds who did not understand Kurdish watched the station's broadcasts.

An even more politically sensitive issue is the fact that the Kurds in exile can play a role in the independence struggle in Kurdistan. In the case of the Kurds in Turkey, a large part of the Kurdish parties' finances allegedly comes from Kurds living in exile in Europe. The ERNK representative Kani Yilmaz indicated this in an interview in 1994, in which, in response to a question on the role of the Kurds in Europe, he replied: "They give financial support - the donations are voluntary, continuous and quite high" (Rugman and Hutchings 1996, 94).

An interesting issue is the differences between the Kurds from Turkey, Iraq and Iran in terms of the extent and type of their political activism. The Kurdish refugees from Turkey often displayed strong emotional support for the Kurdish national movement in northern Kurdistan, while Kurds from Iran and Iraq often were more alienated from Kurdish politics. This is clearly related to the nature of the ongoing struggles in the countries of origin. Joly (1995a) makes a very useful observation when she describes how political refugees' forms of organisations and actions can be periodised:

In the initial period if the conjuncture back home is in turmoil and has not stabilised, exile is envisaged as a very short episode and all energies are tensed towards the goal of overthrowing the regime and returning. As the regime in the homeland stabilises, this is perceived as a consolidation and an indication that

exile will last longer than initially expected. Although one is not here to stay, one is here for a while more. (Joly 1995a, 22)

Although the refugees primary aim is to pursue the political project in the homeland, another secondary project pertaining to everyday issues in the society of reception might later appear. When this new project will appear is not determined by time and duration of exile, and even the structure of the society of reception only plays a secondary role. The important factor is the viability of the political project in the homeland which is kept alive by the possibilities of its victory (Joly 1995a).

This periodication is clearly visible in the Kurdish communities. The Kurds from Turkey are still in the initial period in which their activities are oriented solely towards the liberation of Kurdistan. The Kurds from Iran and Iraq are clearly more disillusioned about their political projects and, although also their ultimate goal is to return, they have started to be more oriented towards the country of exile. As Joly (1995a) points out, this is not a consequence of time, but rather connected to the fate of the political projects in which the refugees have been involved.

This second project, which comprises orientation towards the country of settlement, can use the social networks and associations which were established during the first period of orientation towards the country of origin. In this way the Kurdish refugees can use their political associations as a resource also in situations which are totally unrelated to the original political struggle. Although the associations are mobilised around a political struggle in the country of origin, they acquire new additional functions related to problems in the country of settlement.

The influence of political developments in the country of origin on the refugees' relation to the society of settlement, which is described above, is supported by my empirical findings. However, this seems to be an area where more research is needed to explain fully the influence of all variables. Obviously, there also are a number of other differences between the refugees from Turkey and those from Iran and Iraq which are not related to the political project "back home." These other differences can also potentially have an impact on the political activities of the refugees and their

relation to the society of settlement. For example, in Finland the Kurds from Iraq are quota refugees while the Kurds from Turkey have arrived as asylum seekers. In Britain the Kurds from Iraq are largely well educated persons who have lived in Britain for a long time, while the Kurds from Turkey are recently arrived asylum seekers who live in their own community in North London. Hence, to fully investigate how the political development in the country of origin influences the refugees' relation to the society of settlement would require a larger comparative empirical material than was possible to collect in this study. In addition, even if the political development in the country of origin continues to have an influence on refugee communities, this is of course not a reason to forget the major impact which factors in the country of settlement have on refugee communities. The fundamental importance of different factors within the country of settlement for the process of integration is repeatedly demonstrated in this and the previous chapter.

State and government political actions

Clearly, the countries of reception are not very happy about political activism among Kurdish refugees, especially since they often have lucrative economic relations (including export of military equipment) with the governments that are oppressing the Kurds. In Germany the relations between the German state and the politically active Kurds originating in Turkey have recently been problematic. Germany's approach towards its Kurdish minority's cultural rights, the diasporic political activities of the Kurds and Germany's close connections with Turkey have all played a role in the deterioration of relations. The Kurds have had problems in being accepted as a linguistic and ethnic group distinct from the Turkish minority in Germany (Senol 1992), and a stigmatisation of Kurds as "less worthy Turks" is largely adopted by the German authorities. This institutional racism has led to an ethnic revival among the second generation German Kurds and antagonism between the German state and the Kurdish community (Blaschke 1991a, 1991b). In early 1990s there were frequent petrol bombings and sabotage of Turkish property and businesses in Germany, carried out by people sympathetic to the Kurdish liberation struggle in eastern Turkey. After this wave of political violence, the PKK and the ERNK were declared illegal in

Germany and France in 1993. The subsequent closure in several European countries of a large number of organisations associated with Kurds from Turkey has led to all Kurdish communities all over Europe being regarded as possible “terrorists.” In the case of the Kurds, European integration seems to mean that the Kurds have to be equally persecuted all over Europe.

In England many Kurds feel that they have been intimidated and suspected of criminal activities by the British authorities. There are also suggestions that the Turkish government and their local supporters are spreading rumours about illegal activities in the refugee community. During the fieldwork this criminalisation of the community was a topical issue in discussions with Kurds from Turkey living in London. Regardless whether it is true that there is a systematic criminalisation of the Kurdish communities, it is a fact that British authorities in quite concrete ways have demonstrated hostile attitudes towards Kurdish refugees from Turkey. For example, in chapter five the radical increase in the number of negative decisions on asylum applications from Turkey is described. An incident which has upset many Kurds is the fate of Kani Yilmaz, the ERNK European Representative who was arrested during a visit in London on 26 October 1994. When arrested he was on his way to a meeting in the British Parliament to which he was invited as a speaker. Kani Yilmaz was not charged for any crime but was nevertheless indefinitely detained under the National Security Act. His legal case has been very complex, mainly because Germany asked for his extradition. At the beginning of 1997 he was still detained in a British prison.

On the other hand the British general public and many British political organisations have sympathies for the Kurds and their political struggle. Many MPs have showed a genuine interest in the Kurdish question. There are also many small British left-wing organisations who seem to be supporting the Kurds. Organisations like Militant Labour, Socialist Workers Party and other politically marginal left-wing groups often have a visible presence at Kurdish demonstrations.⁸

In any case the situation in London is not as bad as the situation in Germany. For example attacks on Turkish property are very rare in the UK. The only attack on

Turkish property in the UK that I am aware of is one tragic case of petrol bombing of Turkish banks in the summer of 1994, for which three Kurdish men were imprisoned.

The contrast with the situation in Germany becomes even greater when we look at the situation in Finland. The small community in Helsinki consisting of Kurds from Turkey did not seem to have any disagreements with the Finnish authorities regarding the community's political activities. In fact, all interviewees in Finland had largely positive experiences of the few contacts they had had with the police. Since refugees otherwise often had negative experiences of bureaucracy and xenophobia, the positive experiences with the police were perhaps not totally expected. In 1994 a person active at the Kurdistan Information Centre in Helsinki described the organisation's relations with the authorities:

In Finland we have not had any problems with the authorities or the police. And we do not wish that there will be any in the future. The situation here in Finland is different from for example Germany where the Kurds do not have the right to free speech. We work democratically as long as we have the right to free speech. But in Germany there is problem, because in a situation where there no longer is democracy then you have to fight [t].

It is possible that the freedom of expression and the traditional understanding of issues related to minority rights are preventing conflicts from arising in Finland. Furthermore, the number of Kurds in Finland is very small and, because of the country's geographical location, the Finnish and Turkish governments' political co-operation is not very extensive.

The relationships between the authorities and the Kurdish refugees thus seems to be quite different in the countries here under study in comparison with the situation in Germany. However, the present attempts to criminalise the Kurdish community in Britain, and Finland joining the European Union in 1995, can have negative consequences for the Kurdish refugees in these countries. These issues indicate that the political actions of the state in the country of settlement are decisive for the forms of political activism the diaspora will adopt. Although the political activities of the Kurds in the diaspora is largely perceived as a problem by the authorities, there is

also reason to remember the positive aspects of the refugees' activism. The positive aspects of ethnic associations and social networks have previously been discussed in this chapter.

For the Kurds, who are a persecuted minority in their countries of origin, the diaspora also offer opportunities for political and cultural expressions which would not have been possible in Kurdistan. The diaspora presents an opportunity to develop a common Kurdish ethnic identity among Kurds who in Kurdistan have only had limited possibilities for mutual contacts. The journal *Ronahi*, published by Kurdish students at the School of Oriental and African Studies in London, includes the following anecdote written by a student. Although this quotation deals with the Kurdish national dilemma, it also demonstrates the possibilities for reclaiming a Kurdish identity which the diaspora entails:

Several months ago, with a friend, I went to the British Library - Oriental Section - to look for a book written by Ahmadi Khani (1650-1706). Fortunately we found it. The manuscript called Nubar (a metrical Arabic-Kurdish dictionary for children) was written in the beginning of the 1700s and while we were looking through the faded pages of it, I was lost in thought-- After almost three hundred years, two students from different parts of Kurdistan were for the first time coming across a book of a leading Kurdish poet and scholar in a library in London. If there is a disgrace for the Kurds, is this not to be enough? (Boz 1995, 20)

The examples of political activism in the diaspora which are discussed in this section point to the possibilities presented to the Kurds in the diaspora for uniting behind the Kurdish cause. The diaspora also offer opportunities to meet Kurds from other parts of Kurdistan and freely to exercise a Kurdish identity and culture. This new unity in the diaspora can also serve as a platform allowing the Kurds to get their voice heard and work for the improvement of their situation in their new countries of settlement.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that the social organisation of the Kurdish refugee communities is largely a continuation of social relations in Kurdistan. Already in

chapter six it was shown that the refugees have a continuous relationship to their countries of origin, and this chapter has looked at the social consequences of that relationship.

The same political allegiances that exist in Kurdistan are recreated in the social organisation of the refugee community and its associations. Because of this continuous relationship, one can also find differences in the social organisation and political activism between different parts of the Kurdish refugee community. The different political developments in Turkey, Iran and Iraq continue to influence the Kurds from those countries and can explain differences in the activities and priorities of the Kurdish associations in exile.

Because of the nature of this continuous relationship to the "homeland" the refugee community can be described as a diaspora. This chapter, together with chapter six, has shown that the refugees, "continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another, and their ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship" (Safran 1991, 84). Furthermore, this chapter argues that two more of Safran's characteristics of a diaspora are evident among the Kurdish refugees. First, although this chapter has only given a brief picture of diasporic political activities, it still describes how the refugees, "believe that they should, collectively, be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity" (Safran 1991, 84). Actually, as Cohen (1997) points out, this issue can also involve the actual creation of a homeland. Secondly, it is also evident that the Kurds, "retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland - its physical location, history, and achievements" (Safran 1991, 83). Clearly, the diaspora discourse is useful for an understanding of the refugees' own definition of their situation

Although the community can be regarded as a diaspora, this does not automatically mean that the community is not integrated into the society of settlement. On the contrary, these diasporic relations can have a positive influence on the ability to

become integrated. The associations and social networks, which largely constitute the diaspora, can be useful resources which the refugees can employ to solve the new problems they face in the country of settlement. Although diasporic relations might influence the refugees' motivation to settle down, they can also provide the community with the means it needs to become integrated.

Furthermore, the main obstacles to a positive integration of the refugees are not their diasporic social relations but the social structures in the receiving society. The diaspora discourse, with its emphasis on the relation to the country of origin, should not forget the major impact which the exclusionary or inclusionary social structures in the country of settlement have on the social organisation of refugee communities. The differences between the processes of social integration in Finland and England, which are described at the beginning of this chapter, clearly exemplify the major impact of official policies and social structures in the countries of reception.

Thus, although the concept of diaspora is useful, it should not lead to a negligence of the influence of various exclusionary and inclusionary structures in the countries of settlement. However, the diaspora concept can take this duality into account. Since the concept describes a transnational social reality it can bridge the gap between the country of origin and the country of reception. This diasporic conceptual framework can embrace an understanding of the influence from both the country of origin and country of settlement. Furthermore, this suggests a rethinking of simplistic perceptions of the concept of integration.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

This study focuses on newly arrived Kurdish refugees from Turkey, Iraq and Iran, who live in exile in Finland and England. The research forms the basis for a discussion about the concept of “diaspora” and the concept’s relevance for a sociological study of refugees in the country of exile. It is argued that the concept diaspora, understood as a transnational social organisation relating both to the country of origin and the country of exile, can provide a deeper understanding of the social reality in which refugees live. In a way, the concept of diaspora can bridge the gap between pre-migration and post-migration. From a sociological point of view it is not possible to clearly separate these two moments. Refugees do not start their lives from scratch when they arrive in the country of resettlement, as so often seems to be assumed. The concept of diaspora encompasses the refugees’ own definition of their situation and provides a tool for understanding the transnational social relations found in refugee communities.

As is repeatedly argued in this thesis, the Kurdish communities in exile can be regarded as a diaspora. The previous chapters have indicated that even Safran’s (1991), precise definition of a diaspora is well suited for describing the Kurdish refugees’ situation. All the criteria for a diaspora can be found in the Kurdish refugee communities: forcible expulsion, myths and memories of the homeland, alienation in the host country, the wish to return, ongoing support for the homeland and, finally, a collective identity importantly defined by the relationship to the homeland. Since the Kurds clearly fulfil the requirements of even the strict definition of a diaspora suggested by Safran (1991), it is suggested that there are sufficient grounds for speaking of a Kurdish diaspora.

This thesis highlights the social dimension of a diaspora by looking at the importance of formal and informal associations and social networks. To live in a diaspora not only involves issues of consciousness, identity or psychology, it also has a profound influence on the social organisation of the community (cf. Cohen 1995, 1996). A diaspora can be seen as specific type of social organisation which is characterised by transnational social relations. As Lie (1995) and Tölölyan (1991) point out, the study of transnationalism is an important feature of the new diaspora discourse. This transnationalism includes the various social, political, economic and cultural relations which migrants create and develop between country of origin and country of settlement (Basch et al. 1994), as well as between exile communities in different countries. Clearly, this tendency towards transnationalism is related to more general processes of globalisation and de-territorialisation in contemporary societies. Although globalisation, transnationalism and de-territorialisation can be regarded as general social processes, the formation of diasporas is a feature which is more specific to refugee communities. Obviously, not all diasporas regard themselves as refugee communities, and not all refugee communities become diasporas. Nevertheless, the diaspora concept does highlight some of the typical features of the social organisation of refugee communities. Hence, this thesis goes beyond a limited understanding of diaspora as a psychological relationship by emphasising that a diaspora can also be regarded as a social organisation. The transnational and de-territorialised relations between the country of origin and country of settlement have a profound influence on the social organisation of refugee communities.

Safran's more precise definition of a diaspora has been used in this thesis in order to be able to operationalise the concept as an analytical tool. Yet, there are other ways of using this concept, but these have not been found useful for the subject matter of this thesis. For example, the celebration of contemporary diasporas by writers like Paul Gilroy (1991), Stuart Hall (1993) and Avtar Brah (1996) largely emphasises features like syncretism, diversity, "hybridity" and resistance among groups of migrant origin. However, the type of diasporic consciousness in the relatively well established minority communities described by these authors is somewhat different from that which was displayed by recently arrived Kurdish refugees.

As Marienstrass (1989) points out, time is an important factor in defining a diaspora (cf. Chaliand 1989; Cohen 1997), and this is indeed a poignant reason why one might hesitate in regarding the Kurds as an established diaspora. All the Kurdish communities in Europe have a relatively short history and all the refugees studied in this research had arrived in the country of exile very recently. It might be argued that there is reason to be cautious in using the notion of diaspora before a considerably longer period of time has passed. One cannot rule out the possibility that the diaspora might disappear over time. There is still a possibility that political changes in the Middle East in the near future will make a return migration possible. The future developments of the Kurdish diaspora also depend on the structures and policies of the country of exile. Future generations may, if they are accepted by the host-society, be assimilated into the societies in which they live. On the other hand, the xenophobia, discrimination and racism directed against all visible ethnic minorities might effectively rule out any assimilation. Thus, although the Kurds in exile today clearly live in a diasporic relation, only time will tell if they will become a permanent diaspora. Despite these cautious remarks, my argument is that a sociological analysis of contemporary Kurdish refugees has much to gain from the concept of diaspora and the diaspora discourse. The point is that regardless of whether the Kurdish refugees of today can claim to be a “real diaspora” or not, the concept of diaspora can throw some light on the refugees’ specific relationships to their countries of settlement and their countries of origin.

The label “diaspora” is, perhaps, especially appropriate in the case of the Kurdish refugees because of the influence of Kurdish nationalism which commits many Kurdish refugees to the restoration of their homeland. However, I would suggest that the concept of diaspora can also be a useful analytical tool in the study of other refugee communities, this is because the concept can at the same time relate to both the country of settlement and the country of origin. In this way, it can also describe the transnationalism of the social organisation of refugee communities in general.

This thesis has examined the situation of Kurdish refugees both in Britain and in Finland. Despite the large differences between these two host-societies several features remained constant in both cases. Things that all Kurdish refugees had in common included their wish to return, their feeling of displacement and various psychological problems owing to their refugee experiences. All refugees also created and maintained transnational social networks. These networks included contacts with Kurds in Kurdistan and in other countries in Europe. These features were found in all Kurdish refugee groups, regardless of the refugees' countries of origin or countries of exile.

However, in some matters this research has also found notable differences between refugee groups depending on the refugees' countries of origin and countries of exile. Clearly, the social organisation of refugee communities is influenced by both the relationship to Kurdistan and the relationship to the countries of settlement. Thus, it is possible to regard the country of origin and the country of exile as independent variables which affect the refugees and their associations in various ways.

The Country of Origin as an Independent Variable

This study indicates that there are specific differences between the refugee communities depending on whether the refugees originated in Turkey, Iraq or Iran. Since similar patterns of difference have been found in both Finland and England, there is reason to believe that these differences can be attributed to factors related to the countries of origin.

Although all Kurds share a common ethnic identity, several factors simultaneously separate them from one another. Kurdistan is today divided between a number of different states, each with its own specific political situation and history. There are political as well as ideological disagreements dividing the Kurdish political movements within these countries. The Kurds are also separated by a variety of dialects, many of which are not mutually intelligible, and there are of course gender, class and cultural differences that have to be taken into account. Old tribal allegiances and religious divisions in some parts of Kurdistan make the picture even more

complex. The heterogeneity is also found in the Kurdish diaspora, where different patterns of migration from the countries of origin also highlight some of the differences. The Kurds in the diaspora are mainly political refugees and thus the political divisions become especially apparent in the diaspora. There is, nevertheless, a Kurdish nationalism which today has influenced many Kurds, this nationalism can, to some extent, overcome the differences among the Kurds.

The different Kurdish refugee groups show different patterns of integration within the larger Kurdish community as well as in respect to their degree of integration into other minority groups in the society of settlement. While Kurds from Iraq largely identified themselves only as Kurds and mainly socialised with other Kurds, the Kurds from Iran and Turkey were in practice largely part of a wider Iranian and a wider Kurdish/Turkish community. However, the most important factor explaining the social organisation of the Kurdish refugee community was political allegiances based on political parties in Kurdistan. This factor was especially salient among Kurdish refugee associations, which were largely organised and mobilised according to patterns drawn from Kurdistan. The political developments in the countries of origin influenced the diasporic political activities of the refugees. These developments also affected refugees' plans for a return. Refugees from Turkey were relatively optimistic about their chances to return, while refugees from Iran and Iraq largely felt that the political situation in their countries of origin had developed in a negative direction.

Because of the refugees' continuous relation to Kurdistan it is not easy to understand the Kurdish refugee community as an ethnic group within the context of the countries of exile. In fact, the refugees' ethnicity continues to be based primarily on relations within the context in their countries of origin. As I argue in chapter six, the ethnicity of the Kurdish refugees is not defined through their relationship to the majority in the country of settlement. Instead, the ethnicity of the refugees is mainly based on the experience of being an oppressed group in the countries of origin. This is something that will probably change over time, but among the relatively recently arrived refugees in this study, this feature is very evident. Theories of ethnic relations can therefore only give a limited understanding of refugees and their situation. Instead, the diaspora

concept is a more suitable tool for an understanding of the special relationships that refugees have with both the society of origin and with the society of settlement. The diasporic conceptual framework sheds some light on the largely transnational and de-territorialised social reality in which refugees live.

This continuous relation between developments in the country of origin and the social organisation of the refugee community also adds a new perspective to theories arguing that there is a connection between the type of migration and the migrant's relation to their new country of settlement. Kunz (1981) links the processes of integration and assimilation with classifications of different types of refugee migration. However, his model seems unable to sufficiently take into account the refugees' continuous and transnational relations to their countries of origin. The initial reason for flight, or political activism before flight, is not the only question which has an influence on the refugee in exile. The relation between the refugee and the country of origin is also a continuous relation where contemporary political developments have a direct influence on refugees who have lived in exile for a long period of time. Instead of constructing elaborate classifications of various types of refugee migration, it seems to be enough to say that the refugees' political projects in the countries of origin continue to influence the refugees and their communities in the country of exile. The continuous transnational flow of information, people, capital and ideas creates a relationship between the diaspora and the homeland which continues for a long period of time after the initial migration. The formation of a diaspora and the process of integration is not only dependent on the "situation before flight," the refugees' "background" or their "cultural luggage." Certainly, the formation of a diaspora cannot either be regarded as a question of the individuals' own free choice, as Sheffer (1995) seems to suggest. Instead, the social reality in which refugees continue to live for a long time is a transnational situation where both factors in the country of origin and in the country of exile play a decisive role.

Country of Settlement as an Independent Variable

Although the refugees social reality largely can be understood as de-territorialised and transnational, it is still necessary to remember that in many decisive ways the society of settlement influences the refugees and the social organisation of the refugee communities. There is a danger that the new interest in transnational diasporas (cf. Lie 1995) with its emphasis on globalisation, transnationalism and de-territorialisation will overlook the local context in which migrants and refugees live. Therefore this thesis advocates a framework which takes into account the relations with both the country of origin *and* the country of settlement.

This thesis revealed a number of important differences between the refugees' experiences in Finland and in England. It can be argued that neither country has fully understood the specific nature of refugee migration, although they approach the issue from totally different perspectives. The UK adopts a traditional communitarian and multi-cultural approach, while in practice Finland has a more assimilationist resettlement policy. Since most of the refugees in Finland and England have identical backgrounds and share similar experiences of Kurdistan, it is possible to argue that the differences which can be observed in the two cases can be attributed to factors related to the society of settlement.

As described in chapter six, there are notable differences between the two countries in terms of the practical problems experienced by refugees. Not surprisingly, the way the resettlement of refugees is organised largely determines what kinds of difficulties the refugees will experience. In Finland, the official resettlement programmes and the structures of the welfare state greatly diminished the practical problems related to housing, education and income support. The refugees in Finland even experienced fewer problems connected to language than the refugees in England. On the other hand, in London the strong Kurdish communities and the Kurdish social networks were important resources for the refugees. The refugees were more isolated and their associations were less well organised in Finland than in England, which led to a range of difficulties for the refugees in Finland. The ethnic labour market in London was

often able to facilitate the refugees' employment. However, the only jobs available in London were poorly paid jobs with very bad working conditions. In Finland, the severe unemployment situation in practice closed out refugees from the labour market. Xenophobia and racism were more visible features of society in Finland than was the case in the multi-cultural environment of London.

Resettlement policies were widely different in the two countries. The Finnish policy was to resettle refugees in small groups dispersed all over the country, while in Britain almost all Kurds lived in London. Obviously, these differences made it impossible to establish large and well-established communities and associations in Finland on the lines of those found in London. This led to notable differences in the social networks and the types of social integration found in the two countries. Although all Kurdish refugees used their networks and associations to solve problems they faced in the country of settlement, the role played by social networks and associations was completely different in the two countries. In these areas, the official resettlement policies played a decisive role.

Kurdish refugees' political activities and their support for a Kurdish homeland are certainly not welcomed by the governments of their host-countries. However, if one compares the situation in Finland, England and Germany it seems as though the different policies of the receiving countries have an influence on what forms the refugees' diasporic political activities will take.

All these results suggest that to a large extent the structures and policies of the receiving society determine the process of integration into the receiving society. By stressing the importance of structures this study avoids the danger of using theoretical frameworks where immigrants are mainly seen as choosing whether or not to integrate. Such a theoretical framework forgets the profound importance of various exclusionary structures and discourses within the receiving societies. For example, issues like racism and systematic discrimination have to be taken into account. On the other hand, it is important to remember that the refugees are independent actors and that there is an interaction between structure and agency.

Obviously, various inclusionary and exclusionary processes within the receiving society still have a profound importance on the social organisation of the refugee communities, despite the refugees' transnational and de-territorialised social relations. This suggests that the new diaspora discourse still needs to take into account earlier sociological research about international migration and ethnic relations.

Integration into the Receiving Society and the Diaspora

What then is the relation between the process of integration into the receiving society and the process of diaspora formation among Kurdish refugees? The existence of a diaspora may, for example, suggest that refugees do not want to, or are unable to, integrate or assimilate into the receiving society. Thus the existence of a diaspora could easily be used as an argument for exclusionary policies by anti-immigration political groups. The formation of diasporas could, for example, be used as an argument for more restrictive asylum regulations since "refugees will anyway never become native inhabitants."

I would argue that it is important to understand that to live in a diasporas does not automatically mean that the person is not integrated into the wider society. The process of integration into the society of settlement and the process of diaspora formation are largely unrelated processes, and are certainly not connected in any clear and simple causal relation. With the risk of over-simplifying, it can be argued that integration into the society of reception mostly depends on factors within that society. The minority's relation to the society of origin is in this case not totally without importance, but does not play as decisive a role as factors in the society of settlement. On the other hand, the question whether a minority community forms a diaspora or not, depends largely on the type of relation which exists with the country of origin and only to a lesser extent on the type of relation to the country of settlement. Yet, to get a full understanding of the social organisation of the communities, both dimensions have to be taken into account.

A look at some established diasporas can clarify the relation between diasporas and integration. The classical example of a diaspora is, of course, the Jews, but overseas Chinese are also commonly referred to as a diaspora. These two groups are often well integrated and might have an important and strong socio-economic positions in the societies where they live. Clearly, to live in a diaspora does not automatically entail non-integration. On the other hand, neither is there any guarantee that a diaspora would automatically be well-integrated. There are also diasporas which experience discrimination and which tend to be relatively superficially integrated into their societies of settlement, the Gypsies being one example which easily comes to mind.

Diasporas are often communities who to some degree are isolated from the wider society. This can in some cases lead to a lack of skills and resources which will hamper an integration into the wider society. This case is exemplified by the Kurds from Turkey living in North London who have difficulties to find a job in the mainstream economy because of insufficient language skills. The disadvantages which are connected to living in an insular community are, however, often compensated for by other advantages. For example, in North London there is an ethnic labour market employing Turks and Kurds. Furthermore, the most important issue to remember is that disadvantages associated with insular communities are often of marginal importance compared to the profound effect on the minority of the social structure of the wider society. In the example from North London it is for instance clear that the lack of a minimum wage and other features of the labour market creates a situation with poor salaries and bad working conditions in the "sweat shops." A more general problem related to the social structure of the wider society is the various forms of racism and discrimination facing most refugees. The type of exclusion exemplified by racism and discrimination can be regarded as a far more important reason for non-integration than any tendency to live in insular ethnic communities.

There can also be a relation between integration and diaspora formation in the sense that non-integration might lead to a need for a stronger ethnic community. This may happen as a defence strategy in order to compensate for the discrimination and inferior position in which the minority often finds itself. This defensive community may or

may not be a diaspora. It is easy to agree with Clifford (1994, 312) who argues that diasporic consciousness often is a question of making the best of a bad situation. The refugees' exclusion from the wider society is not a product of their own diasporic consciousness, this exclusion can instead be seen as one of many reasons for the formation of a diaspora. In the case of the Kurdish refugees it seems that to some degree all groups have tried to strengthen their own community in order to solve different problems they experience in the country of settlement. Both informal social networks and formal associations are important resources for a community. For example, the well-organised associations in London today play many different roles for the Kurdish community.

New Kurdish refugees from Turkey are easily integrated into the well-established Kurdish/Turkish community in North London. This development generally supports Breton's (1964) argument that the institutional completeness of a community is decisive for the direction of the process of integration. In cases where strong communities do not exist and the refugees are divided, there might be many persons who instead attempt to assimilate into the majority as fast as possible (cf. Kunz 1981). This pattern was discernible among some of the politically divided Kurdish refugees from Iraq and Iran. However, this option is open only for a few highly qualified persons. Many refugees instead become isolated and marginalised from the majority because of their lack of linguistic and educational skills and as a consequence of racism and discrimination.

The Kurdish refugee communities are divided largely because the political divisions in Kurdistan have a profound influence on the social organisation of the communities in exile. However, at the same time as the Kurds are divided politically, similar forces can also unite those refugees who shared the same political beliefs and background in Kurdistan. The associations and informal networks growing out of this unity can be used as a resource to solve the problems facing the refugees in their new country of settlement. Minority organisations and networks might actually be important in facilitating integration into the receiving society. Thus, rather than hampering integration, diasporas may in fact facilitate integration. The Kurdish refugees in this

study live in a diaspora where their associations and informal networks are largely oriented towards the country of origin. Despite this, the associations and networks can be used as a resource to solve problems refugees experience in the country of settlement.

Despite the above-mentioned qualities of diasporic communities, the formation of diasporas should not be seen as a totally positive process. Although diasporas are often defined in relation to nation-states, it must be remembered that a diaspora cannot provide its members with the same services and opportunities that the state is able to provide to its citizens. Consequently, although a strong and independent community has its advantages, there is no reason to see diasporas as a positive and sufficient alternative to egalitarian welfare states. For example, the voluntary work and the lack of resources in the Kurdish community centres in London cannot be compared with the official reception programmes and the relatively good facilities provided for refugees in Finland.

Both the formation of diasporas and the processes of integration should be seen as complex processes that are difficult to describe by any static models. In this research it has not been possible to identify and measure all the different variables affecting the social organisation of the refugee communities. Obviously, there is a need for more research in this area. This study has suggested a number of variables and their relation to one another. Furthermore, this study has presented an analytical framework in which these issues can be discussed. It is argued here that the concept of diaspora retains an understanding of refugees' specific experiences and transnational social relations.

In any case, the refugees' transnational social reality suggests a rethinking of the concept of integration. The contemporary diaspora discourse is a way to further an understanding of refugees' transnational and de-territorialised social reality. The concept of diaspora can be a useful tool for an understanding of the social relations of refugees in a new country of settlement where their social organisation depends both on features in the country of origin as well as in the country of exile. The concept of diaspora goes beyond simplistic notions of integration, since the concept takes into

account this duality of refugees' social relations. For example, within this conceptual framework it makes perfect sense that people wish to return to their countries of origin at the same time as they want to integrate into their new countries of settlement.

The diaspora discourse highlights the refugees' continuous relation to their countries of origin. Despite this, the relation to the country of settlement should not be forgotten. Although the diaspora discourse adds an important transnational dimension, there is still reason to remember older theories relating to inclusion and exclusion within society in more traditional terms. Thus, the diaspora discourse needs to take into account earlier sociological research and theories about ethnic relations and international migration. Understanding a diaspora as a social organisation and not only as a psychological relation is one step in the right direction. This thesis has sought to show that the concept of diaspora, seen as a transnational social organisation, is a useful analytical tool for understanding the special relationships that refugees have with both the country of origin and the country of settlement.

In summary, this thesis describes the social organisation of Kurdish refugee communities in Finland and England. It argues that the Kurds in exile can be regarded as a diaspora. This concept depicts the transnationalism which characterises the social organisation of the Kurdish refugee communities. In many different ways refugees living in exile have a continuous relation to their societies of origin. Transnational social networks and associations based on this relation can be important resources for refugees. However, there is also reason to remember the importance of social structures and exclusionary policies in the country of settlement, since these continue to have a great impact on how the integration of refugees will happen. Consequently, a study of refugee communities needs to take into account the relationships with both the society of origin and the society of settlement.

APPENDIX

Interview Guideline

Date, time and place:

Persons present (male/female, age):

PERSONAL DATA. What part of Kurdistan? (Turkey/Iraq/Iran/other) Do you speak Kurdish? Other languages? How long have you been living in Britain/Finland? If married, to a Kurdish partner? Number of children?

HISTORY OF MIGRATION. Refugee status in Britain/Finland? Official status as convention refugees or exceptional leave to remain? When did you get your official status? Family-reunion? Do you have a passport/ what citizenship? How did you travel from Kurdistan, straight from Kurdistan or some other way (camps)? Living in any other countries?

COUNTRY OF DESTINATION. Did you plan to come to Britain/Finland? Connections to Britain/Finland? Did you have any relatives here when you arrived?

RECEPTION. Who did help you when you arrived in Britain/Finland? What kind of help did you get? Can you tell me what happened from the first day when you arrived here. Did you apply for asylum already at the border when you arrived or later? Refugee agency? What were your major problems when you arrived in the UK/Finland.

RESETTLEMENT. Help from social workers? Local councils? Community centres? How did you find your accommodation? Changed accommodation several times? Schools for the children and help you with that? Nursery? How did you learn to know the neighbourhood? What do you feel about the way you have been received by the authorities in this country? Have you received the help you needed when you arrived? How would you yourself have organised the reception of refugees in this country if you could decide about it?

KNOWLEDGE OF ENGLISH. Did you speak English when you arrived? Have you ever used an interpreter? How often? Who did pay for the interpretation? Have you received any language training, any lessons in English? When and for how long? Do you feel that you have a sufficient knowledge of English?

EMPLOYMENT. Are you at present working in Britain/Finland? When did you get this job. Is your employer English/Finnish? Are there any other Kurds at the

workplace? Have you ever been unemployed in Britain/Finland? For how long? Who helped you to get your job? Help from jobcentres/employment offices?

SOCIAL NETWORK. Do you have many English/Finnish people as friends? How did you meet them? For how long have known them? Do you have more Kurdish/(country of origin) or more English/Finnish friends. Where do you meet your friends? Do Kurdish men/women have a place to meet where you live? Do you visit Kurdish friend and relatives in other towns and countries?

MEDIA. Do you read British/Finnish newspapers? television? radio? Kurdish newspapers? radio? (country of origin) newspaper? radio?

WAY OF LIFE IN KURDISTAN. Family size? Rural/Urban? Education? Housing? Employment? Friends/social life? Were you a politically active person? If so, was this the reason for leaving Kurdistan?

CHANGES IN WAY OF LIFE. In what way has your life changed since you moved to England? If you compare the roles men and women have in Kurdistan and the way you live today, what are the differences? Role of Family? (if children:) Children's upbringing? Do you eat pork?

(if woman: is there any special problems that you have faced because being a refugee and a woman)

ORGANISATIONS. Are you active in Kurdish organisations? Which one? What about British organisations? Organisations based on country of origin? Are there any Kurdish organisations or community centres where you live? What kind of activities do the Kurdish organisations have? Do you meet your friends in these organisations? Are you active in politics?

OPINION ABOUT ORGANISATIONS. Are you pleased with the Kurdish organisations or are there something you would like to change? Should the Kurdish organisations in Britain/Finland be concerned about the situation in Kurdistan or should they try to work to improve the situation for people who are living here in Britain/Finland, or should they do both?

RELIGION. Do you visit mosques? How often? What is the role of religion in your life? Do you pray?

RACE RELATIONS. Have you experienced racism in Britain/Finland? Any kind of discrimination, by the authorities or otherwise? When was this and how did it happened? Examples? Are you afraid of racist attacks or assault in the streets? What do you think that people in general in England think about Kurds and Kurdistan? Do you experience that there has been any change in the relations with the British during the time you have been living here? Do you feel like a guest in Britain/Finland?

INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS. Where do you get your information about the situation in Kurdistan? Do you still keep in touch with your friends and relatives in Kurdistan? Letters, telephone? Difficult or easy to keep in touch? Does any of the

Kurdish organisations help you to keep in touch and get information about Kurdistan? Have you visited Kurdistan since you moved to England/Finland. (If later married in Kurdistan ask about this.)

IDENTIFICATION. How would you describe yourself? Do you today consider yourself to be Kurdish, (land of origin) or British? Do you today feel that you have more in common with Kurds from neighbouring countries than with non-Kurds from your own country. While you were living in (land of origin) what did you consider yourself to be and has this changed since you moved here? Did you participate in the 1991 Census? What did you answer on the ethnic question in the census/ethnic monitoring in general? Do you yourself use the terms "black" and "ethnic minority"?

MAINTENANCE OF CULTURE. Do you try to preserve your own culture or are you trying to become English. Do you celebrate Nawroz? How and where do you do that? Can the Kurdish organisations help you to maintain your own culture? Do they? Can England/Finland in any way help you to maintain your culture? Do they? Do you think English/Finnish people want you to become British/Finnish or do you think they want you to preserve your culture?

FUTURE PLANS. What are your plans for the future? Would you like to have English/Finnish citizenship? Would you move back to Kurdistan if it today would be possible? Under what circumstances would you do that? Can you give me some examples of on one hand good things, and on the other hand bad things in the British/Finnish society?

SECOND GENERATION (if children): Do your children speak Kurdish? Do you speak Kurdish at home? Are your children taught in the Kurdish language? Where do they receive this teaching? Do you want your children to become Kurdish or English/Finnish? Future plans for children? It is possible for you to imagine that your children would marry an Englishman/woman/Finn? Do they have English/Finnish friends? Kurdish friend? Where do they meet English/Finnish children? Kurdish children?

Is there anything I have left out? Or something you would like to add?

NOTES

Chapter 2 Theory and Literature Review

¹ Of course, there are also other definitions of “social organisations.” According to Weber (1968, 48), a definition of an organisation (*Verband*) is that there is a leader and organised action. An even more specific and functional definition is described by Parsons (1960), who emphasises an organisation’s attainment of a specific goal. Needless to say, this is not the way social organisation is understood here.

² One does not need much imagination in order to see similarities in “race-relations” in early post-war Britain and the present situation in Finland. However, as I argue in chapter five, this is not a valid comparison.

³ Miles (1989, 1993), in his discussions of Barker (1981), does not approve of the use of the concept new racism. Miles (1989) argues that the concept of new racism defines racism in too broad a way since it cannot identify what is distinctive about racism as an ideology, and that it thus confuses racism with other ideologies like sexism and nationalism. Furthermore, Miles (1993) points out that it is not clear what the supposed differences are between the vaguely defined new and old racisms. Despite this, Miles finds that “race” and nation can be “overlapping categories, each functioning to define the parameters of the other” (1993, 59), although he argues that a difference is that nationalism includes a political project which racism does not.

⁴ The origin of this widely used phrase is unknown, but it seems to have been first mentioned by Troyna and Williams (1986).

Chapter 3 Methods

¹ The symbolic interactionism of Herbert Blumer was largely a reaction to the dominance within sociology of structural functionalism, represented by Talcott Parsons, during the 1950s and 1960s. Therefore, it is perhaps not surprising that Blumer emphasises agency at the expense of structures.

² The developer and owner of the copyright of the computer program Atlas/ti is Thomas Muhr, Scientific Software Development, Berlin, Germany.

Chapter 4 Politics and Forced Migration in Kurdistan

¹ Estimating the size of the Kurdish population is difficult since there are very few reliable sources and official figures. Bruinessen (1992a) estimates that in 1975 the Kurds numbered 13.5 to 15 million persons. Sheikmous (1994) estimates that the total number of Kurds both in Kurdistan and in the diaspora in 1994 had risen to between 28 and 29 millions.

² Symptomatic of the cultural persecution of the Kurds in the Middle East is the fact that a large part of all literature published in Kurdish during this century has appeared either in the Soviet Union or, more recently, in the diaspora in Europe. The largely state-sponsored literary activities in Sweden deserve to be especially mentioned (Sheikmous 1989).

³ There are also Muslim political organisations, including the Islamic Movement in Iraqi Kurdistan. It is also clear that many Kurds in Turkey are active in Islamic organisations. However, as explained in chapter seven, I have not found any Muslim political organisations in the Kurdish diaspora. Their political importance in Kurdistan also seems to be marginal. Therefore they are not included in this short presentation of Kurdish politics.

⁴ With an exception for the Stalin-period, the Kurds in Soviet Union were not discriminated in the same way as the Kurds in the Middle East. "In the mid-1970s the Soviet Kurds were among the most prosperous citizens of the USSR" (Kendal 1993b, 205). It is possible that the relative prosperity and cultural freedom (although not political freedom) of the Kurds in the Soviet Union also have influenced the Kurds' opinions about socialism.

⁵ The Turkish sociologist Ismail Besikci has published several articles and books about the Kurdish question. Because of his publications he has repeatedly been sentenced to imprisonment and his books have been banned and confiscated by the Turkish state.

⁶ In the 1980s Abdul Rahman Ghassemlou worked as the General Secretary of the Iranian Kurdish Democratic Party. He was assassinated in Vienna on 13 July 1989 during negotiations with Iranian emissaries. It is commonly assumed that the Iranian government was behind the assassination.

⁷ The ethnic mosaic in contemporary Turkey is comprehensively described by Peter Andrews (1989).

⁸ The term genocide is of course a very strong accusation and it has a defined meaning in international law (cf. Andreopoulos 1994). The mass murder of Armenians is, however, commonly described as a genocide (e.g. Hovannisian 1994). During the conflict between Christian and Muslims at the end of the Ottoman Empire both Armenians and Muslims were killed, and some Kurds actively participated in the

genocide of the Armenians. According to Chaliand (1994), the Kurdish participation in the conflict was largely made in the name of Muslim solidarity in order to re-create the Ottoman Empire.

⁹ Amnesty International has published numerous reports on the human rights situation in Turkey, Iraq and Iran. For practical reasons only the most important reports are found in the list of references. A complete list of the reports on the subject can easily be obtained from Amnesty International in London.

¹⁰ According to McDowall (1992), this is the number of Alevis in the usual Kurdish definition of Alevis. Some Turkish definitions, however, include at least eighteen million people in several different countries.

¹¹ According to recent publications, there is good reason to believe that the Iraqi *Anfal* campaign fulfils the legal definition of a genocide. Bruinessen (1994) points out that the killings of civilians during the chemical war against the Kurds in Iraq during 1987-1988 were massive, indiscriminate and excessively brutal. According to him, the question of whether these massacres should be called genocide or not goes back to the irrelevant issue of whether the massacres fulfil the legal definition of intent. Bruinessen's article was written before the introduction of the "safe haven" in Northern Iraq and before the organisation Human Rights Watch had the opportunity to make a thorough investigation of the *Anfal* campaign. In a case study of the *destruction* of the village Koreme the organisation is still cautious, and while declaring that the report does not prove genocide, it states: "Research increasingly leads to the conclusion that the Iraqi government's Anfal campaign amounted to the crime of genocide within the meaning of the genocide convention" and "certainly the campaign was a crime against humanity within the meaning of customary international law" (Human Rights Watch 1993a, 2). In another report Human Rights Watch clearly calls the *Anfal* campaign a genocide and declares that the Kurds "were systematically put to death in large numbers on the orders of the central government" (Human Rights Watch 1993b, xiv). The intent of the Iraqi government is also described in the eighteen tons of official documents on the *Anfal* Campaign that were seized by the Kurds and later shipped to the USA (Human Rights Watch 1994).

¹² However, in February 1997 there were unconfirmed reports on the internet indicating that the two branches were reunited.

¹³ This was the procedure in Turkey during the time when the refugees in this study left Turkey. According to some reports (e.g. Amnesty International 1994b) Turkey may in future determine the status of all refugees without involvement by UNHCR, which of course would be the normal procedure. Amnesty International (1994b) is concerned about the fact that Turkey still seems to wish to keep the geographical limitation of the Refugee Convention. Taking into account the Turkish policy towards its own Kurdish minority, this might be disastrous for Kurdish refugees from Iran and Iraq.

Chapter 5 The Countries of Reception

¹ During the period of the cold war another issue which partly explains the small numbers of asylum seekers was the sensitive political relations between Finland and the Soviet Union. For example, even if a Soviet citizen did manage to cross the heavily guarded border to Finland, it was possible at least until the 1970s, that he or she would be returned immediately by the Finnish authorities.

² The Ministry of Social and Health Affairs has information about the exact number of refugees who have arrived in Finland. Information about migration and citizenship is, however, collected by the Registration Offices. According to Finnish law it is not possible to compare statistics from these different sources on an individual level. Therefore the exact number of refugees living in Finland cannot be ascertained.

³ The differences between Britain and the "Nordic welfare states" in the case of refugee reception are also described by Ann-Belinda Steen (1992) in her study of Tamil refugees in Denmark and England.

⁴ The description of the resettlement policies in Finland is based partly on my own experiences working with the resettlement of refugees during 1992 and 1993, as well as being influenced by the fieldwork for my MA thesis (Wahlbeck 1992).

⁵ The estimation of the number of Kurds living in Finland is based on my own fieldwork and a variety of other sources. According to official statistics, there were 1,147 persons living in Finland at 31 December 1994 whose mother tongue was Kurdish (Korkiasaari 1995). However, not all persons who define themselves as Kurds are speaking Kurdish as their first language. Furthermore, it is not clear how reliable these statistics are. For example, have all newly arrived refugees really understood that in Finland they can declare Kurdish as their first language? According to figures from the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs published in *Pakolaisinfo* and *Monitori*, the total number resettled in the municipalities during the period 1990-1994 from either Iran, Iraq or Turkey was 2,112 persons (of which only 148 were from Turkey). It can be assumed that a large number, but not all, of these persons are Kurds. Mäkelä (1993) estimates in her MA-thesis that there were only 500 Kurdish refugees living in Finland by the beginning of the year 1992. However, she has only taken into account those Kurds from Iran and Iraq who have been officially resettled in municipalities. The study of refugees in Finland by Ekholm (1995) uses data from most Finnish municipalities, a source which I am grateful to have been allowed to study. Although the material has its limitations, it can be estimated that almost 800 Kurdish refugees from Iran and Iraq were received in the municipalities by the autumn of 1993. In addition to Ekholm's numbers, according to *Monitori* there were about 200 Iranian and 250 Iraqi refugees resettled in the municipalities during the last quarter of 1993 and the whole year 1994. It can be assumed that most of these persons were Kurds. In addition to all these numbers one has to take into account Kurdish refugees who arrived in Finland before the 1990s as well as all those Kurds who are living in Finland but who

officially are not regarded as refugees. Finally, the number of Kurds from Turkey is very difficult to estimate because this group includes persons with a wide variety of legal statuses. According to the Kurdish Information Centre in Helsinki, the total number of Kurds from Turkey living in Finland is about 500 persons (interview made 17 August 1994). Therefore, my estimation is that at the end of 1994 there were 300-550 Kurds from Turkey, 550-800 Kurds from Iraq and 400-650 Iranian Kurds living permanently in Finland.

⁶ It should be noted, however, that only a small proportion of the Turkish citizens living in Finland between 1990 and 1992 officially were refugees.

⁷ In the years 1990-1992 there were 376 marriages between Finnish female citizens and Turkish male citizens, closely followed by 352 marriages with Moroccan males. Finnish men, on the other hand, seem to prefer women from the former Soviet Union, since 1,493 such couples were married between 1990 and 1992 (Nieminen 1994).

⁸ Usually a person with exceptional leave to remain may be granted indefinite leave to remain only after seven years of residence, and then the person often has to wait for twelve months before an application for registration can be considered.

⁹ In recent years several Kurdish asylum seekers have organised hunger strikes and made suicide attempts in the detention centres. On 5 October 1989 two Kurds who were in detention set fire to their room after hearing that they would be sent back to Turkey. One of the men, Siho Iyiguven, subsequently died in hospital while the other suffered severe burns (Collinson 1990; Crisp 1989).

Chapter 6 The Refugee Experience

¹ It is surprising to hear, for example, that in Finland some persons from Turkey, with residence permits on humanitarian grounds, were forced to visit the Turkish Embassy to renew their passports. In Britain I was told that the Home Office has allegedly checked personal details of asylum seekers through contacts with Turkish organisations and authorities. Several interviewees told me stories about hostile and non-professional interpreters. In Britain I heard about a case where the Turkish interpreter, during an interview at the Home Office, did not want to interpret the statement that democracy does not exist in Turkey "since Turkey is a democratic country." Similar cases of non-professional and hostile interpreters are described by Reilly (1991) and Collinson (1990). According to the Refugee Council (1996), some Kurdish asylum seekers in Britain have even been interviewed with an interpreter from the Turkish Embassy.

² The fact that refugees can become an asset even in cases where it would not be expected, is demonstrated for example by Van Hear (1995) in his study of the involuntary mass migration of Palestinians to Jordan in the wake of the Gulf crisis. Contrary to initial expectations, this massive migration seems to have contributed to the economic recovery in Jordan.

³ This interview is translated from the Finnish language which uses the same word, *hän*, for the terms she and he.

⁴ The strong wish to return home to Kurdistan as soon as possible is also found by Richard Black (1995) in his study of newly arrived Kurdish refugees from Iraq living in Greece.

⁵ Totally equal integration of immigrants in the labour market was, however, not the case even when there were jobs available in Finland. Jaakkola (1991) has shown that there was already an ethnic hierarchy and segmentation among foreigners in the labour market at the end of the 1980s. However, Jaakkola's study was carried out before the serious economic recession which hit Finland in the 1990s. During this research the employment situation among refugees was quite different compared to the situation in the 1980s.

⁶ The tragic incident in the Finnish town of Turku on the night of 29 January 1993 also contributed to the fear of racist attacks. Receb Karagöz, a Kurd from Turkey, spent the night out with his Turkish friend. They became involved in a fight with a group of Finnish youths outside a restaurant. Receb's friend managed to escape, but Receb Karagöz was stabbed and he died some days later in hospital. A seventeen year old Finnish boy was arrested by the police after the incident. It was commonly assumed that he had a racist motive, although this was never proven. This tragedy is well known among the Kurds in Finland.

Chapter 7 The Kurdish Refugee Community

¹ Often the Finnish Red Cross programme with “friend families” for refugees is seen to be unsuccessful since many friendships do not appear to last very long. However, I would argue that these friendships are a very valuable resource for the refugees and that these relations serve as an important connection to Finnish society. Taking into account the fact that these friendships are created in a totally artificial way, any of them that stands the test of time should be regarded as a success.

² Alitolppa-Niitamo (1994) describes similar research findings in her study of Somali refugees in Finland. Her informants regarded unemployment among the refugees and negative attitudes among the Finns as significant factors which reduced the personal contacts between the two groups. Because of problems like these, the good language skills which refugees acquired during the language courses might decline over time (Valtonen 1996).

³ In defence of the Finnish policy, it has to be mentioned that while many countries have only chosen refugees for resettlement who have been suitable for the their labour market, the Finnish selection has largely been based on humanitarian criteria. In fact, the Finnish quota has included many disabled and elderly persons whom UNHCR has found it difficult to resettle elsewhere.

⁴ A couple of the interviewees even felt that it was not possible to do anything significant for the Kurdish cause in the diaspora. There are also examples of persons who have returned to Kurdistan in order to join the armed struggle. *Kurdistan Report* (no. 13, no. 19) has saluted three PKK guerrillas who lived in London for several years in the 1980s and who died in the fights in northern Kurdistan.

⁵ According to some informants, this has to some extent changed in the 1980s and 1990s. Because of the influence from Iran, religious issues have to an increasing extent become political issues, and there is now an Islamic party in Kurdistan in Iraq.

⁶ Although this person implies that the information centre in Helsinki is an organisation for PKK supporters this is not the official policy of the organisation.

⁷ This is similar to the pattern of political activism found by Joly (1996) in her study of Chilean refugees.

⁸ In my own opinion this support from small left-wing groups is rather unhelpful since firstly, many of these organisations seem to use Kurdish demonstrations as mainly a way of spreading their own political message and literature. Secondly, support from these small marginal political groups can also marginalise the refugees and the whole Kurdish struggle from mainstream politics in Britain.

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