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ABSTRACT

This article discusses the future relevance of the concept of diaspora in the case of the Kurdish communities in Europe. The article presents the analytical value of the concept of diaspora and outlines how it has been used to study minority communities with a migration history that retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland. Relying on a large body of previous studies on the Kurdish diaspora, the article outlines three key developments of relevance for the Kurdish communities : the development of migration patterns over time, the collective identity of later generations, and the changing meaning of the homeland. These three interrelated developments give some indications as to what extent the communities also in the future will display diasporic features. A comparison with classic cases of diasporas provides some additional insight into the future relevance of the concept of diaspora.

KEYWORDS: collective identity, community formation, diaspora, migration, transnationalism

RÉSUMÉ

Cet article aborde la pertinence future du concept de diaspora dans le contexte des communautés kurdes en Europe. Il présente la valeur analytique de ce concept et décrit comment il a été utilisé pour étudier les communautés minoritaires ayant une histoire migratoire et conservant une mémoire collective, une vision ou un mythe de leur terre d'origine. En s'appuyant sur un large ensemble d'études antérieures sur la diaspora kurde, cet article met en avant trois évolutions clés pour les communautés kurdes : l'évolution des schémas migratoires au fil du temps, l'identité collective des générations suivantes, et la signification changeante du pays d'origine. Ces trois développements interconnectés permettent d'évaluer dans quelle mesure ces communautés manifesteront à l'avenir des caractéristiques diasporiques. Une comparaison avec des exemples classiques de diasporas apporte des éclairages supplémentaires sur la pertinence future du concept de diaspora.

MOTS CLÉS : identité collective, formation de communauté, diaspora, migration, transnationalisme

This article will employ a temporal perspective on the Kurdish communities in Europe. These communities have been described as a diaspora since the 1990s. In this paper I will discuss the analytical value of the concept of diaspora in the case of the Kurds. The aim is to arrive at a conclusion about the possible future relevance of the concept. In the social sciences, the concept of diaspora has been used to portray how minority communities with a migration history retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original “homeland”. Through various transnational connections the communities continue to relate to the homeland and are collectively “committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland”, as outlined in the widely cited definition of diasporas by the political scientist William Safran (1991, 83–84). Thus, diasporas have been defined as expatriate communities that are characterised by their specific relation to a real or envisioned homeland. This specific relation to a homeland provides a source of collective identity and enhances political mobilisation of the community. The Jews are historically seen as the exemplary community of a diaspora, and the original Greek translation of the Bible uses the term diaspora to refer to dispersed Jews. Furthermore, the notion of an African diaspora has been well established in literature at least since the 19th century. In more recent years, the concept of diaspora has been extended to cover numerous other groups (cf. Anteby-Yemini, Berthomière & Sheffer 2005; Dufoix 2008; Cohen 2022).

In the field of Migration Studies, the concept of diaspora has recently been widely used in connection with the *transnationalism* of contemporary migrant communities. Transnationalism describes the social, economic and political ties that migrants uphold between countries of origin and settlement (Bauböck & Faist 2010). However, although transnationalism is an obvious feature of the first generation of migrants, it is not clear how subsequent generations will relate to the country of origin of their ancestors. Clearly, transnational ties may fade over time and a diaspora needs to rely on other connections to a “homeland”.

Clearly, not all communities with a migration history will retain a strong collective memory, vision, or myth about their original “homeland” and it is not obvious to what extent subsequent generations will be committed to the maintenance or restoration of the homeland of their ancestors. Thus, it has been suggested that time needs to pass in order to assess whether a minority community forms a diaspora, or whether the community follows another integration or assimilation trajectory. The importance of time as a criterion for a diaspora was pointed out already by Richard Marienstras (1989, 125) and Alain Médam (1993) and has been stressed also in later overviews of the concept (e.g., Cohen

2022). This paper will discuss what research results indicate concerning possible future trajectories of the Kurdish diaspora. Most research on the Kurdish diaspora has been conducted in Europe, which hosts the largest Kurdish diaspora communities, and therefore this article will focus on developments in European countries.

The Kurds as a diaspora

Today, the Kurdish communities outside of Kurdistan are commonly referred to as diasporas. This is, however, a very recent development. My own study of Kurdish communities in the UK and in Finland was one of the first studies that endeavoured to apply the concept of diaspora in the case of Kurdish refugees (Wahlbeck 1997). In the late 1990s, I still had to defend the use of the concept in the case of the Kurds and many commentators argued that the Kurds were not a “true diaspora”. My critics questioned whether the Kurdish communities in exile were sufficiently unitary, while some argued that the lack of agreement on a Kurdish state made the existence of a Kurdish “homeland” untenable. Many people also wanted to question whether there actually was one and not several different Kurdish diasporas.

In my own research, I have emphasised that the term diaspora has to be understood as an ideal type, i.e. a term used for analytical purposes (Wahlbeck 2002). The question researchers need to answer is not whether this or that group is a true or false diaspora, but if the concept of diaspora is able to highlight the specific features of a community that we want to analyse. I have argued that already the first generation of Kurdish refugees in Europe clearly display features that are characteristic of a diaspora (Wahlbeck 1997, 1999, 2002). My argument was that the Kurds in Europe fulfilled all the typical characteristics of a diaspora outlined in the classic definitions of the term, for example the widely used definition by Safran (1991). The Kurdish refugees I studied displayed various transnational ties between the countries of settlement and origin and were highly influenced by a political mobilisation supporting the Kurdish struggle in Kurdistan. As the sociologist Rogers Brubaker points out, rather than speak of a diaspora “as an entity, a bounded group, an ethnodemographic or ethnocultural fact, it may be more fruitful, and certainly more precise, to speak of diasporic stances, projects, claims, idioms, practices, and so on” (Brubaker 2005, 13). The point of this approach to the concept of diaspora is that it helps the researcher to use the concept as an analytical tool to describe the on-going processes of ethnic and political mobilisation of a group and how it is related to ideas of a homeland. Thus, the key defining features are the ethnic and political

mobilisation of the Kurdish communities in Europe as well as their relation to and identification with Kurdistan.

Consequently, I argue that the concept of diaspora captures important sociological relationships of refugees and migrants, including transnational social networks. From a sociological point of view, it provides a framework for understanding immigrant integration processes, taking into account simultaneous social inclusion and exclusion in both the countries of origin and settlement. My own study on the Kurds was actually initially aimed to be a critique of a simplistic understanding of the concept of integration in the European immigrant integration discourse of the 1990s (Wahlbeck 1999). Thus, a diaspora is characterised by both its settlement in a host society and its simultaneous relation to societies of origin, which are referred to as “the homeland”.

In other words, the concept of diaspora describes collective identities significantly formed by a specific relationship to a homeland. Yet, it is the homeland as an idea that is central for the collective identity, not the homeland in a concrete sense (Alinia et al. 2014, 54). The homeland has to be seen as a symbol rather than as a place to literally return back to. This symbolic relation to a homeland is actually a central feature of the diasporic identity of many classic diaspora groups, as exemplified by the Jewish diaspora, and even more so, the African diaspora. The idea of a homeland also demarcates the limits of the use of the concept of diaspora. If a diaspora is defined by the relationship to the homeland, the absence of this relationship logically means that the group in question is not a diaspora and has to be described as something else (for example, an ethnic minority, a migrant group, but not a diaspora). Therefore, it can be argued, that for a diaspora, the centrality of the idea of a homeland is not the existence of a homeland, but *the lack* of a homeland, since you do not live in the place that your regard as your original homeland. This lack of it, is what gives the concept of a homeland its symbolic power, because home and homeland cannot be taken for granted and is the object of political struggles.

Since the 1990s, the Kurdish communities in Europe have been the object of many studies that outline how the communities are highly politicised in terms of homeland politics. This political mobilisation constitutes a key aspect of the Kurdish diaspora, as outlined in many previous studies on the Kurdish diaspora in Europe (Bruinessen 1998; Wahlbeck 1999; Ammann 2001; Alinia 2004; Emanuelsson 2005; Khayati 2008; Ayata 2008; Soguk 2008; Demir 2022). The homeland orientation impacts Kurdish communities in several ways. This political activity both reinforces Kurdish identity and provides an opportunity for Kurds to work together to support political goals both in Kurdistan and in the diaspora (Wahlbeck 1999).

In short, the concept of diaspora is presently widely used to describe the Kurds, and the usefulness of the concept of diaspora is obvious. The literature on the Kurdish diaspora has proliferated over the last 20 years, and the concept of diaspora is broadly used to describe the Kurdish communities in Europe and elsewhere (Hassanpour & Mojab 2004; Başer, Emanuelsson & Toivanen 2015; Wahlbeck 2019; Ata 2023). Hardly anyone would any longer question the use of the concept of diaspora in the case of the Kurds. Yet, there are questions that remain about the future of the collective diasporic identity and the transnational relations among the Kurds in Europe. For example, the broad overview of global diasporas provided by Robin Cohen suggests that the Kurds and some other refugee populations should be seen as “incipient diasporas” suggesting that there is some uncertainty concerning their future status (Cohen 2022, 123–141).

Thus, although the Kurds in Europe presently display a diasporic consciousness and the concept of diaspora is useful today, the question is whether this will be the case also in the future. Over time, the first generation of migrants is replaced by later generations and the future collective identity may change. Likewise, the transnational relations between countries of settlement and countries of origin may be hard to sustain among later generations. What does research on the Kurds have to say about this? Actually, there are already studies that have been able to provide some indication of plausible future developments. In the following, I will outline three key developments: the development of migration patterns over time, the collective identity of later generations, and the changing meaning of the homeland. These are three key developments that have been in the focus of recent research. These developments give an indication as to what extent the Kurdish communities in Europe also will display diasporic features in the future, or whether the communities will follow another assimilation or integration pattern in the countries of settlement.

New migration patterns

A specific feature of the Kurdish diaspora in Europe is that it has been formed by successive arrivals of migrants from Kurdistan. Unlike many other diasporas, there has not been one single traumatic event or one major exodus from the homeland that defines the diasporic experience. In the case of the Kurds in Europe, there has been a continuous arrival of migrants and refugees since the late 1950s (Wahlbeck 2019, 414–415). There is much to suggest that this continuous migration over a period of almost 70 years has kept the relation to the homeland topical and vital among the Kurdish communities.

The labour migration from Turkey clearly accounts for the largest migration flows to Europe, but the various humanitarian and political crises and wars in Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria have led to successive waves of refugees arriving in Europe. Kurdish labour migrants from Turkey began arriving in Western Europe in the late 1950s and in larger numbers in the 1960s. Germany received the largest number of these migrants, but France, the Netherlands, and several other Western European countries also actively recruited workers from Turkey. The active recruitment of migrant labour came to an end in all European countries in the early 1970s, but this did not bring an end to the migration of Kurds to Europe. In addition to family reunions and student arrivals, an increasing number of Kurdish refugees and asylum seekers arrived in Europe (Wahlbeck 2007, 2019). The first Kurdish refugees may have arrived in Europe already in the 1950s, but since the 1980s the numbers have been large. For example, in the late 1990s, a growing number of refugees from Iraq resulted in the proportion of Kurds from Iraq increasing in the Kurdish communities in Europe (Wahlbeck 2007). Iraqi citizens, including Kurds, continue to form one of the largest nationality groups among asylum seekers in Europe in the 2000s. The arrival of Kurdish refugees from Iran has a long history since the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979. The civil wars and violent conflicts in Iraq and Syria in the 2000s have also had various consequences for the migration patterns of Kurds. Furthermore, recent statistics from the European Commission also show a sharp increase in the number of asylum seekers from Turkey in the early 2020s; citizens from Turkey are in the fourth place among first-time asylum seekers in the EU in 2022 (Eurostat 2024).

Consequently, there has been a continuous arrival of Kurdish migrants and refugees in Europe distributed over a relatively long period of time. The political refugees from all parts of Kurdistan have had a great social, cultural and political impact on the Kurdish communities in Europe (Wahlbeck 2019). The Kurdish refugees in Europe largely constitute what Danièle Joly (2002) has called “Odyssean refugees”, who nurture a collective project in the land of origin and took it with them in the land of exile. The Kurdish identity has become a more explicit and politicised identity in Europe than it originally was among the early Turkish labour migrants of the 1960s and 1970s. Many studies on the early labour migration from Turkey point out that few migrants from Turkey actively identified as Kurds in the 1960s and 1970s (e.g., Busby 1995; Falk 1998). However, in more recent years there was an ethnic and political mobilisation of a Kurdish identity because of political developments in Turkey and the Middle East. As a result of the Kurdish conflict in Turkey that escalated after the late 1970s, many Kurds in Europe thought that they had to identify either as Turkish or Kurdish (Bruinessen 1998, 2000; Başer 2015). Likewise, the various political

developments in Iran, Iraq and Syria are central to understanding the political mobilisation of the Kurdish communities that originate in these countries.

It is the above-mentioned political mobilisation of the Kurdish community that has enabled the formation of a community that fulfils the traditional political, social and cultural characteristics of a diaspora group (Wahlbeck 2002). The continuous arrival of new migrants and refugees is a key factor explaining the existence of a political mobilisation of the Kurdish diaspora. The multiple layers of migration occurring over an extended period of time also has consequences for the integration processes of migrants. Newly arrived migrants have been able to get support and advice from earlier arrived Kurds and their well-established organisations, thus facilitating the processes of economic and social integration into the countries of settlement.

Do we know how the migration patterns will develop in the future? Clearly, there is no indication that migration from Kurdistan to Europe would completely stop in the near future. The various political crises and the Kurdish national issue do not show any indication of being solved rapidly. Quite to the contrary, the number of asylum seekers has recently increased from Turkey. Much suggests that there will be new refugees arriving in Europe, at least in the near future, and this will probably support a continuous political mobilisation of the Kurdish diaspora. Furthermore, as I have outlined elsewhere (Wahlbeck 2019, 417–418), there is reason to note an increased globalisation of the migration patterns of the Kurds. Today, Kurds can be found in countries all over the world. Although Western European countries hosts the largest communities, the proportion of Kurds living in other parts of the diaspora has increased in the 2000s (Wahlbeck 2019). The patterns of political mobilisation of the diaspora in countries outside of Europe seem to follow similar patterns as in Europe (e.g., Yilmaz & Demir 2023). Thus, the Kurdish diaspora is today a global diaspora with a relatively long and diverse migration history.

New Kurdish generations

Because of the long migration history of the Kurdish communities in Europe we presently have not only a first generation of Kurds living in Europe, but a second, third and soon also a fourth generation. As already noted, the transfer of an identity and diasporic consciousness into subsequent generations is a key feature of a diaspora. A key question for the future of the Kurdish diaspora is what type of collective identities and diasporic consciousness subsequent generations will display.

The sociologist Karl Mannheim (1952, first published in 1923) defined generations as social groups sharing a common historical experience during the formative years of the generation. This explains why different generations tend to think and act in ways that are distinct from each other. In this Mannheimian sense, new generational experiences become central symbols of the generation and will influence the consciousness of the members of the group in future years. For example, the political violence in Turkey in the late 1970s and the military coup in Turkey in 1980 has defined the political identity of Kurdish refugees from Turkey in the 1970s and 1980s (Zettervall 2013), the Anfal campaigns against the Kurds, for example the massacre in the town of Halabja in 1988, constitute collective memories for Kurdish refugees from Iraq (Toivanen & Başer 2019), and the revolution in Iran in 1979 is a decisive moment for the Kurdish generation that experienced it.

What does research have to say about later generations in the Kurdish diaspora? Most studies on the Kurds in Europe, including my own studies in the 1990s, relate to newly arrived refugees and the first generation. However, there is a growing research interest in later Kurdish generations in Europe, and this new research provides plenty of information about the social identities and identifications of later generations (e.g., Eliassi 2013; Alinia & Eliassi 2014; Toivanen 2014, 2021). In general, this research indicates that there are new generational experiences among later generations that become symbols of Kurdistan and of Kurdishness. The meaning of Kurdistan as a homeland changes, but Kurdistan still remains a powerful symbol that is central for the identity of later generations. Likewise, transnational networks and connections exist, but are different than among the first generation. Thus, the interpretation of experiences and memories may differ significantly among Kurdish generations (Alinia & Eliassi 2014; Başer, & Toivanen 2024).

The research on later generations clearly indicates that subsequent generations of Kurds in Europe tend to continue to identify as Kurds and display a diasporic relationship to Kurdistan. However, the identity and patterns of identification are still in significant respects different when compared to the first generation. Among later generations, Kurdish identity can be understood in relation to broader processes of identity politics among migrant populations (Alinia & Eliassi 2014). Kurdish identity among young Kurds often bridges previous distinctions among Kurds from Iran, Iraq, Syria and Turkey. This new pan-Kurdish identity among young generations in Europe is enhanced by everyday social contacts in the diaspora among Kurds with a background in various parts of Kurdistan (Eliassi 2013; Schött 2021; Toivanen 2014, 2021). For example, Barzoo Eliassi (2013, 46–47) describes how later generations in Sweden may refer

to themselves as “Kurdistanis”, to emphasise that they are not Kurds from Iran, Iraq or Turkey. Likewise, political activities may unite the later generations. For example, the developments in the Kurdish areas of Syria in the 2010s came to play a central role for many people of Kurdish ancestry in Europe. The significant events involved the de facto autonomy of the Kurdish area of Rojava and its fight against the Islamic State and the Turkish military. These developments mobilised broad political support among the Kurdish diaspora, especially among young Kurds in Europe (Schøtt 2021; Toivanen 2021). The struggle became a new generational experience for young people of Kurdish ancestry in Europe, which is a group that Mari Toivanen (2021) in her study of the case of France aptly has described as “the Kobane generation”.

Furthermore, Kurdish migrants have displayed relatively high rates of naturalisation. As a persecuted minority, Kurdish migrants often do not have a strong emotional bond to their original state citizenship and may therefore show a high tendency to apply for the citizenship of the country of settlement (e.g., Wahlbeck 1999, 111). It is highly likely that the Kurdish diaspora of today predominantly consists of citizens of European countries. Later generations of the Kurds also strongly identify with the societies where they live. For example, surveys among youth with Kurdish background in Germany indicated a strong identification as Kurds *and* as citizens of Germany already in the 1990s (Schmidt 2000). Among later generations, multiple and hyphenated identities as German-Kurds are common. Likewise, a recent German survey of migrants originating from Turkey and their descendants showed hybrid identities. Interestingly, the Kurdish participants in the survey displayed a stronger identification with German society than the Turkish participants (Demmrich & Arakin 2020). What seems to be emerging is a European Kurdish identity, where hyphenated identities, as for example German-Kurds or Swedish-Kurds become increasingly important.

Thus, the Kurdish diaspora can no longer be described as a migrant community, since permanent settlement predominantly characterises the Kurdish diaspora. Although the idea or myth of return persists, the fact is that the possibility and likelihood of return diminishes over time. There is a need for a recognition of the Kurdish diaspora communities in their own right, as permanently settled communities, and not only as displaced people or as refugees. This aspect of the Kurds as a permanent community in Europe indicates that the concept of diaspora is the correct term also in the case of later generations, since a diaspora has been defined as a “minority community” settled in a “host society” (Safran 1991, 83).

New symbolic roles of the homeland

The discussion above indicates that there is reason to consider more closely the key defining characteristic of a diaspora, the specific relationship to a “homeland”. What about the centrality of the homeland for the collective identity of the Kurds in Europe in the future? What is the role of the old homeland, if any, among later generations? Clearly, whether Kurdistan is a homeland you personally have left, or if it is a mythical ancestral country where you never have lived, makes of difference for the type of “diasporic consciousness” you have. For example, the previous centrality of the Kurdish political parties in Kurdistan and the political preoccupations of the first generation of Kurdish refugees, have to give way to new forms of political and cultural identities among the new generations (e.g., Alinia & Eliassi 2014). Furthermore, as mentioned above, the likelihood of any form of “return” diminishes over time.

The generational question among migrants is, of course, not a unique Kurdish question. Among immigration scholars, the generational aspect has always been a central research question, for example widely studied in connection with the immigration to the USA. These studies suggest that the first generation is always characterised by a myth of return, which the next generation wishes to overcome and redefine. Children, of course, always strive to do things differently than their parents. However, as migration scholars, it is also useful to remind ourselves of the so-called “third generation theory” outlined by the American immigration historian Marcus Hansen already in the 1930s. Hansen (1938) argued that what the second generation tries to forget about its ancestral roots, subsequent generations desperately try to recover and preserve. The recovery and preservation of ancestral roots are central to understanding any diasporic experience. This is connected to the largely *symbolic* importance of the homeland, since you cannot recover or preserve the actual historic place and personal memories of your ancestors, what remains to recover and preserve is the symbolic meaning of the homeland.

A recovery and preservation of the symbolic homeland is today easier than in the 1930s, because of new information and communication technologies. Thus, the Kurdish diasporas of today can largely be considered “digital diasporas”. Information and communication technology, often run by Kurds in the diaspora, has been central both for the mobilisation of a Kurdish nationalist movement and in the creation of a diasporic Kurdish identity (Sheyholislami 2011; Keles 2015; Mahmud 2016; Aghapouri 2020). This utilisation of new technology contributes to the creation of “imagined communities”. To follow Benedict Anderson’s (1983) famous theory on nation building, “print capitalism” is central for

the creation of a national identity and a sense of community. This community is “imagined” because we do not know all members of the community personally, but there is still a strong social bond among the members of the community. How is this type of community created? As indicated already by Anderson (1983), an imagined community is upheld with shared symbols. In this way, also the homeland of a diaspora becomes imagined symbolically. As an imagined place, the homeland has to be understood as having symbolic features rather than as an actual physical place. This is the development we can find among new generations of Kurds in the diaspora, where the homeland primarily serves as a strong symbol, rather than a place to return to. Thus, the new Kurdish generations in Europe form new ways of defining a Kurdish identity in the diaspora and in these processes the role of social media has been central. For example, social media played a key role for the young Kurds in Europe supporting the Kurds in Syria in the 2010s (Schøtt 2021; Toivanen 2022; Başer & Toivanen 2024).

Thus, in short, the meaning of the homeland Kurdistan, as it was experienced by the first generation of migrants, may be lost in history and cannot be recovered. However, there are new symbols and new understandings of the Kurdish homeland that emerge and develop in the diaspora. In other words, the struggle for a Kurdish homeland continues in new ways. In Europe of today, there are new political struggles for Kurdish recognition and new political symbols, which unite and define new generations of Kurds. The Kurdish identity survives in the diaspora, but the identity of later generations is not the same identity as it was in the first generation. This is connected to the debate about the need to see diaspora as a deterritorial identity rather than as a specific place, which is an aspect of the Kurdish diaspora stressed by for example Minoo Alinia (2004). Thus, there is reason to see the new Kurdish identity formations in Europe as largely deterritorialised identities, and not as connected to a return to a land of the ancestors.

The deterritorial aspect of diasporic identities also corresponds to the political and social realities of many of the classic diaspora groups (cf. Cohen 2022). For example, the classic examples of the Jewish and African diasporas comprise communities and collective identities that have existed for a long time despite the absence of realistic options for return and without the existence of a homeland as a territorial and political reality. In the case of the Jews, integration into host societies was generally the political option preferred among the European Jewish communities until the 19th century. The identification as an “extra-territorial nation” (Marienstrass 1989) was strong also without a homeland. Until this day, the rejection of a territorialisation of Jewish identity remains strong

among many Jews (Cohen 2022, 23–39, 142–151). It was only after the growing support for the political movement of Zionism, the experiences of pogroms and the Holocaust (the *Shoah*), and the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948, that a “return to a homeland” became an option for the Jewish diaspora. However, for the Palestinians, this establishment of the state of Israel became the *Nakba*, the catastrophe that led to large numbers of refugees and the emergence of a new Palestinian diaspora (e.g., Dufoix 2008, 96–97). Thus, the Palestinians can be seen as a political diaspora (Bruneau 1995, 2010) that strives towards a return to homeland in the form of a Palestinian state. In the case of the African diaspora, a back-to-Africa political movement emerged in the USA in the 19th century and did have some support among black nationalists in Jamaica in the 20th century. For example, the Jamaican political activist and black nationalist Marcus Garvey and members of the Rastafari movement represent this political sentiment. Yet, this did not materialise itself in any substantial migration to Africa, but was instead expressed as a deterritorialised cultural diaspora (Cohen 2022, 45–47, 110–112). These various historical examples show that various aspects of deterritorialisation does not diminish the strength of a diasporic identity. The idea of a homeland may take many forms, may change over time, and does not depend on the existence of a state. A diaspora does not even depend on a homeland in the form of a geographical territory. Quite to the contrary, as mentioned previously in this article, it is the lack of a homeland and the struggle for a homeland that gives the concept of diaspora its meaning.

Conclusion

Research on other diasporas suggest that the relationship to the homeland may change over time. This article has tried to outline how the Kurdish diaspora may develop in the future in the light of recent research on the Kurds in Europe. I have outlined three interrelated aspects of the Kurdish diaspora : the migration patterns, the new generations and the changing meaning of the homeland. These aspects together provide an indication that the Kurdish communities have a future as a diaspora defined by its relation to the homeland of Kurdistan. As outlined above, the fact that politically active refugees continuously arrive in Europe has significantly politicised the Kurdish diaspora. The continuous migration between various parts of Kurdistan and the diaspora has established long-lasting social, political, economic and cultural ties between Kurdistan and the Kurdish diaspora. Furthermore, a diasporic identity is not limited to the first-generation. Several studies among the new generations growing up in Europe indicate that they uphold a strong Kurdish identity. The Kurdish communities have evolved into well-established and recognised ethnic minorities in many European countries. Clearly, a

diasporic identity is not a hindrance to integration into host society and does not preclude an identification with the host country. Studies of the Kurdish diaspora suggest that a strong community among Kurds is also combined with integration into the new country of settlement. The Kurds of Europe can no longer be regarded a migrant community, they need to be understood as a settled minority community. The diaspora as a settled minority community is a social formation that to some extent is autonomous from both the host and the origin societies (Bruneau 2010, 37). Still, the Kurdish diaspora is held together by a strong identity built around a conception of Kurdistan as the original homeland, either as a geographical region or in a symbolic sense. The ethnic and political mobilisation of the Kurdish communities in Europe is kept topical and vital by various types of support of Kurdistan. This specific relation to a homeland suggests that Kurds can be defined as a diaspora according to the classic definitions of the concept (e.g., Safran 1991; Cohen 2022). Thus, the concept of diaspora remains a key analytical concept that can describe the Kurds in Europe, and much suggests that a typical diasporic consciousness may be even more evident in the future than it was among the first generation of Kurds in Europe.

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