Chapter 31

Diaspora

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While the diaspora concept is not new, its contemporary usage within the western social sciences and humanities has moved well beyond any simple notion of a scattered population. Conventional treatments of the concept, which often focus on the Jewish diaspora and the culture of exile, have emerged in contemporary writings as a "special form" of transnational ethnic communities marked by a "persistent sense" of belonging among members "across borders and generations" (Clifford 1994; Castles & Miller 1998: 201; Safran 1991). As such, diaspora is increasingly part of the lexicon of the multicultural, transnational, and cosmopolitan moment in social inquiry, celebrating the disorientation and reorganization of global circuits of power (Hesse 2000; Tölölyan 1991; see also Cheah & Robbins 1998). Recent studies concerning migration and changing cultural landscapes of a globalizing world, have reworked the diaspora concept, denoting the cultural effects of shifts in capital and the extension and acceleration of transportation and communication networks (e.g. Nonini & Ong 1997). In this vein, authors have imagined diasporas as networks given over to new subject positions in which diasporic subjects are "enmeshed in circuits of social, economic, and cultural ties encompassing both the mother country and the country of settlement" (Lavie & Swedenburg 1996: 14; cf. Brah 1996: 196). Furthermore, diaspora has been held up as a site of progressive politics and antihegemonic subjecthood:

> Diaspora formations currently define the post-colonial sense in the proliferation of and interaction between cultural differences that shape the transnational configurations of dispersed histories and identities within and against the cultural legislation of the western nation. (Hesse 2000: 20)

Despite the celebratory mood of its many advocates, the reality for would-be diasporic communities is more stark; an experience of exclusionary policies and intolerant attitudes held by host-societies, whose resident populations maintain tenacious biases in favor of racial, ethnic, and even civic national identity in which migrants are said to have no place (Geddes 2000; Harding 2000; Levy 1999; Sassen

1998: 31–53). The popular sentiment in industrialized countries, especially in western Europe, that they are awash with refugees, though dealing with but a fraction of the world's total, has contributed to a sense of siege; one in which anti-immigration platforms have well served right-wing political leaders in recent years. Such biases are most recently evident in the rise of nationalist and anti-immigration candidates across Europe (Cowell 2002; *Economist* 2002; Lyall 2002). For their part, migrants – both labor and refugee – are seeking to abandon the economic despair, political persecution or social instability endemic to an increasingly globalized world and the convulsions accompanying the end of empires and the excesses of neoliberalism (Harding 2000).

Although much of the renewed interest in migration studies may be understood as a reasoned, even progressive, response to reactionary immigration policies, the cultural concepts emerging from this literature remain much debated. Criticism of these "new" theories of migration and culture – what some have termed "globalization from below" – focuses on both the conceptual duplicity between concept and reality and the narrowness of their explanatory vision. For example, Nagel argues that "concepts such as diaspora and transnationalism, while attempting to loosen conceptual boundaries, often revert to very rigid and traditional understandings of culture, ethnicity, and locality" (2001: 247). Mitchell (1997) suggests that such decontextualized, celebratory declarations of the culturally ambivalent, new or cosmopolitan "may neglect the actual geographies of capital accumulation in which those spaces are produced" (p. 551). This essay follows from these critical positions to more fully question the (geo)political significance of diasporas, specifically in the context of Kurdish emigration to Europe and North America.

Before considering diaspora as a geopolitical category, it is useful to recognize that diasporas denote quite specific sociospatial formations and cultural expressions distinct from many of the terms drawn in close association with migration. Three such terms are discussed here: transnationalism, multiculturalism, and hybridity. First, transnationalism, as typically understood in writings on diasporas, describes a condition in which somewhat regularized nongovernmental transborder relations persist among individuals who share a common culture and historical memory, a common experience of dispersal from and loss of a homeland, and a desire to symbolically maintain, or physically return to, that homeland (Cohen 1997: 26; see also e.g. Tatla 1999; Wahlbeck 1999). While broader interpretations of transnationalism include the emergence of culturally novel forms (Basch et al. 1994) or politically effective organizational relations (Risse-Kappen 1995), it is sufficient for our purposes to recognize that diaspora is often predicated on transnational social relations. However, transnationalism is not a sufficient condition for diasporas, which additionally imply a common sense of territorial identity among its members, nor are all transnational relations diasporic. Moreover, it is quite common to find an implied equivalence between transnationalism and diaspora, which threatens to evacuate any meaningful value from either term (see also Nagel 2001).

Second, authors often describe diasporic communities in terms of multiculturalism, that is, thrusting into a host-society an "other" whose cultural difference cannot be wholly dissolved nor whose political loyalties can be fully won over. While multiculturalism is typically understood to mean the inclusion of cultural difference

within the formal institutions of representative government and civil society, it is best understood specifically to describe one possible political response by a host government to various forms of migrancy, which may or may not include diasporic projects. In any case, this concept implies an abandonment of strict ethnic or racial definitions of "nation" in favor of a more tolerant "civic national" enfranchisement of recently migrated or permanently resident noncitizens. In terms of diasporas, multicultural policies would appear to slacken apprehension over the "divided loyalties" of residents who seek a redemptive or reclaimant politics toward a homeland. In reality, multicultural projects generally disfavor the socially or politically extroverted communities that diasporas imply – focused as they are on the politics of a homeland.

Third, hybridity is frequently employed to describe the effects of migrancy on identity – the condition of being an in-between, out-of-place, or multiply-constituted subject (e.g. Bhabha 1994). Applied to the diaspora concept, it becomes apparent that hybridity opens the possibility of the diasporic subject to participate in two cultural registers or to be situated within two identity categories at once. Yet, this implies a degree of selective acculturation that many diasporic subjects, indeed many migrants, rarely achieve in light of the assimilative expectations or requirements they face, especially by participating in localized and nationalized political-economies. The imagination of a hybrid subject, one relatively accustomed or experienced in two or more distinct cultural registers confounds any attempt at precision – by what do we gauge it? – and fails to meaningfully explain the social significance of the concept, trapped as it is in psychological speculation. Instead, it refuses the moment of cultural synthesis, of the collapse of difference, in favor of a hyphenated and uncomfortable conjuncture of difference. The upshot of hybridity, when put in the context of migrancy, is that it replaces the homology of space and identity with two such homologies in tension, leaving relatively unexplored the social constitution of spatialized identities. Worse still, it appears from some treatments of hybridity that its application to social explanation depends on an unwarranted degree of voluntarism on matters of identity and political action.

Geopolitics, Diasporas, and Refugees

In reconsidering the diaspora concept from a more skeptical standpoint, and one that is concerned with the interaction of space, identity, and power, particularly at a geopolitical scale, it is useful to do so in the context of contemporary theories from international relations and the area of political geography termed critical geopolitics. Both literatures critique realist theories which describe international politics as a function of states operating in an anarchic, or unruly, environment. Within the international relations literature, authors such as Ashley (1987) have rejected the realist framework on the grounds that political interactions are not the actions of states *per se* but rather of a small network of specialist elites, such as foreign ministers and embassy officials, operating on behalf of states and who, when reconceived of as a social unit, may be recognized as sharing certain ideas and values that function as a form of power/knowledge. Once recognized as a socially constructed rather than naturally evolving condition, international politics is opened to social inquiry to explicate the practices that:

provide the framework, symbolic resources, and practical strategies for the coordination and legitimation of action, the disciplining of resistance, and, hence, the historical production and differentiation of the community, its boundaries, its objects, and its subjective agents. (Ashley 1987: 403–4)

Likewise, critical geopolitics seeks to identify and critique the practice of geopolitics from a position outside the received tradition of formal geopolitics. Committed to both heterogeneous and alternative practices of power and space, it also seeks to develop more fully an appreciation of nonstate geopolitics, including nonstate actors, shifting scales, unbound territorialities, and popular representational practices of the geopolitical (Ó Tuathail & Dalby 1998: 2–7). Agnew's argument that "the 'spatiality' or geographical organization of power is not necessarily tied for all time and all places to the territoriality of states" reminds us of the problems inherent in normalizing existing geopolitical space (1998: 49). To escape what Agnew terms the "territorial trap," we must recognize that a state's sovereignty, its exclusive spatiality, and its social "contents" are normative constructs that do not reflect the increasingly globalized and transnational character of contemporary social, economic, and even political interactions. In terms of the diaspora, as a political-cultural trope, one has to make a careful distinction between, on the one hand, an approach that reasserts the primacy and normality of territorially discrete nation-states favored by irredentist identity politics, and, on the other hand, an approach that recognizes diaspora as a socially constructed claim to territoriality. In consideration of these efforts, Dalby suggests "that 'alternative politics' is about more than resistance, social movements, and states. These arguments also show in a number of ways that critical geopolitics is about connections and community understood as other than place-bound political entities" (Dalby 1999: 181).

Though discussions of diaspora are steeped in the vocabulary of cultural studies, the concept is not without political and geopolitical import. Like nation, diaspora describes a relationship between space and identity though authors have tended to adopt one of two general schemes in specifying this relationship, each bearing quite different geopolitical implications. One approach to diaspora represents ethnic identity as organic and autochthonous; identity mapped onto specific territories or homelands. The loss of a homeland, usually through forced migration, heralds the emergence of a diasporic culture (that is a culture is displaced and also becomes a culture identifying itself with loss and the pain of exile). So while diaspora is much vaunted as "exemplary communities of the transnational moment" (Tölölyan 1991: 5), the concept has nevertheless, for some authors, become essentialized – it serves to reestablish the notion of territorially fixed and naturalized ethnic homeland as a norm from which a diasporic group was displaced: "the phenomenon of ethnic loyalty towards homeland is usually called a diaspora" (Tatla 1999: 2). The danger inherent in this use of the diaspora concept lies in its supposition of a natural order of places and peoples, which, *in extremis*, lends moral justification to nationalism, especially pernicious irredentist or revanchist policies. Malkki refers to this sensibility as the "national order of things": "the supposedly normal condition of being attached to a territorialized polity and an identifiable people" (1995: 516). The diaspora concept retains a sense of loss and longing for a cultural homeland that is attendant on loosely nationalist aspirations of the diasporic migrant: "The idea of

'homeland' can be seen as another criterion; the notion of diaspora thus indicates a nationalism in exile" (Wahlbeck 1999: 30). By extension, diasporic communities are defined by some authors according to a shared sense of common ancestral territory, an experience of dispersal or displacement from that homeland, and an implicit desire for its recovery or liberation (Cohen 1997: 26). The function of dispersal and loss as implied by the diaspora concept also serves to prefigure the refugee as a necessary diasporic subject. Taken further, diasporas are the site of political mobilization for homeland restoration and frequently imply a return migration (Tatla 1999). Ironically, nationalism's pernicious homology between space and identity, which endorses the diasporic subject's irredentist, romantic nostalgia for a homeland, also underpins the xenophobic and violent reactions of host-societies to those migrants.

A second approach to diaspora takes a very different tack from the first, insisting on the constructed and multiple nature of identity and refusing any necessary, or geographically normal, location. As such, diaspora represents less the loss of a cultural location than a reaffirmation of how culture, territoriality and identity are constructed in the first place. Donald Nonini and Aihwa Ong (1997), in a set of essays on Chinese transnationalism, argue "the necessity of reconceptualizing the relationship between the study of . . . identities and the place-bound theorizations of a preglobal social science, implied in such terms as *territory*, *region*, *nationality*, and *ethnicity*" (Nonini & Ong 1997: 5, emphasis in original). These authors view cultural forms, such as familial relations, identity and territorial attachments, as discursive tropes whose constructions have specific genealogies and intellectual antecedents that relate cultural epistemologies to the economic and geopolitical, not to mention academic, relations between China and the world. A "deterritorialized ethnography" that refuses any necessary equation between space and identity must, therefore, recognize the mobility and transience wrought by flexible accumulation, uneven geometries of power, and the emergence of global "third cultures," as described by David Harvey, Doreen Massey, and Mike Featherstone, respectively (Nonini & Ong 1997: 9–12). Their repeated refrain calling for a rethinking of how we understand the relationship between space and identity is highly appropriate, disinvesting as it does in the racist and ethnocentric tropes derived from European Enlightenment traditions and colonialism. As a result, Nonini and Ong reject the notion that diasporic persons are residual or inferior elements of some territorialized normal culture, but rather take "an affirmative view of diaspora as a pattern that marks a common condition of communities, persons, and groups separated by space, an arrangement, moreover, that these persons see themselves as sharing" (Nonini & Ong 1997: 18).

Finally, we turn to the specific issues surrounding the migrancy most closely associated with the diaspora concept, that of refugees or asylum-seekers. In as much as refugees are those forced to migrate or whose "well founded fear" of persecution precipitated flight, "the concept of diaspora seems to encompass the transnational and de-territorialized social relations of refugees as well as to outline the specific refugee experience" (Wahlbeck 1999: 30). Soguk (1999) argues that migrants, especially refugees, are disruptive of state territoriality while at the same time they are instrumental to the territorialization of the modern nation-state and citizenship complex (pp. 209–10). Put another way, the "state as container" analogy

that Agnew warns against has as its corollary the demographic vision of the state and its citizens, a homology that migration brings to the surface by importing the foreign body into domestic space. This homology is underpinned by a sedentarist bias, which Foucault describes as necessary for the administrative control of territory and population (1991: 99–101), and which prefigures migrancy as a transgressive condition; of being out of place or a threat to the domestic order. This is readily apparent in the representation of refugee migration by the Trilateral Commission:

> The most objectionable policy in the public mind is one where the nation appears unable to control a basic element of sovereignty, such as the choice of who resides in a country. This abdication of choice is what burgeoning asylum caseloads represent, and long-staying asylum populations symbolize national vulnerability. (Meissner et al. 1993: 48)

This realization, that migrants figure as threats to states but also provide states an unruly subject whose regulation reestablishes state power, highlights what Soguk refers to as the paradoxical and unequal relationship between sedentarized state projects and the reality of human mobility. Moreover, when those in motion are seeking exilic refuge from harm – mobility brought on by the failure of states – their transgressive acts of border crossings and domestic "disruptions" challenge the state system itself and by extension the sovereign principles through which "order" and "control" are recovered. This has led several authors to critically reconsider the refugee and the international refugee regime as a bundle of geopolitical practices, that is, processes enmeshed within international politics and concerned with the exercise of sovereign territorial power (Lippert 1999; Loescher 1990, 1996; Soguk 1999). Though the refugee is an almost inevitable outcome of the system of territorial nation-states, national governments present themselves as the necessary backstop and ultimate power broker in governing refugee migrations (Soguk 1999). That is, territorially sovereign states occupy the only base from which mastery of international space is possible. The deterritorialized refugee, on the other hand, is bereft of any position in the "national order of things" – the state-centric discourse that maps political rights to a sovereign territorial identity (Malkki 1995, 1997). Displaced from their country of origin, the refugee is reconfigured as the recipient of humanitarianism, bound to the limited participatory rights afforded by the host-state. As such, refugees become idealized as apolitical subjects, their access to the protections of refuge conditional on their docility and acquiescent social position. Indeed, the expectation that refugees should be apolitical is formalized by states in their immigration and asylum policy, yet we know that refugees are not only political subjects who seek consideration from their host-state but that their condition also bears witness to and is born of the geopolitical reality of the state system. As a result, we have little conceptual or empirical research to explain the intersection of refugee political identities and interests and the system of territorial nation-states that ensnares them. The following section takes up the question of how refugees and other migrants attempt to engage international politics by examining recent studies of Kurdish refugee migrations and the formation of Kurdish communities in exile.

Kurdish Diaspora

The Kurdish population is approximately 20 to 25 million people, and Kurds identify their homeland, Kurdistan, in a region transected by the boundaries of four states: Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria. Linguistically distinct from both Arabic and Turkish, the Kurdish dialects are, like Farsi, part of the Indo-European family. Religiously, Kurdish society is roughly two-thirds Sunni Muslim with the other third comprising Alevi and Yezidi religious minorities with a small number of Christians and Jews. This means that Kurds are often religiously different from surrounding populations and are often held in suspicion by secularist regimes. Physically marginalized by their location in the mountainous terrain of Kurdistan, the Kurds have also been regularly conquered by regional empires. With the division of the Ottoman Empire after the First World War, the Kurdish population came under the rule of the four regional governments. The Kurdish experience in each country has been one of political disenfranchisement and cultural oppression, in which genocidal campaigns such as that in Iraq in 1988 have figured significantly. As a result, the last 80 years have witnessed steady Kurdish emigration from Kurdistan in search of either more stable conditions in larger cities like Istanbul or Damascus, or for more distant solutions in Europe and beyond. Kurdish refugee migrations have also numbered among the largest such movements of persons in recent years, much of it directed toward Europe. The Kurdish community in exile, what some Kurds refer to as the Kurdish diaspora, numbers approximately one million people living in Western Europe and North America.

Several authors have studied aspects of Kurdish refugee migration or Kurdish communities in exile as components of a Kurdish diaspora (Leggewie 1996; Van Bruinessen 1999, 2000; Wahlbeck 1998, 1999). While their approaches differ according to disciplinary interests, the research site, and the particular Kurdish subpopulation under investigation, their conceptual conclusions direct our attention to issues at the heart of this chapter. Namely, these authors seek to understand better the relationship between Kurdish migration (both labor and refugee) and the obtaining geopolitical condition of Kurdistan, with particular emphasis on the struggle to gain full cultural and political rights and economic opportunities in the region. As such, the authors typically focus on the issue of Kurds from Turkey and the ensuing relations between European host-states and the Turkish government as it vies for accession to the European Union. What is most striking in these works is their shared view of Kurdish refugee mobilization as a form of globalization, a concept that attains a certain degree of geopolitical immediacy but which is more often left conceptually unexamined.

The political life of Kurdish exiles is often overlooked by social scientific studies that are more concerned with the sociology of community formation *vis-à-vis* resettlement policy. Extant contributions on this topic are rarely the result of fieldwork, but rather form analyses of current events and news stories. For example, Claus Leggewie discusses Germany as the "second front" of the Workers' Party of Kurdistan (PKK), the Kurdish movement in Turkey under Abdullah Öcalan (1996). It is true that many of the PKK's operations and brutal acts occur outside Kurdistan, thereby exporting the civil war to countries like Germany, where hundreds of

thousands of Kurds migrated as *gastarbeiter* (guest workers) or as refugees. But Leggewie contends that many Kurds "did not discover their 'Kurdishness' until they came to Europe" where they could more freely participate in cultural and linguistic practices outlawed in Turkey (1996: 79). While this forms the basis for the Kurdish conflict with Turkey, along with the political and economic marginalization that propelled so many to Germany in the first place, it does not fully reflect the Kurdish dilemma in Germany. It is Germany's reluctance to grant full citizenship rights to refugees, guest workers, and even German-born Kurds – part of Germany's long-standing ethnic policy on citizenship – that further radicalizes Kurds in Germany.

> In the face of these barriers, Kurdish nationalism has sprung up in Germany. In other words, Turks have become Kurds because the Turkish state denies them cultural recognition and the German state denies them political recognition. (Leggewie 1996: 79)

It is Leggewie's contention that Kurdish identity among Turkish *gastarbeiter* surfaced not through co-ethnic communal affinities in the urban quarters of Europe's working class but after Turkey's 1980 state of emergency in Kurdish southeast Anatolia and the ensuing criminalization of Kurdish culture that escalated to civil war. Their ensuing marginalization by German society as part of the "Turkish problem," seen as an inassimilable excess labor pool and the target of right-wing hate crimes, only hastened to radicalize Kurds toward a Kurdish nationalism that sought international and domestic political justice. What is most compelling in Leggewie's analysis is the equation of migration, whether "economic" or refugee, with the internationalization of political questions raised by separatist conflicts. The specific geopolitical map emerging from an internationalized conflict, begins to reconfigure Kurdish refugee communities as alternative, nonstate actors. Beyond the conflict between the PKK and the Turkish Armed Forces in southeast Anatolia, the 9,000 Kurdish activists and their 50,000 supporters in Germany point to a more complex reality: the Kurdish civil war is being funded by an extensive apparatus of the PKK that maintains cells in every Kurdish community in Germany and all around Europe (Leggewie 1996: 82–3). Further, a political movement of both PKK and pro-Kurdish activists in Europe has effectively used Turkey's application for membership in the European Union as a lever by which to alter the practices of the Turkish government.

The importance of Leggewie's study is that he successfully gives an empirical example linking the underconceptualized relationship between host-country resettlement policies and the geopolitical conditions in the sending region. He traces in both directions the otherwise unidirectional relationship between root causes and resettlement, tying what happens in exile to geopolitical developments back home – producing an ironic map that links the activities of the PKK in Germany to the amplification of conflict in Turkish Kurdistan, and a subsequent continued emigration of Kurdish refugees to Germany. These refugees often construct a typical chain-migration sequence, following kinship and communal relations in seeking asylum in Germany. Set against the backdrop of rising German and European resentment of immigration, this refugee migration puts into motion every scale of geopolitical interaction, including diplomatic conflict between Germany and Turkey, and Turkey and the European Union. Similarly, it puts additional strain on migrant–host relations, most noticeably through state-controlled channels, that is, migration policies,

social benefits, economic participation, and political enfranchisement. Leggewie's study of Turko-German relations regarding the Kurdish question is not, however, easily generalizable to other Kurdish migrants living in Germany or elsewhere in Europe because his analysis hinges on the tactics of the PKK.

Noted Kurdologist Martin Van Bruinessen similarly recognizes the importance of exile communities as active sites of Kurdish politics (1999, 2000). Like Leggewie, Van Bruinessen focuses on Turkish Kurds in Germany and their political activism since 1980 when the migration of politicized Kurds from the southeast provided a "catalyst on the Kurds' ethnic awareness" in German cities (Van Bruinessen 1999: 11). Further, he stresses the inculcation of Kurdish identity in second-generation children of immigrants who most acutely face the failure of Germany's reluctant citizenship policies to more fully incorporate immigration communities into civic life. Two factors convinced the PKK that "Europe was the arena where the next phase in the Kurdish struggle was to be fought" (Van Bruinessen 1999: 17). First, Öcalan's expulsion from Syria and the catalytic effect his search for asylum had on both heightening European attention to the Kurdish situation and the consolidation of sometimes rival Kurdish organizations bore witness to the size and political effectivity of the Kurdish community in Europe. Second, the depopulation of the Turkish countryside in Kurdistan had led to an increasingly less effective campaign against the Turkish military, one that might be taken up more effectively outside Turkey. That is, there was greater strategic advantage in using Europe as both the grounds for the PKK campaign because it contained a reservoir of Kurdish political activism that could mobilize a diplomatic lever against the Turkish state. Van Bruinessen concludes, similar to Leggewie, that

> Turkey's authorities apparently expect that the mass emigration from Kurdistan will ultimately lead to the assimilation of the Kurds and the gradual disappearance of the Kurdish question. The thrust of [this argument] has been to show that it was precisely because of this mass migration that Kurdish identity as well as the identities of smaller ethnic categories among the Kurds have been invigorated. (Van Bruinessen 1999: 20)

Van Bruinessen's study does not, however, clarify the extent to which the cultural and political activities of the Kurdish diaspora out of Turkey parallel that of or can be equally applied to Kurds from outside Turkey. To do so, we may examine three areas of transnational activity: linguistic and cultural maintenance; media technology; and transnational political organizations. For Van Bruinessen, the maintaining of mother tongue ability, or regaining this ability, is an important contribution to Kurdish culture made by Turkish Kurds living in exile. Because Turkey outlawed the Kurdish language and actively sought to replace it with a Turkish national language, it is in exile that an active scholarly community of Kurdish intellectuals and artists have reasserted the Kurmanci dialect of northern (Turkish) Kurdistan. The development of a Kurmanci literature is certainly important to Turkish Kurds who have lacked a significant and sophisticated literature in which to discuss their condition. It is similarly the case for Kurdish culture among those from Turkey – the recovery of community observances, such as *newroz* or new years, and customs long banned in Turkey are an important component of cultural revival. While the reemergence of Kurmanci and Kurdish culture among the Kurds from eastern Turkey

suggests exile is an important site for their recovery of Kurdish identity, it does not necessarily hold true for Kurds from Iraq or the other countries. Although Iraqi Kurds have suffered regular conflict with Baghdad, their relatively autonomous status in northern Iraq has meant much less cultural and linguistic oppression, thus there is less of a linguistic and cultural renaissance among Iraqi Kurds in exile. Instead, the maintenance of Kurdish language ability and its instillation in the second generation is more easily recognized as a struggle against the assimilative forces of refuge and exile for Iraqi Kurds. The extent to which Iraqi Kurds maintain and instill Kurdish linguistic abilities and cultural identity in their community might indicate the extent to which these factors will contribute to their continued pressure and activism in recovering a homeland.

Media technology, especially satellite television and Internet resources, provide information and cultural programming that serve to bolster the expression of Kurdish identity and its attendant politics. In the case of Kurds from Turkey, satellite programming is provided by MED-TV, with production facilities located in the Netherlands. The programming concentrates on Turkey and the activities of the PKK and has had a wide appeal for Kurds throughout Europe, including Kurds from Iraq. More recently, satellite and Internet services directed at Iraqi Kurds have come online and in a form that is closely tied to transnational political organizations. The main Iraqi Kurdish political parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), each have satellite television stations and Internet websites. These sites serve to maintain contact and relevancy with Iraqi Kurds living outside the region. Party officers interviews by the author noted the importance of keeping exile communities informed and aware, in preparation for the mobilization of either homeland defense or a return migration. The now-significant proportion of Iraqi Kurds living outside northern Iraq require that the political parties, as the only clear governing force on the ground, maintain their network of loyal members since, in the event of a return migration, the Kurds from exile will more likely have more money, skills, and new experiences to bring to bear on any new political situation.

To this end, the Iraqi Kurdish parties have reorganized their structures to more directly incorporate their membership living in exile. The Kurdish Parliament in Exile was convened in The Hague in 1995. Though it nominally seeks to represent all Kurds, its focus on the Kurdish question in Turkey, and Öcalan's case in particular, alienated some non-Turkish Kurdish parties and organizations, suggesting that it comes up short of being the "trans-state" organization that Van Bruinessen recognizes. Most certainly, because of its focus on the Kurdish question and its efforts to mobilize European governments on its behalf, the Kurdish Parliament in Exile is a transnational political organization. However, because it lacks significant organizational capacity in Turkey beyond the parties represented in it, it is transnational because of its efforts throughout Europe on behalf of issues in Kurdistan. The PKK does not enjoy official sanction to operate in Europe and is branded a terrorist organization by most governments. Nevertheless, their illicit activities in Europe effectively constitute a transnational political organization. It is important to recognize the multiple local competencies and on-the-ground capacities of an organization's activities in order to ascertain the geographical bearings of its particular brand of transnationalism.

Östen Wahlbeck's study (1998, 1999) examines the associational networks and activities of Kurdish refugee communities in London and Finland. Placed within the context of British and Finnish resettlement policy, he is able to more fully specify the effect of relocation on social relations within the communities than either Leggewie or Van Bruinessen. Focusing primarily on Kurds from Turkey, Wahlbeck notes the general split in refugee associational networks between Kurds from Turkey and those from Iraq, Iran, or Syria. Wahlbeck also observes that these associational networks and organizations, while focused primarily on assisting migrants, especially refugees, in their resettlement, were highly politicized and bore witness to "the same political allegiances and boundaries that can be found in Kurdistan [and] are thus recreated and modified in exile" (Wahlbeck 1998: 223). Kurdish political parties are frequently identified with different community centers or organizations, though management of these activities is never directly a function of party operations. While family structures are an important basis for social cohesion and organization, any explicitly "tribal" organization of Kurdish society has given way to a politically partisan organization, which serves to unite Kurdish ethnic identity, according to Wahlbeck, in place of religious or kinship-based solidarity (1998: 224). More importantly, his study suggests "social groups which are not politically organized, as well as nonpolitical or antipolitical individuals, will easily become marginalized in the Kurdish community" (1998: 225). Though Wahlbeck presumes that "Kurds from Iraq and Iran often were more alienated from Kurdish politics" (1999: 173), research conducted by the author suggests that these communities are each as well organized and cohesive as the Turkish Kurds. Explaining the difference is the outlaw status of the PKK as a terrorist organization and the politics of Turkey's accession to the European Union while Iraqi and Iranian political parties enjoy favor in most western capitals as opponents to "rogue regimes" in Baghdad and Teheran.

Deterritorialization and the Limits of Diaspora

The Kurdish community in exile is marked by a high degree of segmentation: Not only are Kurds divided in their homeland by state boundaries but their exile communities exhibit those same divisions, particularly in the separation of Turkish from Iraqi and other Kurdish groups. Likewise, within the Turkish and Iraqi exile communities, partisan differences obtain as the most salient social organizing principle, imputing nearly every event or organization with the subtle politics of internecine competition. These forms of imposed and self-inflicted segregation defy the very belief that most Kurds publicly express, namely, that "all Kurds dream of a united and independent Kurdistan." Such expressions of irredentist claims to Kurdistan as a homeland lost to the geopolitical depredations of Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria and after the many years of their cultural, economic, and political repression of the Kurdish minority would appear to satisfy their condition as being one of diaspora. Yet the particularity of their political and cultural condition seems to confound any theoretical position that would characterize the present Kurdish communities in exile as comprising a diaspora. From the author's fieldwork in the Kurdish communities in Britain and North America, the very idea of diaspora is not common among refugees nor among most political leaders. While the Kurdish exile communities exhibit a high degree of transnationalism, particularly among its fragmented

political organizations, there is no conceptual justification for understanding their condition to be particularly diasporic. There are, however, nascent in the vague and unmobilized common historical narratives of these exiles sufficient discursive potential for a future constructed diasporic identity that bridges the practical differences separating the Kurdish communities in exile and, perhaps, *in situ*.

If not a diaspora, then what describes the condition of Kurdish exile communities? Wahlbeck (1999) describes Kurdish communities in exile as deterritorialized, implying the maintenance of intensive social relations among actors who are not co-present but are connected by new communications technologies. That is, deterritorialized social relations are made possible through immediate and frequent uses of communication technology or social interaction. While Wahlbeck's use of the term is not unique, his generic rendering of "territory" as simple human co-presence departs from more geographical understandings of deterritorialization as a loosening of the connections between social practices and particular sociopolitical spaces. The distinction is important, for without a recognition that territorialization is the social process of mapping identity onto space we lose all value in understanding the social, cultural, and political changes wrought by migration of any kind. Deterritorialization, however, cannot be divorced from the political, or even geopolitical, context of displacement. The spatial metaphor of deterritorializing is not simply a challenge to the organicism of national identity theories. Instead, deterritorialization foregrounds the social construction of identity-in-place by recognizing the historiographic discourses that have mapped identity and space, and the modes of power and authority that maintain them. Further, there cannot be a deterritorialization without an ensuing reterritorialization, a renewal of the geographical specificity and unevenness of social life. In discussing these topics, Ó Tuathail suggests that geographers have a task

> to theorize critically the polymorphous territorialities produced by the social, economic, political and technological machines of our postmodern condition rather than refuse this complexity and reduce it to singular dramas of resistant territorialization or unstoppable deterritorialization. (Ó Tuathail 1998: 90)

While Wahlbeck and van Bruinnessen recognize the role of deterritorialization in expanding the Kurdish geopolitical condition beyond the geographic bounds of the region, they fail to fully appreciate that the resettlement of Kurds outside the region portends significant and important changes in a reterritorialization of social and political (and even economic) geographies. Put another way, the geopolitical question of the Kurds has not been evacuated or diminished, *per se*, but rather its specific geographies realign the social interactions of identity and politics beyond the boundaries of the nation-state. This geographical expansion of social relations is typically thought of as a diminishing of ethnic intensity, a "watering-down" of identity-in-place and, therefore, a lessening of the meaning and attachment that historical and cultural practices map onto space. The study of migration often presumes that identity, in its "native" or ethnic varieties, is diminished by mobility *qua* deterritorialization; place-based social bonds or ecological practices that underwrite identity are exchanged, through assimilation, with those of the host-society. Empirically and conceptually, these presumptions fail to recognize that migration does not

necessarily require an either/or outcome in terms of identity. What immigration theories have identified as unassimilated – or inassimilable – "ethnic enclaves" are frequently sites of complex social rearticulation. As such, it may be more useful to think of communities in exile, like those of the Kurds, less in terms of coherent and identifiable, if out-of-place, renditions of extant sociospatial identities, but rather as sites of cultural and political negotiation over the social and geopolitical terms of what it means to be Kurdish and what or where a Kurdish homeland ought to be. Furthermore, this negotiation is not constrained to "co-ethnics," but instead involves a series of interlocutors not limited to members of the host-society, those living in the "homeland," as well as state actors whose geopolitical interests may, at times, conflict with that of any presumed diasporic movement and its putative restorative claims to a homeland.

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