

‘HOME’ AND ‘RETURN’ – THE EXPERIENCE OF SECOND-  
GENERATION IRAQI KURD RETERNEES TO KURDISTAN REGIONAL  
GOVERNMENT (KRG)

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## **Abstract**

This research focuses on the experiences of migrants who have ‘returned’ to the Kurdish regions of Iraq from neighbouring countries and Europe. It addresses key issues in the field of Refugee Studies, including concepts of return, understandings of home and negotiations of identity and belonging among second generation Iraqi Kurdish returnees. Scholars and researchers have often used these terms loosely and sometimes interchangeably: critical analysis informed by this research suggests that they are related but are also distinct and specific. The second-generation Iraqi Kurds taking part in the study belong to the generation of migrants who were born in diaspora countries or moved to diaspora in their early childhood from the region of Iraqi Kurdistan. These second-generation migrants have a different understanding of ‘home’ to their parents. Their upbringing in diaspora countries and transnational links to ‘homeland’ create a tension between their constructions of ‘home’ and ‘belonging’.

The empirical data for this study is based upon an in-depth qualitative study of the experiences of 20 Iraqi Kurd returnees in Kurdistan, most of whom were neither born nor grew up in the KRG region, and had little or no previous experience of their ‘homeland’. Interview themes involved home, transnational ties and attachments, identity and belonging. I propose that second-generation migrants are motivated to ‘return’ because of a strong sense of belonging and a need for identity in relation to a familial and/or ancestral ‘home’. Analysing in detail the life-narratives of second-generation returnees, the research identifies multifaceted perspectives in which notions of ‘return’, ‘home’, ‘identity’ and ‘belonging’ are relevant in recent Kurdish experience. It proposes that diasporic links and networks, and earlier experiences outside the KRG, play a key role in shaping aspirations, expectations and experiences in Kurdistan.

The findings from this research suggest that the factors motivating Kurdish returnee migration back to Kurdistan are sophisticated. Certainly, the analysis of my data indicates that for the second generation who have taken the decision to return to KRG region, this migration is facilitated through the social relationships and resources which are generated and sustained through their family networks. It is these family networks which make the difference between the dream or intention to return and the actual reality of doing so. The findings explain that family narratives are vital factors of the second generation's 'home' constructions. However, the return experiences show that their 'imagined home' and 'reality' do not always match. The KRG region, more often referred to as homeland, is very central in respondents' narratives. What is most noticeable for the second-generation Iraqi Kurds is that while homeland is very significant for them, no given homeland exists. The homeland is therefore an ambiguous, vague and ambivalent conception. It is mostly about a subjective feeling and individual and political constructions based on lived experiences, collective memory and history and political discourses. For them 'home' is a space that exceeds several territorial borders and several nation-states. The meaning of identity, home(land) and belonging for second-generation Iraqi Kurds is more situational, ambivalent and flexible.

**Keywords:**

*History of Kurdistan, second generation, return, home, identity, belonging, transnationalism, life narratives*

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# **1. Introduction**

Around the world, migrants and refugees have been moving from one nation to another driven by different dreams and aspirations (Portes & Rumbaut, 2005). The understanding about the movement across and beyond national borders has become very clear, but the meaning of ‘home’ has become vague and unclear. As Christou states, ‘migration, is a phenomenon which has brought about unprecedented changes not only in the movement of peoples but also in their identifications which, although negotiable, are at the same time intimately and ultimately connected to the notion of place’ (Christou, 2003).

Research in migration studies is often involved with one of two themes – “either a country of origin focus (what causes people to migrate and the impact of population loss on the ‘homeland’) or a receiving country focus (the process of adaptation that migrants undergo in the new country). In addition to this spatial dichotomy in approach, there is also an ‘either/or’ assumption about the temporal dimension of migrant experience: either they are permanent residents and potential future citizens, at some stage in the (linear) process of assimilation, or they are temporary sojourners who do not prioritise assimilation, as their goal is to return to their country of origin” (Oeppen 2009).

“The first significant numbers of Kurds to out-migrate were mainly young men who fled the 1975 collapse of the Kurdish rebellion against the central government in which many of their peers perished. Most settled in neighbouring countries, Europe and the United States. Their was probably the last generation of Iraqi Kurdish out-migrants to experience a thorough rupture from their past that was sustained by Iraq’s ongoing political unrest, totalitarianism, and relatively sealed borders. This changed dramatically in 1991 when the Kurdish region of Iraq became functionally independent from Baghdad” (King 2013).

Between 1991-2003, despite organising the first independent election to form the first parliament and electing the first KRG government in 1992, Iraqi Kurds – mainly youngsters

and also families – started to flee from their region. One can summarise the reasons for leaving as: financial crisis after the withdrawal of Iraqi forces in October 1991 left the local government in a difficult position, inability of the locally elected government to pay salaries, lack of people's trust in the Kurdish government, fear of Saddam's return, and finally, the internal fighting between the main two parties the KDP and the PUK (Fareed Asasard 2006). Therefore, in order to understand the meaning of home for Iraqi Kurds, it is important to understand the context within which the decision to leave and to return was made, which is closely affiliated to the history of the country.

Iraq is a state profoundly affected by displacement (Philip 2011). Insecurity and violence have been seen as major reasons for displacement since the invasion of Iraq in 2003, when Kurds allied with the international community to topple the regime of Saddam Hussein. For Kurds, the liberation of Iraq was a real opportunity to assure their own rights in the Iraqi constitution. It was the first real moment to participate in building a new democratic Iraq through which the Kurds could guarantee their role in ruling Iraq, their share in the economy, and a solution to the unsettled border territories like Kirkuk (Fathil Mirani 2013).

After the fall of the Ba'athist regime and the invasion in 2003, the number of exiled families deciding to return to Iraqi Kurdistan increased from dozens to hundreds and continued to increase (Martina, 2007). The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that more than four million Iraqis were displaced by the war in Iraq. Two million found asylum in neighbouring countries like Syria and Jordan, smaller numbers fled to Egypt, Iran, Lebanon and Turkey (Riller, 2009). There are no official figures about the Kurdish population in the West since they are registered as citizens of Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria. Yet, the Kurdish diaspora in the West is estimated to exceed one million immigrants (Hassanpour & Mojab 2005).

Therefore, it is important to find out what motivate the second-generation Iraqi-Kurd returnees, born and/or grow up in diaspora countries, to return to Kurdistan Iraq where in the past, many Kurds were forced to seek refuge in European countries and neighbouring countries as a result of war and ethnic prosecution by the Iraqi governments.

Regime change in Iraq opened the door to the return of hundreds of thousands of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), the majority of whom were expelled from areas in northern Iraq (Romano and Gurses 2014). The Kurds in northern Iraq became functionally independent from Bagdad and achieved de facto autonomy by creating their own government in the north – the area controlled by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).

This project seeks to address a lacuna in research on the second generation's connections to the ancestral homeland, mobilizing migrants' strategic positionality with respect to questions of home and identity.

The words “return” and “home” need to be contextualised, as some of the second-generation Iraqi Kurd returnees were born in diaspora and indeed do not “return” to their homeland but move to their parental homeland where they have not previously lived but have a strong emotional and political affiliation and attachment to it (Keles 2016).

My study will examine the return home of the Iraqi Kurdish second-generation from different diaspora countries. My study examines the return to Kurdistan of the second generation with Iraqi-Kurdish parentage, and explores their complex and ambivalent identities, views of ‘home’ and search for ‘belonging’ in the ancestral homeland. In many ways, the conflict in Kurdistan has been a conflict over the meaning of home.

The aim of my research is to obtain accurate information about the life experiences and attitudes to return of second-generation Iraqi Kurds returning from Europe and neighboring countries.

I explore narratives of life in diaspora countries as a constitutive element of a Kurdish diasporic imaginary in the homeland itself in addition to in the diaspora countries. While abroad, some migrants and refugees produce children who are referred to as second-generation migrants (Hollifield, 2004). The term second-generation, in the context of this study, refers to people who were born outside their native parents' country and have stayed abroad and are perhaps considering returning 'home' (Christou, 2006; Ali, 2011). After living away from their parents' homes, second-generation migrants and refugees may feel an urge to trace their cultural roots for a variety of reasons, such as psychological satisfaction and knowledge of their history (Favell 2008). For second-generation migrants and refugees, a sense of belonging strengthens their perseverance to return home and to reconnect with their communities. By extension, if second-generation migrants feel they belong, there is a sense of 'homeness', whereas if the opposite is perceived, the person feels 'homeless'. Generally, when a person belongs, there is a strong sense of identity (Ali, 2011). Therefore, belonging creates some psychological harmony between the second-generation migrant and refugees with their environment. Some scholars contend that the term 'home' is synonymous to 'belonging', but this depends on the circumstances of the second-generation migrant or refugee (Hedetoft, 2002). With this explanation, the common belief that 'home is where we belong' should not be taken at face value, but analyzed further according to the plight of second-generation migrants and refugees (Christou, 2004).

My research examines the experience of second-generation refugees returning to the territories of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) from various locations within the Kurdish diaspora.

It is based upon a qualitative study of the experiences of 20 young people, many of whom were neither born nor grew up in KRG region, and have little or no experience of

living in their 'homeland'. Iraqi Kurdistan is seen as a 'homeland' for a significant number of Kurdish people living throughout the West and in countries neighboring Iraq.

However, for second-generation Iraqi Kurdish returnees, returning to one's 'homeland' does not necessarily mean 'return', because the majority of them have grown up in diaspora country or left the Iraq in a very young age of their life without ever having and experienced life in KRG region.

The return of second-generation Iraqi Kurds from diaspora countries can be seen as an advantage for the country rebuilding its communities from the grassroots. Some of the returnee participants interviewed in this study were found to be covering important shortages in state and private sectors. Many participants, especially those returning from European countries, reported that they had acquired new skills while they were living in the diaspora. Even among those who returned from neighbouring countries, it was noted that they acquired a better understanding of employment. Changes were observed in the level of skills, both among returnees from Europe and from neighbouring countries.

Interestingly, highly educated Iraqi Kurdish returnees from Europe seem to be more likely to make a sustained contribution to KRG's development, as evidenced by that fact that those interviewed for this research who were returning from European countries were better able to settle in the KRG region than those from neighbouring countries. Moreover, Iraqi Kurdish returnees from European countries are usually considered less economically vulnerable than those who returned from neighbouring countries, because of the education and skills they were able to acquire as well as the financial savings some could accrue.

Through a combination of push and pull factors the decision has been made by second-generation Iraqi Kurds from diaspora countries to return to their 'homeland', and while meeting the physical needs of this group is high on the agenda of the KRG government wanting to bring young Iraqi Kurds home, their psychosocial needs – while much less visible

– are possibly no less crucial to their successful and permanent return. Differing from two other studies (Alinia and Eliassi 2014) that look at older and younger ‘generations’ of the Kurdish diaspora living in Sweden, my research focuses on conceptions of Kurdish identity, home(land) and belonging among the Iraqi Kurdish second generation.

According to (Alinia and Eliassi 2014) there is a distinction between the younger and older generation in terms of their relationship to homeland and their perceptions to home. Generally, it can be said that “homeland for the older generation is something real, a physical place from which they have lived experiences and to which they have real and material bonds. For the younger generation, on the contrary, homeland is imaginary, something they ‘create’ according to their wishes and needs. For the older generation, homeland is connected to their experiences and memories from the past and means a continuation of their identities” (Alinia and Eliassi 2014).

Taylor develops a slightly different understanding of the meaning of home. She focuses on four key aspects of home - the spatial, temporal, material and relational - to reveal that ‘home for the refugee is complex, multiple and in process’ (Taylor 2009). Taylor states in her research that: ‘What the refugee loses when they are displaced is not only the physical property of the spatial home; but also, the networks and social capital of the relational home; the framed memories, repetitions of daily life and future potential of the temporal home; as well as the tastes, scents and embodied experience of the material home’ (Taylor 2009:1).

Returnees have life experiences in both countries; they retrospectively evaluate their new lives in their new homes, comparing and contrasting the two countries, remembering their romanticized ideas or their childhood memories of homelands they had never lived in before (Kilinc 2014). The processes of ‘becoming’ and the transformation of ‘home’ also prove that identities are in flux and the feeling of ‘belonging’ is a journey with pauses,

sometimes receding, sometimes proceeding, collecting the new and the old and constantly renegotiating the self in the light of new circumstances.

“A key element is missing from the existing theories and literature on return migration which do not consider the political dimension of the return of geographically displaced Diasporas and the descendants such as the Kurds, Tamils and other stateless Diasporas who have developed a strong diasporic consciousness in their settlement countries towards their imagined homeland beyond economic concerns, they claim a legitimate belonging and desire to return to an imagined homeland whilst residing in another country” (Keles 2016:9).

Second-generation’s Iraqi Kurd’s sense of belonging and attachment to their parent’s home country is intergenerational and demonstrated in the transnational activities, fund-raising for homeland and sending remittances as well as returning to their homeland at some point to play a crucial role in post-conflict reconstruction and consolidate the process of the institutionalization of the nation building project to which they have transnationally have contributed in diaspora. In this sense, the “return” migration of second-generation Iraqi Kurd returnees with diasporic backgrounds to a post-conflict region has been the subject of limited scholarly work. The aim of this report is to fill in this research gap. This research will focus on the motivations of second-generation Iraqi Kurds for the ‘return’ to their parental homeland and the discourse of belonging and how they build transnational networks.

One of the key findings of my research demonstrate that the second generation’s decision to return is enhanced through the social relationships and resources which are obtained through their family connections. The second-generation’s feeling of belonging to their homeland is not just a bond with their territorial place but is often based on a sense of attachment to the relatives and friends, personal and collective memories, language, and cultural products and practices.

## **1.1 Research Context**

The second-generation return migration phenomenon has become very widely researched in recent years (King and Kılinc 2014). Research has been conducted on the English-speaking Caribbean (Phillips & Potter 2009; Potter 2005; Reynolds 2011), India (Jain 2013) and several southern European countries including Portugal (Sardinha 2011), Italy (Wessendorf 2007), Greece (King et al. 2010) and Cyprus (Teerling 2011). However, my purpose for this research on second generation Iraqi Kurds is not just to add another case-study. Rather, what it is interesting is that it almost no research has been published on second generation Iraqi Kurds returning from Europe and neighboring countries to the KRG region.

Although there is some academic work on first generation Iraqi Kurdish refugees and a wide range of research about other groups of first- and second-generation refugees in other countries, there is a gap in research on Iraqi Kurdish returnees to the KRG region. The study of returnees has been an under-explored field of migration research more generally. Scholars usually examine the immigrant group's lives, expectations and integration/assimilation processes in the host country (Kilinc, 2014). Therefore, my research aims to contribute to return migration studies in general and also to the specific case of second-generation Iraqi Kurds returning to the KRG region.

My study is new in terms of the second movement of Iraqi Kurdish second-generation returning from the diaspora to their home country, a country whose structures have been changed since 1991. There has been little sustained research on Iraqi Kurds second-generation returnees. I anticipate that the project will make a contribution to literature on the refugee experience, on "return", home and identity, and to understanding of processes of rapid change now taking place in the KRG.



Different phases of the second-generation Iraqi refugees are investigated in my research:

the reason for return, and their experiences in the parental homeland of KRG, belonging and identity. The first and second research questions are about the images of the ‘homeland’ created by second-generation returnees and the factors, that encouraging the second generation’s decision to return.

These questions aim to explore constructions of home and belonging through the participants’ Kurdish upbringing in diaspora countries and their childhood memories from the homeland. The third research question aims to explore how the second generation adjusts constructions of home and their belongingness once they return to their parental homeland, as well as their gendered-self. These questions try to make a connection between past and present; how these diasporic and transnational experiences shaped the return migration project and what kind of ‘counter-diasporic’ experiences they had in the parental homeland (cf. King and Christou 2010).

## **1.2 The term ‘second-generation’**

From the outset of my thesis I acknowledge that the term ‘second generation’, is rather complex and is actually a contradiction in itself, particularly in the context of my study. A fundamental part of the research on the ‘second generations’ emphasizes the complex issues of home, identity and belonging. In terms of ‘second generation’ the term ‘return’ is vague, as it is not a return in terms of birth-place, but rather an emigration to another country (Christou 2006c: 15). Furthermore, the term ‘generation’ has been debated in other researches (for example, Kertzer 1983). Kertzer conceptualises ‘generations’ using four principles: ‘generation as a principle of kinship descent; generation as cohort; generation as life stage; and generation as historical period’ (Kertzer 1983:126).

In the context of my research the term ‘generation’ is mainly understood as kinship descent, a genealogical aspect related to the family (parents and their children).

Hence, the first generation are Iraqi Kurds born in Iraq who emigrated to Europe and neighboring countries, whilst the second generation are the Iraqi Kurds born in Europe and neighboring countries who arrived in the diaspora before the age of five years old.

Kilinc indicates in her research that the term second generation refers to the children of ‘first generation’ immigrants, who are born in the host country of their parent’s immigration. Most of the time, they do not have any connections to their parents’ country except vague memories of their relatives and neighbours from summer holidays and short visits. Therefore, the second generation imagines a ‘homeland’ that is constructed through familial stories and nostalgia (Kilinc 2013). In the framework of my research the ‘second generation’ refers to kinship descent; connecting the children of the first-generation Iraqi Kurds immigrants into this research as ‘second generation’. The following paragraphs will discuss the concept of ‘second generation’.

Other researchers, who investigate immigrant groups in the USA came up with some definitions for the concept of ‘second generation’, but their definitions are not detailed enough and often inadequate. Portes and Zhou (1993:75) outline second-generation as ‘native-born children with at least one foreign-born parent or children born abroad who came to the United States before the age of 12’. The explanations are equally vague in European research of the second generation. However, ‘the strict or “classic” definition of the second generation is that it is made up of children born in the host country to two immigrant parents, the latter being the first generation’ (King and Christou 2008: 5).

Most studies which focus on the second generation are about their integration/assimilation in the host society: the expectation is that they will adapt better than their parents and make greater progress than their parents in education and employment

(Thomson and Crul 2007; Kilinc 2014). Until recently, there was little or no expectation that they would return to the country of origin of their parents, although there is now a small, growing, and distinctive literature on second-generation or counter-diasporic return migration (Wessendorf 2007; King and Christou 2010; Oso 2011; Sardinha 2011; Teerling 2011).

Researches on the Iraqi Kurd second-generation returnees are still lacking.

What is common among the studies on second generation returnees is their approach to generation from the perspective of migration experience and in addition to belonging to the same age cohort. Indeed, migration literature is replete with references to the ‘first’, ‘second’, and ‘third’ generation (of migrants), with the first term referring to individuals who migrated as adults, the second to individuals born to migrant parents in the society of settlement, and the third to their descendants (Rumbaut 2004). However, the self-contradictory term ‘second-generation migrant’ needs to be approached critically on account of its implicit assumptions as to (national) origins, ‘nativeness’, and relations of (non-)belonging (Kilinc: 2014). Kilinc has employed the term ‘generation in-between’ in her research on young Turkish second generation returning to Turkey from Germany. She has stated that the term second generation refers to individuals who share the experience of migration having taken place in their childhood and early teenage years (Kilinc: 2014). More specifically, Levitt suggests that “the ‘second generation’ are often raised in settings in which the homeland is referenced daily – ideologically, materially, and affectively. She also considers the members of the ‘second generation’ to be ‘socialized directly and indirectly into the asymmetries and disjunctures inherent in the transnational social field and [...] part of the cast of characters who resolve them » (2009: 1231).

### **1.3 Research Questions**

- In what way are images of the ‘homeland’ created by second-generation returnees?
- What are the factors encouraging the second generation’s decision to return?
- How do second-generation returnees react to the potential discovery that the ‘pure’ Kurdistan of their received memory (from parents’ stories, holiday visits etc.) is different in reality?
- How does the second generation’s return affect the meaning and boundaries of their ‘identities’: their sense of ‘who they are’ and where or what ‘home’ is?
- How are the returnees’ narratives of home and ‘belonging’ shaped or influenced by externally scripted views of home?

### **1.4 Research Background**

My interest in researching Iraqi Kurdish migration stems from my family background and academic studies. I was born in Sulaimani and was 16 years old when I arrived with my family to Germany. In early 1996, my family went into exile and ended up in Germany. We started a new life, a life away from our homeland. We did not get into a refugee camp because my father arrived in Germany before us. First of all, I had to learn German – a new and a difficult language – with no previous experience. Secondly, as a teenager I had to integrate into a new society and a totally different culture – a struggle which was not easy at all. I was conflicted between keeping some of my traditional customs and social behaviours and adapting to those of the host country. Finally, I had to adjust to a new educational system, and to find my way through this system to achieve my aims, goals, and objectives. Describing my situation brings me back to a time of suffering which all immigrants went through.

I studied for a BA in Social Science at Humboldt University in Berlin/Germany from 2001-2004. I then completed an MA in Refugee Studies at the University of East London in September 2008. My dissertation looked at the deportation of Iraqi Kurdish refugees in the United Kingdom.

I returned to Kurdistan twice, once after about 14 years when I graduated from high school. For summer holidays we visited Kurdistan. In 2004, after I graduated from university, I returned to see if it was possible for me to come back and live in Kurdistan. I did not stay for the whole year, but I stayed for more than one month. I visited the university. I spoke with my old friends and relatives.

In 2009, I came to the decision that I needed an academic background in social science. After coming to the UK, I always thought about a suitable time for return. In late 2010, I decided to return to Kurdistan.

The reason behind my return was that I always want to be involved in making changes in a place, not being in a place where my existence does not bring much to the table. I thought that if I stayed in Europe, I would not have any influence since there were thousands of professional academics like me. When I returned, I started teaching in the University of Sulaimani. Teaching and working with my colleagues was both beneficial and enjoyable. It was a particularly good time for Iraqi/Kurdistan. Many families had decided to return to the KRG region and many more were already living in the region. Some time later, I decided to base my PhD on 'return' to the KRG region. I took an exam to win a scholarship from the Ministry of Higher Education in the KRG region and passed the exam.

Migration and displacement have been a part of my immediate and extended family's history. I have always had a great interest in refugee and migration-related matters and the personal stories of those involved, which led me to embark on academic and professional career.

Being familiar with life in the Middle East, especially in Iraq and neighboring countries, and having experienced life among ‘divided’ populations, this research project on second-generation Iraqi Kurds returning to the KRG region produced the ideal opportunity for me to further explore these important and current issues in the field of migration and refugee studies.

I am myself part of the 1.5-generation of Iraqi Kurd in the diaspora. As stated earlier, I was born in Sulaimania/Iraq in 1978 where I spent the first sixteen years of my life. I was just two years old when the Iran/Iraq war started in 1980. That was the end of my childhood as I knew it because of all the wars and political complications in the area. 1996 we were to seek asylum in Germany. I lived in Berlin with my family.

All of this happened about twenty-two years ago, which means that I have now spent more than half of my life outside my native country. Berlin became my permanent home while Sulaymaniyah belonged to the past. Several years have passed and despite the fact that I can speak German fluently, I am always being asked where I am from. This has made me question where my home really is and where I belong; this struggle to belong despite successfully integrating (at least linguistically, among other things) ignited my interest in the issue of identity and belonging. Although sociologically significant, these issues have for a long time been also at the heart of my life journey.

I am providing these parts of my life story here because there is no denying that my interest in the issue of identity formation a result of my own daily experiences and struggles. I am aware of the fact that exploring one’s own experience has the potential to create some ambiguities, but this reflexive awareness combined with having lived the issues at hand will allow me to explore and analyse the issues involved from various perspectives.

## **1.5 Summary of the Thesis structure**

**Chapter 1:** This chapter introduces the thesis. In this chapter I demonstrate my research aims and objectives.

**Chapter 2:** This chapter provides a brief overview of the political history of Kurdistan in general and Iraqi Kurdistan in particular. Furthermore, this chapter states the refugee background of the Iraqi Kurdish population, with special attention being paid to second-generation Iraqi Kurdish returnees.

**Chapter 3:** This presents the experiences of second-generation returnees born in exile, returning to the ‘home’ country of their parents, where they have never lived. Moreover it explores the decision-making strategies of second-generation returnees making the decision to return back homes, who was involved in such choices and how they perceive the process of returning ‘home’. The study adopts theories of social and cultural capital to examine its role in shaping the second-generations returnees experiences of returning. As research on some of these topics is rather limited, I try to add further insights by interweaving some of my own empirical material, which I collected during fieldwork in the KRG region.

**Chapter 4:** This introduces the methodological and ethical perspectives and context in which the research was conducted, analysed and written up. It provides an in-depth explanation and assessment of the research design and methods of data collection. In this chapter, the disclosure and explanation of the narrative methodology have been presented. Additionally, the use of snowballing as the sampling technique when an inadequate sample was unreachable was also justified. This chapter are then followed by the significant chapter that make up the important part of my thesis: the ‘findings or results’ chapters.

**Chapter 5:** In this chapter I present the results of the narratives in relation to the thematic factors that cause the second generation Iraqi Kurds to return to Kurdistan.

It shows that family and social relations, political, hostility and discrimination in settlement countries, nationalism and patriotism and the interaction between these factors motivate the decision to return. It looks at the meaning of home and belonging of second-generation Iraqi Kurd returnees. To trace the process through which the notions of 'belonging' and 'home' are constructed, this research section reflects three main memory types that feature in the theoretical overview outlined by Erll (2011), Assman and Czaplicka (1995).

**Chapter 6:** This is the concluding chapter. This chapter revises the research questions and makes comparisons with other research on second-generation return and re-evaluates my methodological framework.



## **2. History of Iraqi Kurdistan**

### **2.1 Kurdish History**

Iraqi Kurdistan is at a momentous crossroads in terms of its political development. Painting a picture of 25 centuries of Iraqi Kurdistan's history in one chapter is an impossible task.

Therefore, this introduction will merely highlight major landmarks and facts likely to help in understanding the present reality. The political situation of Iraqi Kurdistan is often said to be unique. Some aspects of it are, but others have corollaries elsewhere, and it is possibly more correct to say that the situation is anomalous. For example, Iraqi Kurdistan remains unrecognized as a state by the international community, yet it possesses a domestic political system which displays highly developed and increasingly sophisticated state-like institutions, attributes and characteristics.

Kurdistan is a region of mountains and plateaus bordering Turkey, Syria, Iran and Iraq (Askari 2013); mostly inhabited by Sunni Muslims. Most Kurds, who are a group of individuals whose language is associated with Western Iran, inhabit the Kurdistan region (Askari 2013). Kurds largely lived a nomadic lifestyle and are currently considered one of the largest ethnic communities lacking their own state (King 2013). Before the First World War, the Kurds were spread in areas currently covered by Turkey, Iran, Iraq, Syria and Armenia; which were still under the Ottoman Empire (Barbir and Hathaway 2014). Their main livestock included sheep and goats, which they herded throughout the plains of Mesopotamia, the Turkish, and Iranian islands (Barbir and Hathaway 2014).

Following the breakup of the Ottoman Empire, which led to the formation of new states, the Kurds abandoned their traditional lifestyles and seasonal movements, mainly because they were not free to cross borders into different states without permissions (McDowall 2004). Subsequently, due to restrictions on border movements, Kurds embraced a market economy (McDowall 2004).

Evidence points to Central Asia as the ethnic origin of the Kurds, which connects them closely with Iran (Muys 2010). An estimated 15 to 20 million Kurds live in regions covering parts of Armenia, Turkey, Iraq, and Iran (Sharp 2011). In order to overcome many years of subjugation, they have tried to establish an independent state for themselves, but each time they try to do so the governments of the regions in which they reside have crushed their uprisings (Russell 2014). This chapter focuses on Saddam Hussein's al-Anfal campaigns against the Kurdish population, the displacement of Kurds, the Halabja massacre, which saw the death of thousands of Kurds, the major political organizations and activities, the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG), the role of the Kurdish Regional Government in Iraq, and the present region of Iraqi Kurdistan.

The history of the Kurdish people can be traced back to the medieval period, which covers the Safavid era (Izady 2015). Arab people used the term 'Kurds' as a universal concept that referred to Iranian nomadic tribes; the concept predates the Islamic period (Aziz 2014). During the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the term 'Kurd' was used by Sherefxan Bidlisi to refer to four tribal groups of people, who are known as the Iranian nomads: Guran, Kurmanj, Kalhor and Lur. Each of these tribal groups spoke different dialects (Rashidvash 2014).

However, the two tribal groups most closely associated with modern Kurds are the Carduchi and Corduene, because Carduchi has been considered to be a primordial equivalent of the term 'Kurdistan', while scholars have viewed Corduene as being equivalent to the contemporary Kurdistan: these two groups are considered as the ancestors, or at least the original nucleus of the Iranian-speaking people inhabiting what is currently known as Kurdistan (Calavito 2015; Rashidvash 2014).

Clearly, the Kurds did not originate as a single tribe. It is apparent that the Kurds and their history are the products of centuries of continuous internal assimilation and evolution of new tribal groups and ideas that were introduced periodically in the land that would come to

be known as the Kurdistan. Essentially, the Kurds turn out to be the descendants of all the tribal groups that finally settled in Kurdistan.

Around 4,000 years ago, the first precursor of the Indo-European speaking people was immigrating into Kurdistan in small numbers to inhabit the area (Calavito 2015). These people finally formed the nobility of the Hittite, Mitani and Kassite Kingdoms (Soomro 2008). However, the people who had settled there earlier remained solidly Hurrian. With time, Hurrian Kurdistan fast became Indo-European Kurdistan (Soomro 2008). The Hurrian are considered the most significant reflection of Kurdish culture to date. Medes is one of the prominent clans that had settled in the areas of Kurdistan (Izady 2015). The Medes established an empire that included all Kurdistan and some of the surrounding territories (Middleton 2015).

However, the people who came to be known as Kurds experienced massive population movements by the start of 300 BC; in the process, they settled in and dominated various neighbouring regions (Izady 2015). Kurdish polities of the time resulted from these movements (Leonard 2005). They formed such kingdoms as Cortea, Adiabene, Gordyene, Media and Kirm, which joined the confederate members of the Parthian Federation in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC (Leonard 2006). In the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Turkic nomads immigrated to the Kurdistan region and, with time, exerted political dominations of the vast areas the Middle East (Docherty 2007). In the process, most of the kingdoms that had been established succumbed to the kingdoms and empires that had been established by the Turkic people (Docherty 2007). However, the Kurdish principalities were not assimilated in to the kingdoms and they continued to exist autonomously until around the 17<sup>th</sup> century (Meho 2002).

The dawn of the Ottoman and Safavid empires changed the Kurdistan region; partitioning it into two colonies and introducing artilleries, which devastated its inhabitants.

During the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, large numbers of Kurds were expelled violently to far corners of the Ottoman and Safavid empires (Ahmed 2012). Due to the circumstances as a result, the Kurdish people started voicing a desire for nationalism and a unified Kurdish state; they also began to defend themselves (Ahmed 2012). The call for a unified Kurdish community led to the birth of nationalism. The Kurdish people started to agitate for an independent Kurdistan while still under the Ottoman Empire, but Kurdish nationalism became more prominent in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the Ottoman Empire was dissolved after the First World War (Ahmed 2012).

When the Ottoman Empire was divided into different regions, the League of Nations granted Britain mandates over Palestine and Mesopotamia (later known as Iraq), while France was granted mandates over Lebanon and Syria. The territories of the state of Iraq were defined in 1920 (Kadhim 2012). They included Lower Mesopotamia and Upper Mesopotamia, which came to be known as Iraqi Kurdistan (Barkan 2013). The British mandate formally ended in 1932 and the Kingdom of Iraq obtained its independence (Shelley 2013). The Kingdom joined the United Nations in 1945 and it became one of the founding members of the Arab League (Taus-Bolstad 2003). During the same time, Kurdish leader Mustafa Barzani led a rebellion against the government of Iraq (Taus-Bolstad 2003). The rebellion failed, prompting Barzani and his associates to flee to the Soviet Union, but it marked the beginning of a series of uprisings by the Kurdish people to agitate for their own independent state (Taus-Bolstad 2003).

The Kingdom of Iraq became the Republic of Iraq in 1958 after a coup led by Abd al-Karim Qasim and Abdul Salam Arif to overthrow the Hashimite monarchy (Romero 2010). During the five years of his governance Qasim achieved much, withdrawing from the Baghdad Pact, issuing agrarian and land reform legislation and nationalizing oil companies' lands.

The only allies Qasim had were his own people and the Soviet Union, and he faced various attempts to overturn his rule. The most significant was an unsuccessful attempt in Mosul by the Al-Shawaf Movement just few months after he came to power in March 1959, and another failed assassination attempt in October 1959 by the Arab Baath Socialist Party.

Qasim was later assassinated in 1963 after the Baath had captured power, with Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr as the Prime Minister and Colonel Abdul Salam Arif as the president (Ciment 2015). The conflicts between the Kurdish people began around this time as the Baath government forces campaigned to end insurrection by the Kurds (Tucker 2010). Saddam Hussein coerced President Hassan al-Bakr to resign in 1979, then assumed office as both the President of Iraq and Chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council (Hauss 2010). Apart from invading Iran, Saddam Hussein's forces started suppressing the agitations of the Kurdish people, who continued to press for an independent state (Kelly 2008). In order to deal with Kurdish pro-independence elements, Saddam Hussein conducted the Al-Anfal campaigns and used chemical weapons against the Kurdish population (Kelly 2008). The subsequent sections examine these scenarios in depth.

## **2.2 Diplomatic Struggle for a state: - Kurds and the international community in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.**

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The root of the historical problem can be traced back to 1926, the year that Iraqi Kurds were included as part of Iraq, the consequence of which was the fight for autonomy by the Kurds (Donabed 2015). The Kurds had nurtured the hope of being an independent state in the early 1920s, mainly because the possibility of achieving that hope was apparent in the Treaty of Sevres of 1920 (Donabed 2015). The post-First World War treaty was signed between the representatives of Ottoman Turkey after their defeat and the victorious Allied forces on 10 August 1920, marking the end of the war (Bolukbasi 2012). Essentially, the treaty marked the end and the beginning of the partitioning of the Ottoman Empire (Bolukbasi 2012). The treaty obliged Turkey to relinquish all its claims over North African and Arab Asia (Bolukbasi 2012).

In addition, the interpretation of the treaty implied that Armenia could be independent and Kurds could form an autonomous Kurdish region (Bolukbasi 2012).

However, Turkish representatives rejected the treaty and in 1923 it was replaced with the Treaty of Lausanne, which effectively invalidated the treaty of Sevres (Tucker 2014).

The Treaty of Lausanne was the treaty that finally concluded the First World War. It was signed between Turkey's representatives and a group of states, which included Italy, Greece, France, Great Britain, Yugoslavia, Croatia and Romania, among others (Tucker 2014). One of the main provisions of the treaty was the recognition of the geographical borders of the modern Turkey (Tucker 2014). Consequently, Turkey managed to keep the largest region of Kurdistan within its territory and influence (Hall 2014). Nonetheless, southern Kurdistan remained annexed to Iraq, which was still under the British mandate (Hall 2014).

In 1922, following months of conflict, the then Anglo-Iraq guaranteed the Kurds within the territory of Iraq the right to form and run their own government. However, four months later, when the Treaty of Lausanne was established, the hope of forming an autonomous state with its own government was not fulfilled (Hall 2014).

In December 1925, the League of Nations, a precursor to the United Nations, made a decision that Mosul should be part of Iraq (Donabed 2015). At the same time, as has been indicated earlier, the promise of a Kurdish state was abandoned and replaced by a promise to secure the Kurdish administrative, linguistic and cultural entitlements from the newly established government of Iraq (Donabed 2015). As a result, the Kurds resorted to unrest and petitioning the League of Nations to demand that they should be granted independence, a strategy which remained ineffective (Donabed 2015).

The dawn of the Ottoman and Safavid empires changed the Kurdistan region; partitioning it into two colonies and introducing artilleries, which devastated its inhabitants.

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### **2.3 State Conflict over decade between the Iraqi Government and the Kurdish National Movement**

The process of fighting and negotiation between Kurds and the Iraqi central government began even before the formation of an Iraqi government. In 1918, Sheikh Mahmood declared an independent government in the city of Sulaimani. The British army moved their forces and succeeded in capturing the city of Sulaimani and Mahmood was arrested (CJ Admons 2012).



Afterward Sheikh Mahmood was allowed to return to his city in 1922 and announced a new government, this time helped by the British.

However, he turned his back and revered Britain again. Fighting started again and Kurdish forces were defeated and forced to escape to the border with Iran. The sheikh continued defending himself until 1923 when he finally entered into negotiations to end the battle (Salih and Abdulrazaq 2011). However, in recent history, fighting and dialogue between the Kurdish national movement and the Iraqi central government began in September 1961 when Mula Mustafa Barzani led a rebellion against Qassim's government. Two years later a ceasefire was declared and talks started for the first time. On 8 February 1963, Qasim's regime collapsed and Arab nationalists and the Arab Baath Party took power.

Qasim was assassinated and Abdul-Salam Arif was declared the first President of the Republic of Iraq, while Ahmad Hassan Al-Bakir was announced as Prime Minister (Haider 1998). The KDP delegated Jalal Talabani, Loqman Barzani and Salih Yousifi to negotiate on their behalf and claim Kurdish rights. The committee presented their written requirements which included the following:

1. Agreeing on autonomy for the Kurdistan Region
2. Forming a local parliament which would elect a local Kurdish government within Iraq.
3. The position of Deputy President of Iraq should be filled from the Kurdish region and should be elected by the KDP.
4. The Kurdish language should be used as the formal language in the region.
5. There should be a percentage of peshmerga (Kurdish fighters) in the Iraqi army.
6. Kurdistan's local government should have a share of Iraq's national resources.
7. The Kurdish region should include the governorates of Sulaimani, Erbil and Kirkuk, and the Kurdish dominated towns in the governorates of Mosul and Dyala.

Iraqi officials declared these requirements as unreasonable and impossible to achieve (Sayed 1999). According to Sayed, this memorandum was seen as a covert declaration of an independent Kurdistan and, therefore, was completely dismissed (Sayed 1999). Barzani's peshmerga resumed their attacks on the Iraqi army in the north of Iraq on 5 May 1963. Iraq's National Council of Revolution met on the 9 June to make a decision on starting a military operation against Kurdistan. According to Hani Al-Fakiki the civilian members of the council stood against this decision. However, the army officers gained the majority and war against Northern Iraq and Barzani was declared (Al-Fakikki 1993).

The division between army officers and different factions of the Arab Baath Socialist Party increased, with disagreement on issues such as the union with Syria and Egypt, acknowledgement of Kuwait as a state, and the resumption of fighting against the Kurds. This came to a head on 18 November 1963, when Arif finally gained power and made Tahir Yaha the Prime Minister (Al-Rakaby 2017). In February 1964, the KDP announced another ceasefire and the central government and the Kurdish National Movement went through another round of talks. This time Barzani demanded the formation of a Kurdish region, including the governorates of Sulaimani, Kirkuk, Erbil and the towns of Sinjar, Zahko, Khanaqeen and Amidia. The KDP asked for more power and greater independence. Furthermore, Barzani insisted that the temporary constitution of Iraq should state that the Arabs in Iraq are part of the Arab nation and not all Iraq, referring to the fact the Kurds are a separate nation. This was completely rejected by Iraq's central government, which argued that it was an attempt to divide Iraq.

The Barzani-Yaha talks collapsed and fierce fighting resumed in April 1965 (Kathim & Shalal 2014). The battle persisted until Abdul-Salam Arif died when his helicopter crashed travelling from Qurna town to Basra on 13 April 1966.

The military personnel, backed by the Egyptian government, supported Arif's brother the General Abdul Rahman Arif to be the president of Iraq, rather than Abdul-Rahman Al-Bazaz or Abdul-Aziz Al-Uqaily. One of the reasons the army had for supporting Abdul-Rahman Arif was his wish to end the battle with Kurds, which they believed he could achieve (Al-Hasnawy 2009). However, despite Arif and his Prime Minister's first speech after taking power confirming the government's commitment to Kurdish rights, they resumed military operations until the peshmerga defeated the army in the strategic battle of Handreen in May 1966. This was the beginning of another period of peace.

Negotiations which started soon after reached agreement on 29 June 1966. The Iraqi government agreed on 12 points, including a decentralized ruling system for the Kurdish region, acknowledgement of the Kurds as a second nation in Iraq and the return of displaced people and families to their homes (Al-Maathidi 2012). In August 1966, Prime Minister Al-Bazaz resigned to be replaced by Naji Talib and then Tahir Yaha until Arif was removed from power by another faction of the Arab Baath Socialist Party in a military coup led by Ahmad Hssan Al-Bakir and Saddam Hussein in July 1968. In the period between June 1966 and July 1968 there was no further fighting, but the Iraqi government withdrew from its commitment to solve the Kurdish problem. In the meantime, Barzani increased his demands to include a self-governed and independent administration of the Kurdish region and a complete retreat of the army from the area (Al-Zubaidy 2006).

After the military coup, fighting recommenced. The Arab Baath Socialist Party issued a governorate law, which empowered local government in each province, established the University of Sulaimani and officially recognized Nawroz as an Iraqi national holiday (Muhedeen 2006). This was an attempt to re-start talks with Kurds. Indeed, negotiations restarted in January 1970 and led to the agreement of the Self Autonomy Law on 11 March 1970.

Barzani and Saddam Hussein agreed to implement this law in four years ( M.Al-Barzani 2002). However, the situation deteriorated and difficulties in implementing the agreement started to appear, especially as a result of Barzani's lack of confidence in the government's seriousness.

This absence of trust peaked after a failed assassination attempt on Idris Barzani (Mala Mustafa's son) in December 1970, and another attempt on Mula Mustafa himself in Gala, in the north of Iraq, in September 1971. As a consequence, clashes between the peshmerga and the army occurred in the town of Khanaqeen in the south of Kurdistan and dialogue stopped again in November 1971 (M.Barzani 2002).

This time Barzani insisted that the governorate of Kirkuk and the towns of Khanaqeen and Sinjar should be included in the autonomous area. The Iraqi government firmly and fiercely refused this request.

Battle resumed in 1974 until Mula Mustafa Barzani's revolution collapsed after Algeria's agreement with Iraq and Iran on 6 March 1975. According to this agreement, Iran took control of half of the Shaat Al-Arab river and stopped any support to Kurdish fighters. The Iraqi army controlled all of Kurdistan and Barzani escaped to the United State of America, where he died of cancer in March 1979 (M.Barzani 2002). In 1976, guerrillas against the Baath regime restarted despite the events of 1975 and the loss of hope that freedom for Kurdistan could be achieved.

The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, which formed in Damscus in June 1975, declared a new revolution against the the Baath party, as bloody fighting involved most cities, town and villages in a new period of struggle. Thousands were killed among the Iraqi army, the peshmerga and civilians until November 1983 when negotiations started and a ceasefire was announced between the PUK and Saddam's regime (Mustafa 1999).

PUK delegates, led by Jalal Talabani and Nawsherwan Mustafa, visited Baghdad and met with Iraqi officials, including former President of Iraq Saddam Hussein, on various occasions. There was disagreement about the geographical border of Kurdistan and the degree of self-administration and independence. On 15 January 1985, the leadership of the PUK revealed that negotiations had collapsed and war was announced again (Mustafa 1999). Fighting continued until the al-Anfal campaign when most of peshmerga forces left Iraq and fled to Iran.

In March 1991, after the USA and its allies liberated Kuwait, the Shia in the south and the Kurds in the north rose up against Saddam's regime. Kurdish fighters and civilians took over most of the cities and towns in the north including Kirkuk.

However, the Iraqi army managed to regain control in about one month. Nearly a million Kurds left their homes and fled to Iran and Turkey. In 1991, the Kurdistan Front including all of Iraqi Kurdistan's political parties entered another round of talks after the second Gulf war. Mukaram Talabani, has written in detail how talks started (Talabani 2006). Kurdish politicians from the PUK, the KDP and other parties visited Baghdad many times. By end of 1991, the Kurdish delegates returned to Kurdistan with no hope of an agreement and, once again, talks collapsed mainly because of disagreement about Kirkuk and other border town Ahmad 1991.

Kurdish people elected their own local parliament and government, which was later known as the KRG. This situation persisted until 2003, when the USA and their allies liberated Iraq. Initially, Iraq was ruled by the Coalition's administration led by Paul Bremer until Summer 2003. In July 2003, Iraq elected its own council which consisted of 25 members and reflected all Iraq's ethnicities and religions. Kurds were represented by five members which accounted for 20 per cent of seats. These were taken by Jalal Talabani, Masood Barzani, Dara Noor Al-deen, Dr Mahmood Ottman and Salah Al-deen Bhadeen.

In June 2004, the council was replaced by a temporary Iraqi Government. Prior to 2003, debate about Iraq's territorial stability tended to focus on the Kurdish issue and the relationship between the autonomous Kurdish area and the rest of Iraq (Bremer 2006). However, after 2003, this preoccupation shifted toward a tripartite fragmentation of Sunni, Shiite and Kurds.

More decentralization was requested and was reflected in the Iraqi Constitution in 2005, which displayed a remarkable trend toward federalism for all Iraq. The Kurds in particular escalated their requests and insisted on federalism within Iraq. Kurdish politicians linked their existence within the big home to having more independence within their smaller one (Visser 2010).

The USA faced enormous difficulties in keeping security in all Iraq, mediating between different Iraqi politicians who mirrored a variety of sectarian groups and different political parties with different agendas (Cole 2003). According to Paul Bremer, the USA were faced with a large number of problems to solve: de-Baathification and expelling members of the former Arab Baath Socialist Party from the new Iraqi government, reforming the Iraqi army, fighting insurgency, challenging corruption, maintaining security on the street and stopping looting by gangs, and, last but not least, handing over or transferring power to the Iraqi people (Bremer 2006). In 2005, representatives of different Iraqi parties formed the committee tasked with writing the Iraqi constitution and each group insisted on including their rights in the constitution. In 2005, the Iraqi people elected their representatives for the Iraqi parliament freely for the first time after a long period of dictatorship under Saddam's regime. The parliament voted on the constitution and most of the Kurd's demands were agreed, including a federal union between the Kurdistan region and Iraq (Al-Maamoori 2015).

The Kurdish people had 75 representatives in this parliament and this was considered a golden period for the Kurdish National Movement in their long struggle towards independence. For Kurds the constitution solved most of their issues apart from the geographical border of their region, which later became a key disagreement and pushed Kurds to declare their desire for independence in a historical referendum in September 2017. Moreover, in 2006 Iraqis elected their government and a Kurdish leader, Jalal Talabani, was elected for the first time in Iraq's history as President of Iraq.

In conclusion, the Kurdish National Movement have tried over years to gain more independence and to have more power in ruling their region. During periods of war or peace since the formation of the Iraqi government in 1921, Kurds have struggled for more freedom, liberty, autonomy and self-determination.

Kurds did not declare their desire to have an independent Kurdistan until 25 September 2017, when Kurdish people voted in a referendum for independence.

## **2.4 Major Political Organizations and Activities- Kurds during and after Monarchy in Iraq.**

While using rebellions to fight for their own independent state, the Kurds also created political formations to advance their political, economic and social agenda. One of the earliest political organizations was the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), which was formed in 1946 in Mahabad, Iran, to fight for the political interests of Iranian Kurdistan.

Qazi Muhammad, the then leader of the short-lived Soviet-backed republic of Mahabad, formed the party (Abdulla 2012). The party was intricately intertwined with the politics of Iraq and Iran at the same time, particularly because Kurds were found across both borders (Abdulla 2012). During that period and beyond, the Soviet Union provided support to the growing Kurdish national struggles against the monarchical domination of both Iran and

Iraq (Abdulla 2012). One of the most prominent leaders of the KDP was Mustafa Barzani, who played a key role in advancing the Kurdish nationalist agenda (Gunter 2010).

In 1946, when the party was established, he was selected as the leader of the party to lead the Kurdish revolt against the Iraqi regime; he doubled as the political and military leader of the Kurdish uprisings until the time of his death in 1979 (Gunter 2010). The party played a significant role in advancing the quest for Kurds to form their own autonomous state in Northern Iraq (Gunter 2010).

Another important political organization which championed the cause of Kurds was the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), which was established in 1975 as a result of discontent within the KDP (Izady 2015). Following the collapse of the Mahabad Republic in early 1947, Ibrahim Ahmad joined the Iraqi KDP (Izady 2015). Ahmad had been the representative of the KDP in Iran's Sulaimani. The internal wrangles within the KDP were mainly due to Ahmad's leftist politics and his support for Qazi Muhammad, which put him and his factions against Mustafa Barzani and his supporters (Izady 2015).

The Kingdom of Iraq became the Republic of Iraq in 1958 after a coup led by Abd al-Karim Qasim and Abdul Salam Arif to overthrow the Hashimite monarchy (Romero 2010). During the five years of his governance Qasim achieved much, withdrawing from the Baghdad Pact, issuing agrarian and land reform legislation and nationalizing oil companies' lands.

The only allies Qasim had were his own people and the Soviet Union, and he faced various attempts to overturn his rule. The most significant was an unsuccessful attempt in Mosul by the Al-Shawaf Movement just few months after he came to power in March 1959, and another failed assassination attempt in October 1959 by the Arab Baath Socialist Party.

Qasim was later assassinated in 1963 after the Baath had captured power, with Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr as the Prime Minister and Colonel Abdul Salam Arif as the president



(Ciment 2015). The conflicts between the Kurdish people began around this time as the Baath government forces campaigned to end insurrection by the Kurds (Tucker 2010). Saddam Hussein coerced President Hassan al-Bakr to resign in 1979, then assumed office as both the President of Iraq and Chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council (Hauss 2010). Apart from invading Iran, Saddam Hussein's forces started suppressing the agitations of the Kurdish people, who continued to press for an independent state (Kelly 2008). In order to deal with Kurdish pro-independence elements, Saddam Hussein conducted the Al-Anfal campaigns and used chemical weapons against the Kurdish population (Kelly 2008). The subsequent sections examine these scenarios in depth.

The defining moment for the KDP came during the second Iraqi-Kurdish war between 1974 and 1975 when the Kurds were defeated. On May 1975, Talabani, an ally of Ibrahim Ahmad, together with members of his faction, formed the PUK and subsequently announced its existence through the Syrian media (Gunter 2009). The 1974 conflict was an attempt by Kurdish forces to fight against the Iraqi army. Since, the Kurdish forces did not have the kind of sophisticated weaponry possessed by the Iraqi forces, they were crushed and their plans quashed. The defeat of the Kurdish forces caused Mustafa and some of his supporters, including his son, to escape to Iran, leaving a leadership gap in the KDP (Gunter 2009). Jalal Talabani, who cooperated with other likeminded supporters to create the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, filled this leadership gap (Gunter 2009).

Around 1976, Masoud Barazani and his cronies regrouped in Europe to launch the provisional leadership of the KDP and to reposition themselves as a leftist movement. Later, Masoud Barzani returned from Iran to take up the leadership of the KDP in Iraq (Marcus 2009). The activities of the KDP in Iraq increased, largely against the members of the rival party, the PUK (Marcus 2009). The KDP killings of members of the PUK mostly took place between 1976 and 1977 (Tahiri 2007).

Talabani retaliated by ordering his forces to fire upon any members of the KDP. However, the PUK was not able to defeat the KDP because the KDP had greater operational strength. Both parties were supported financially by the neighbouring states, especially Iran (Tahiri 2007).

The continued internal wrangles among Kurds made it impossible for them to achieve their dream of defeating Iraqi regimes to become independent. This weakness was confirmed during the beginning of the war between Iraq and Iran, when Saddam Hussein said that the Kurds' internal misunderstandings made it difficult for them to achieve their plans to form an independent state (Tahiri 2007).

In 1981, a coalition of the KDP, the Kurdish Socialist Party and the Iraqi Communist Party attacked PUK members in Erbil (Aziz 2014). In revenge, the forces supporting the PUK mounted a counterattack, killing 50 communists and arresting 70 (Aziz 2014). In the subsequent years, Iran started to work closely with the KDP against the regime of Saddam in Iraq (Hiro 2001). By 1983, it became apparent that Iran would invade Iraq through Kurdistan. However, Iraq successfully enacted revenge by rounding up and killing about 8,000 males of the Barzani clan (Charountaki 2010).

At the same time, the forces of the PUK had declared a ceasefire with Saddam's regime, which proved to be fallacious as more than 3,000 PUK troops defected and joined the KDP to strengthen the fight against Hussein (Charountaki 2010). The Kurds realised that, in order to achieve their liberty, they needed to unite and work together. Consequently, in 1986, the existing political parties, including the ICP, the PUK and the KDP, formed a common unity against Saddam's Baath Party. Jalal Talabani and Barzani finally met in Iran to form a common working front, the Kurdistan Front, in 1987 (Tahiri 2007).

The Kurdistan Front made the Kurds' forces stronger than they had been from the early 1960s (Tahiri 2007).

With the support that they received from Iran, KDP and PUK forces managed to capture various military and civilian regions that had been occupied by Baath forces. The strengthened Kurds' forces became a real threat to Saddam Hussein (Tahiri 2007).

Having perceived the gravity of the threats, Saddam instructed his cousin, Ali Hassan al-Majid, to commence attacks on Kurdish positions using chemical weapons (Anderson 2011). The attacks led to the Halabja massacres, the worst of Saddam's campaigns of al-Anfal against the Kurd population (Anderson 2011).

The history of the Kurds' fight for independence took another turn during the Gulf War, which provided a perfect opportunity for Kurdish uprisings.

In 1990, Saddam attacked and captured Kuwait, an act that was widely condemned by the members of the international community, especially the United Nations (UN), the European Union and the Arab League (Abdualla 2012). In order to remove Saddam's forces from Iraq, the UN sanctioned a coalition of 34 states, led by the United States, to take military actions against Iraq and to remove it from Kuwait (Abdualla 2012). The intervention by the international community provided rebels such as the Kurds and Sunni with an opportunity to stage an uprising against Saddam (Combs 2015). However, the PUK and the KDP publicly denied that they were willing to participate in the ousting of Saddam Hussein by the international community's military forces (Combs 2015). The reason for taking such a position was informed by the fear that Saddam might stage further chemical attacks on the Kurdish population (Farkas 2003). The parties were also worried that working with the international community against Saddam might strain their relationship with Iran, which was the main source of their financial support (Farkas 2003).

The Kurds took advantage of the defeat of Saddam's forces in 1991 to rise up against the regime. The uprisings were mainly in areas that were inhabited by the Kurds, which were what would later constitute the territory that is now controlled by KRG.

The United States and other members of the international community established a no-fly zone over the Northern Iraq to protect the Kurds (Gertler 2011). The zone later came under the control of the Kurdistan Regional Government.

The violence that was experienced by Kurdish people had a serious impact on women and children, many of whom lost their families and their own lives. Therefore, the struggle for the Kurdish autonomous region also involved the efforts of women. In order to empower women politically to fight for the rights of women, the KDP formed the Kurdish Women Union (KWU). The KWU has been handling women-specific political issues within Iraqi Kurdistan since its formation in 1952 (Hill and Hagerty 2013).

Evidence shows that the Kurdish Women Union has actively participated in in the Kurdish national struggles to achieve autonomy and respect for human rights of the Kurdish people (Hill and Hagerty 2013). Even though its focus has been on women, the KWU has been fighting against violent campaigns of the Iraqi regimes against the Kurd population. Essentially, its involvements have focused on social, economic and political spheres of Kurdish lives (Hill and Hagerty 2013).

## **2.5 The Displacement of Kurds in Iraq and Turkey.**

It is difficult to gain an exact picture of immigration from Kurdistan to the diaspora, since there is no independent Kurdish state that could issue birth certificates or passports.

Approximations can be made from statistics on immigration from the geographical areas that are considered the Kurdish heartlands in south-eastern Turkey, northern Iraq, north-western Iran and northern Syria, but these can never be exact.

The historical displacement of Kurds can be traced back to their domination under the Ottoman Empire. Notably, during the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, especially during the First World War and the Turkish War of Independence, the Christian minorities within the empire were

forcibly displaced from their homes (Chatty 2010). In the process, a significant portion of the Kurd population suffered similar fates, because some of them supported the efforts of the Ottomans, while many rebelled in many regions around the empire (Chatty 2010).

In the newly created state of Turkey, the plight of Kurds became serious between the 1920s and 1930s, when most of them rebelled against the government, causing the mass killings of many and the expulsion of thousands by the new regime (Chatty 2010). Ultimately, the conflicts between the Kurds and Turks led to the displacement of approximately three million Kurds, a significant number of whom remained unsettled and without homes (Zdanowski 2014). Kurds faced similar challenges in other countries in which they found themselves after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, as they fought for autonomy without success (Zdanowski 2014).

In Iraq, the displacement of Kurds came as a direct effect of Saddam's al-Anfal campaign and other forms of violence against Kurdish people (Voller 2014).

Al-Anfal led to mass movements of affected Kurds both within Iraq and across the borders of Turkey and Iran as they escaped annihilation by Saddam's government (Voller 2014). A significant number of Kurds who were victims of the first al-Anfal attack in the Jafati valley and elsewhere managed to find refuge in Iran, primarily because the region from which they originated was close to Iran's borders, making their escape from Iraq relatively easy (Voller 2014). Meanwhile, after the al-Anfal attack in the region of Badinan Kurds sought refuge in Turkey (Williams 2013). Notably, hundreds of thousands became internally displaced after they returned surreptitiously to different Iraqi cities and towns (Williams 2013). Yet, as the al-Anfal campaign gained momentum, some Kurds were rescued and hidden by friends and family. Others took personal initiatives in order to escape and others got help from the Jash militant forces (Williams 2013).

In 1970, Saddam's Baath Party, in a bid to consolidate power, granted Kurds a significant level of autonomy, which was more than Iran, Turkey and Syria had allowed the Kurds in their controlled territories (Aziz 2014). However, Saddam's regime intentionally demarcated Kurds' autonomous territories to exclude areas that had oil, during the Arabization process (Aziz 2014). The major oil producing regions that Baath sought to Arabize included Kirkuk, Khanaqin and other parts of the territories, from which the party evicted Kurd farmers and replaced them with poor Arabs who were brought from the South (Zedalis 2012). The Arabization programme and al-Anfal campaign thus led to the greatest numbers of Iraqi IDPs and refugees in the country's history, accounting for the majority of the 800,000 estimated IDPs in northern Iraq today (Romano 2005: 433)

In 1974, the revolt by the Kurds against the Iraqi government gained further momentum under the leadership of Mullah Mustafa Barzani, who got strong support from Iran, the United States, and Israeli governments (Zedalis 2012). The revolt did not last long, because, in 1975, the conclusion of border agreements between Iran and Iraq and Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party lost the support of the Shah (Zedalis 2012). Barzani then escaped into Iran together with his party members, consequently leaving members of his tribe vulnerable to be forcibly evicted from their homes and compulsorily resettled in the desert regions of southern parts of Iraq (Zabari 2015).

Moreover, in the mid 1970s, Saddam Hussein's government forces acted again to expel more than 250 thousand Kurds from Iraqi borders with Iran and Turkey (Krassel 2005). In order to make the plan effective, the forces destroyed the Kurds' villages (Krassel 2005). The displaced Kurds were alternatively resettled in *Mujamma'at*, which were areas that were strategically located along the highways that were considered military-controlled Iraqi-Kurdistan areas (Kreyenbroek 2009).

The *Mujamma'at* was a term that was used to refer to concentration camps in which Kurds who had survived mass murders, imprisonments, and deportation were placed to await their fates (Kreyenbroek 2009).

In 1987, the Iraqi regime attacked areas that were inhabited by Kurds with chemical weapons (Crenshaw and Pimlott 2015). During the attack period, many Kurds who had been injured and admitted in hospitals around the Erbil city were forcefully abducted, never to be seen again (Crenshaw and Pimlott 2015). During the same period, Saddam Hussein's forces, under al-Majid, came up with a three-staged programme, whose main purpose was to clear or collectivise villages that were inhabited by the Kurd populations.

The first stage was conducted between 21 April and 20 May of 1987, the second stage was carried out between 21 May and 20 June of the same year, while the last stage was suspended (Crenshaw and Pimlott 2015).

This led to the destruction of over 700 Kurds' villages, mainly through the burning and bulldozing of the villages (Kelly 2008). The suspension of the third stage of operations was due to a lack of resources.

However, it would be accomplished through an Anfal. The programme caused the death and displacement of many Kurds (Kelly 2008).

In order to target Kurds, Saddam Hussein's regime relied on the national census that was conducted on 17 October 1987. The regime offered Kurds two options, one of which was for them to leave their homes and accept mandatory resettlement in camps that were placed under the watch of the regime's forces (Human Rights Watch n.d). The other option was to lose their Iraqi citizenship and, consequently, be declared military deserters and face execution. Essentially, the Kurds were offered forceful displacement to unproductive areas or the death penalty (Human Rights Watch n.d).

Immediately before the census of 1987, al-Masjid came up with a strategy to single out targets who lived in what were then government-controlled areas. He ordered his intelligence personnel to compile a list of families that were considered unfriendly to Saddam Hussein's regime (Human Rights Watch n.d). At the conclusion of the exercise, thousands of women, children and old people were compulsorily relocated to the rural regions of Iraq, apparently to share in the plight of their peshmerga kins. Peshmerga are the military forces controlling the autonomous areas of Iraqi Kurdistan (Human Rights Watch n.d). The Kurds were continually displaced as Iraqi government forces continued to target them with all sorts of weapons, including chemical weapons, bombs and other sophisticated weapons affordable to the government. Many of the Kurds were displaced to countries neighbouring Iraq, especially Iran.

Manifestly, two things facilitated the displacement of Kurds. First, the aggressive campaigns by the Iraqi regime to annihilate Kurds made them fear for their lives and consequently seek refuge in areas they felt would be safe.

Second, the government deliberately planned to remove Kurds in government-controlled areas in a cleansing process to pave the way for the Arabization of those areas. Irrespective of the reasons for moving, Kurds preferred moving to areas that were under the control of the peshmerga, which made them even more vulnerable to the al-Anfal campaigns, because the Iraqi military generally considered them enemies too; hence, they were to face the same fates as civilian Kurds.

In 1991, Saddam Hussein's regime continued its hostilities by massacring more Kurds, leading to more than 500,000 Kurd refugees seeking safety in Turkey in just a few days (Mason 2015). Moreover, because of the 1991 uprising of the Iraqi people against Saddam Hussein and his regime, many Kurds escaped from the country to find refuge in the neighbouring countries, including Iran (Mason 2015).



Iran alone provided asylum for 1,400,000 Iraqi refugees, mostly Kurds, who had been uprooted as a result of the Persian Gulf War (1990–91) and the subsequent rebellions. After the fall of Saddam and the invasion in 2003, United Nations estimates state that more than 3.5 million Iraqis were compelled to leave their homes as a result of the violence that has engulfed their country since the 2003 war, disrupting people's lives and the most basic services (Al-Zubaidi and Wimmen 2008:2).

These events led to the displacement and dispossession of hundreds of thousands of Kurds, leaving many of them without citizenship and some stateless in their place of refuge (Chatty 2010: 233). Although reliable estimates remain difficult to obtain, prior to the 2003 war, roughly 800,000 Iraqi refugees were residing in neighbouring countries: Iran (202,000 registered by the UNHCR), Jordan (around 300,000, mostly unregistered), Saudi Arabia (5,100 in the Rafha camp near the Iraqi border), and Syria (40,000, unregistered). In addition to these groups of refugees and IDPs, hundreds of thousands of Iraqis received asylum outside the region (mostly Europe, the United States, Canada, and Australia).

All told, there may be up to three million Iraqi exiles abroad, 500,000 of who may ask the UNHCR for assistance to return home (Romano 2014:136). Between 2005 and 2006, immigration from Iraq almost quadrupled: it increased from 2,035 individuals in 2004 and 2,448 in 2005 to almost ten thousand people in 2006 (Pelling 2013).

In 2006 and 2007, Iraq suffered not only from high levels of violence, but also a lack of security which severely affected the economy, while the democratic institutions that the Alliance had promised to build were fragile at best. In sum, factors relating to the level of violence, to the economic crisis and to the lack of functioning democratic institutions combined to make Iraqis one of the largest refugee population in the world.

In 2007, at the height of the most recent Iraqi refugee crisis, Sweden received the largest amount of Iraqi asylum applicants in any country outside Iraq's neighbouring region

with over 18,000 asylum seekers from Iraq arriving in Sweden that year (UNHCR 2010). The large number of asylum seekers from Iraq contributed to make Sweden the second most important country of destination for asylum seekers of the industrial countries in absolute numbers in 2007 (UNHCR 2011, 8).

Kurds in the United Kingdom represent the second biggest Kurdish migrant population in Western Europe after Germany, as high as 200,000 to 250,000 mostly from Iraq. The Kurdish community in the United Kingdom is not considered to be one of main ethnic minorities, but the presence of a large Kurdish diaspora cannot be denied. The 2001 UK Census did not record the number of Kurds in the UK but they are estimated to be around 200,000 (Zalme, 2006). Unlike Kurdish communities in Sweden and Germany which contain a large proportion of families, the Kurdish immigrant communities in the United Kingdom are predominantly single males (Zalme, 2006).

All in all, over two million people fled from Iraq between 2003 and 2007, making refugees from Iraq one of the largest refugee populations in the world (UNHCR 2008). The overwhelming majority of them were received in Syria and Jordan (Weiss Fagen 2007).

The displacement of the Kurdish population was not just a violation of human rights, but also an interference with their indigenous lifestyles and cultural practices.

The displacement of people in different directions made individuals lose their families, including children who never saw their parents after they fled their homes to seek safety. It is worth pointing out that civil strife often destroys the social fabrics and interferes with social processes within a community or society. Consequently, adapting to new environments, particularly in the context of refugee camps, becomes difficult. Therefore, the displacement of the Kurdish people was a social fact that negatively affected their lives.

### **Estimations of the number of Kurds in Europe**

Country	Institute Kurde de Paris	NAVEND	Council of Europe*
Germany	600,000–650,000	700,000–800,000	700,000–800,000
France	130,000–150,000	100,000–120,000	120,000–150,000
The Netherlands	80,000–90,000	70,000–80,000	70,000–80,000
Switzerland	70,000–80,000	60,000–70,000	60,000–70,000
Belgium	50,000–60,000	50,000–60,000	10,000–15,000
Austria	60,000–70,000	50,000–60,000	50,000–60,000
Sweden	40,000–50,000	25,000–30,000	80,000–100,000
UK	30,000–40,000	20,000–25,000	80,000–100,000
Greece	20,000–25,000	20,000–25,000	20,000–25,000
Denmark	15,000–10,000	8,000–10,000	8,000–10,000
Norway	4,000–20,000	4,000–5,000	4,000–5,000
Italy	8,000–10,000	3,000–4,000	3,000–4,000
Finland	4,000–6,000	2,000–3,000	2,000–3,000

Sources: Institut kurde de Paris 2011, NAVEND 2011 and \*) Russell-Johnston 2006.

## **2.6 The brutal regime of Saddam Hussein (Al-Anfal Campaigns)**

In the historical context of Iraqi Kurdistan, al-Anfal was a policy that was adopted by Saddam Hussein's government for military operations that primarily targeted the elimination of Muslim Kurds in the Northern part of Iraq, although non-Muslim minorities were also targeted (Mikaberidze 2011).

The reason why the Iraqi government chose the term ‘al-Anfal’ was to make the Kurds appear as non-Muslims in order to legitimize the government’s campaigns against them and other groups such as Christians (Mikaberidze 2011). Al-Anfal referred to a sequence of eight attacks that the Iraqi government carried out against the Kurds in Iraq in different periods, beginning around 1988 (Mikaberidze 2011).

At the forefront of the campaigns were the Baathists, mainly composed of the Iraqi military personnel under the leadership of Saddam Hussein’s cousin Ali Hassan al-Majid, who presided over almost all the al-Anfal campaigns (Crowe 2014).

The first al-Anfal took place from 21 February to 18 March 1988 and it commenced in the city of Dolli Jafayty Marg (Martin 2010). The second one happened between 22 March and 14 March 1988 and it began in Qaradakh District. The third one followed from 31 March to 14 April 1988 and it started in the Garmyan District (Martin 2010). From 20 April to 18 April 1988, the fourth al-Anfal began in Askar District and other towns such as Dashti Koya, Qala and Swaka, among others (Donabed 2015).

The fifth, sixth, and seventh al-Anfal attacks started in the districts of Rewandiz and Shaqlawa between 24 May and 31 August 1988 (Donabed 2015). Finally, the eighth al-Anfal happened between 25 August and 6 September 1988 in Badinan District (Donabed 2015). The sequences in which al-Anfal elements were implemented reveal a trend in which the government of Iraq carefully planned and executed genocide against the Kurdish population. The government remained largely responsible for the suffering of people who it had a primary duty to protect. The al-Anfal campaign resulted in the execution of thousands of men, women and children (Kelly 2008).

The executions were the Iraqi government’s policy to annihilate the Kurdish population in Iraq, from about 1988 (Kelly 2008). The victims were tied together before being shot dead and left to fall into pre-prepared mass graves (Kelly 2008).

Moreover, the government forces attacked Kurdish towns and villages using lethal chemical weapons (Kelly 2008). Even though the al-Anfal campaigns of the 1980s resulted in genocide, scholars have contended that the genocide against the Kurds commenced in the early 1960s, when Arabization of the villages surrounding Kirkuk and other places was taking place (Anderson and Stanfield 2011).

Essentially, the al-Anfal campaign was preceded by the disappearance of Faylee Kurds between 1970 and 1980, the use of chemical weapons to eliminate them in 1980s, and the killing of approximately 8,000 Kurds, mainly men (Anderson and Stanfield 2011).

The root of al-Anfal can be traced back to 1926, the year that Iraqi Kurds were included as part of Iraq, the consequence of which was the fight for autonomy by the Kurds (Donabed 2015). The Kurds had nurtured the hope of being an independent state in the early 1920s, mainly because the possibility of achieving that hope was apparent in the Treaty of Sevres of 1920 (Donabed 2015). The post-First World War treaty was signed between the representatives of Ottoman Turkey after their defeat and the victorious Allied forces on 10 August 1920, marking the end of the war (Bolukbasi 2012). Essentially, the treaty marked the end and the beginning of the partitioning of the Ottoman Empire (Bolukbasi 2012). The treaty obliged Turkey to relinquish all its claims over North African and Arab Asia (Bolukbasi 2012). In addition, the interpretation of the treaty implied that Armenia could be independent and Kurds could form an autonomous Kurdish region (Bolukbasi 2012).

However, Turkish representatives rejected the treaty and in 1923 it was replaced with the Treaty of Lausanne, which effectively invalidated the treaty of Sevres (Tucker 2014).

The Treaty of Lausanne was the treaty that finally concluded the First World War. It was signed between Turkey's representatives and a group of states, which included Italy, Greece, France, Great Britain, Yugoslavia, Croatia and Romania, among others (Tucker 2014).

One of the main provisions of the treaty was the recognition of the geographical borders of the modern Turkey (Tucker 2014). Consequently, Turkey managed to keep the largest region of Kurdistan within its territory and influence (Hall 2014). Nonetheless, southern Kurdistan remained annexed to Iraq, which was still under the British mandate (Hall 2014).

In 1922, following months of conflict, the then Anglo-Iraq guaranteed the Kurds within the territory of Iraq the right to form and run their own government. However, four months later, when the Treaty of Lausanne was established, the hope of forming an autonomous state with its own government was not fulfilled (Hall 2014).

In December 1925, the League of Nations, a precursor to the United Nations, made a decision that Mosul should be part of Iraq (Donabed 2015). At the same time, as has been indicated earlier, the promise of a Kurdish state was abandoned and replaced by a promise to secure the Kurdish administrative, linguistic and cultural entitlements from the newly established government of Iraq (Donabed 2015). As a result, the Kurds resorted to unrest and petitioning the League of Nations to demand that they should be granted independence, a strategy which remained ineffective (Donabed 2015).

During the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the Kurds spent much of their time fighting to maintain their identity as Kurds within the newly formed states, following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. They suffered persecution in all the countries where they found themselves after the disintegration of the empire and the formation of new states with new boundaries (Tucker 2010). In Iraq, Saddam Hussein and his Baath party managed to kill more than 200,000 Kurds using chemical weapons and mass shootings, torturing, and displacing millions in an operation that took place between 1987 and 1991 (Tucker 2010).

Arabization was one of the main elements of Saddam's al-Anfal campaign against the Kurds (Eliassi 2013).

It was a strategic approach that Saddam's regime supporters used to expel Kurds out of their homes in areas such Kirkuk and areas where there were oil resources and to relocate them to the southern region of the country; also killing victims in their thousands (Eliassi 2013). Saddam Hussein's policy at the time was to separate the Iraqis from Kurds by shifting Arabs to Kurds' seemingly fertile regions and relocating the Kurds who were not killed to poor regions of Iraq (Eliassi 2013).

The Kurds were left without any form of assistance from either the government or the international community (Eliassi 2013). With limited resources, and sometimes the lack of them, the forcefully relocated Kurds were not able to cope effectively with their new squalid environments. Women and children were the most affected by such conditions (Eliassi 2013).

## **2.7 The brutal regime of Saddam Hussein (Halabja Massacre)**

Halabja was a town of more than 50,000 people, the majority of them Kurds. The town borders Iran, a fact that explains why there was a conflict between them (Siddig 2012). The Halabja massacre was a result of one of the deadliest attacks by the Iraqi government on the Kurds. On 16 and 17 of March 1988, Saddam Hussein commanded aircrafts to drop chemical weapons on the town of Halabja, leading to the death of more than 4,000 people, including women and children (Siddig 2012). In effect, the chemical attacks on the city were a perpetuation of the al-Anfal element that Saddam had started earlier (Siddig 2012). The attacks occurred against the backdrop of the 1980-1988 war between Iran and Iraq (Bellamy 2012). The Iraqi government accused Kurds of siding and collaborating with the Iranian military personnel, which, to the government, was treasonous (Bellamy 2012). Just like other al-Anfal events, the Halabja massacres were carried out under the watch of Saddam Hussein's cousin, Ali Hassan al-Majid, who was famously referred to as "Chemical Ali" (Bellamy 2012).

While the attacks were primarily targeted at the Kurds of Iraq, the other Iraqi interest was to fend off Iran's Operation Zafar 7, an Iranian offensive during the Iran-Iraq war, during which Iran overpowered Iraq (Black 1993). However, Iran was not able to capture the town of Sulaimani, due to economic and military sanctions against the country (Black 1993). Besides, Iran suffered a heavy loss of its military personnel following a chemical attack that was perpetrated by Saddam's regime (Black 1993).

As a result, Iran withdrew its offensive actions, allowing Iraq to recapture the town of Sulaimani and begin attacking Kurds with chemical weapons (Black 1993).

While al-Anfal was primarily targeted at the annihilation of Kurds, the Halabja massacre was a form of a revenge for the Kurds purportedly collaborating with an enemy, Iran (Galip 2015). In this regard, during the initial stages of the war between Iraq and Iran, the Northern part of Iraq experienced unrests, whereby the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan forces with the support of Iran led a rebellion against Iraqi's Baath regime between 1982 and 1983 (Galip 2015). Therefore, the collaboration with the Iranian government largely contributed to the chemical weapon attacks on areas that were inhabited by Kurdish people (Galip 2015).

The attack took approximately five hours, after which the Iraqi government sent its scientists to check the extent of damages and the effectiveness of the chemical weapons (Ham 2010). To do this, the scientists largely relied on the position and distance of the bodies from the points at which the weapons were dropped (Ham 2010). Once the scientists were finished, all the buildings within Halabja were demolished using further explosives and bulldozers, as the bodies of dead Kurds were buried in mass graves. The chemical attacks in Halabja were not the first of their kind, but they are believed to be the worst of all the violence and killings that Saddam's regime committed against the Kurds during his al-Anfal campaigns (Ham 2010).



Kurds who had successfully escaped the chemical weapons, decided to go back to rebuild the city of Halabja (Karber 2012). However, due to the effects of the chemicals, some of which are suspected to have been cyanide, Sulphur mustard and newer agents, the Kurds who later returned to the city have never lived a normal life (Karber 2012). According to researchers who have investigated the aftermath of the attacks, complications experienced by women resulted in stillbirth, premature delivery and miscarriages (Karber 2012).

In addition, children born after the attacks suffer deformities from birth, meaning that women rarely give birth to normal babies (Karber 2012). This is testimony to the fact that the chemicals affected the DNA of the victims, making future generations also suffer from bear the attack by Saddam's forces.

## **2.8 The Kurdish Regional Government**

The establishment of the Kurdish Regional Government faced violent challenges as uprisings by Kurds in Iraq were met with forceful suppression by the Iraqi government. Just before the formation of the Kurdistan Regional Government and the establishment of the Kurdish Autonomous Republic, Iraq experienced more uprisings in its Shia-dominated regions, from early in 1999. The uprisings of 1999 were triggered by the assassination of Grand Ayatollah, Mohammed Sadeq al-Sadr by Saddam Hussein's brutal operatives.

The fights between the Kurds and the government forces continued until sometime in October 1999, when an agreement was reached between opposing factions (Cockburn 2008). One of the provisions of the agreement required that Iraq should withdraw from regions of Iraq that were occupied and inhabited by Kurds. The result was a recognition by Saddam of a Kurdish Autonomous Republic in the northern part of Iraq (Jahn 2015).

The withdrawal of Iraqi forces from the Kurdish-inhabited regions also paved the way for the formation of the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) in the autonomous area in

1992, as discussed in detail later in this section (Jahn 2015). Therefore, the KRG is the official ruling entity in the northern region of Iraq, known as Iraqi Kurdistan. The new government of the state of Iraq recognized the Kurdish Autonomous Region after the US and its allies invaded in it in 2003 (Jahn 2015).

After the Iraqi forces had recaptured Kirkuk and other regions, and as the forces of the international community continued to impose a no-fly zone, both parties negotiated for an autonomous Kurdistan (Szajkowski 2004). Given the experiences of the past, Talabani was not trusting of Saddam's promise and was against the signing of any agreement that would not be recognised by the international community (Szajkowski 2004). Subsequently, Saddam preferred dealing with Barzani (McDowall 2004). Even so, the negotiations between Saddam and Barzani failed to yield any result and Saddam decided to isolate the regions that were occupied by Kurds, so that they would not be able to import goods, nor do any export trade (McDowall 2004). This led to demonstrations against both the Iraqi government and the KDP leaders at the time (McDowall 2004). The isolation by Saddam provided the Kurds with the perfect opportunity to conduct democratic elections in their inhabited regions without any interference from the Iraqi government, which they did in 1992 (Danilovich 2014).

In that election, the KDP won 51 seats, while the PUK won the remaining 49 seats (Danilovich 2014). However, there were claims of election malpractices. To avoid any possible conflict, the two parties agreed to share the seats equally and established a unity government (Danilovich 2014). The unity government ultimately collapsed in 1994, when a civil war broke out once again (Meho 2004). The last parliamentary caucus was held in 1996 and two Kurdish states emerged thereafter; one state controlled by the PUK with its base in Silemani and another state controlled by the KDP with its base in Hewler (Meho 2004).

Both of the two factions claimed to be the legitimate rulers and governments of Iraqi Kurdistan. This scenario created party rule in the region (Meho 2004), but an election took

place in 2005, fundamentally to end the rule that was claimed by both KDP and PUK (Bengio 2014). The two parties decided to unite again after engaging in a civil war. Before the elections of 2005, the two parties formed a coalition, the Democratic Patriotic Alliance of Kurdistan, which also included small parties.

The Democratic Patriotic Alliance of Kurdistan won the elections with about 90% of the votes, enabling the two main parties to share the government positions equally to the exclusion of other parties; the smaller parties did not obtain the requisite number of seats to get a representation in the government (Bengio 2014). The coalition also won the next elections in 2009 (Bengio 2014). In that election, two main opposition parties emerged: the Change List and Reform List. It is important to note that in the 2005 elections, the President was elected by the Parliament. However, in 2009, the KRG decided that the President should be elected by the people and not by Parliament. Masoud Barzani, who had been elected by Parliament in 2005, contested the seat once more and won by about 70% of the votes (Bengio 2014).

After the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, Iraq adopted a new constitution in 2005, which recognised the legitimacy of the KRG as a constituent state in the democratic federal Iraq (Hill and Hagerty 2013). The establishment and recognition of the Kurdish Autonomous Region (Iraqi Kurdistan) under KRG has provided the Kurds with a sense of entitlement to their own freedom. In their history of struggle, the Kurds had for the first time the most powerful government of their own to advance their social, economic and political interests.

The fourth Iraqi Kurdistan elections took place in 2013 and were supposed to include the election of the president (Danilovich 2014). However, Parliament decided to extend the term of President Massoud Barzani for a further two years (Salih 2015).

For the first time since 1992, the KDP and PUK vied for seats independently in the elections of 2013 (Salih 2015).

There were high expectations that KDP would win the elections, because it had more support than other political parties, especially the PUK (Romano and Gurses 2014). The PUK at the time was wrought by internal conflicts and uncertainty due to the illness of its leader, Jalal Talabani, who had suffered a stroke (Romano and Gurses 2014).

Nonetheless, the campaigns were disrupted by clashes that emerged due to tensions among the supporters of the KDP, the PUK and the Movement for Change parties. Even though the KDP won the elections, no party garnered enough votes to form and run the government alone. As a result, the KDP had to form a government with the party that came second in the election, the Movement for Change (Romano and Gurses 2014).

Even though the new constitution of 2005 assured Kurds of some form of autonomous self-rule, some of them felt that it did not provide enough, especially when considered against the hope for statehood among the Kurdish population (Ahmed 2012). This implies that some Kurds wanted a fully autonomous state in the regions controlled by the KRG (Ahmed 2012). According to those who preferred a full independence to a mere autonomy, a federal structure would not recognise the historical, geographical and ethnic realities of Fatah, the Kurdish homeland (Ahmed 2012).

## **2.9 The Role of the Kurdish Regional Government in Iraq**

Since the establishment of Iraqi Kurdistan and the recognition of its government within the territory of the wider Iraq, the KRG has played a significant governmental role in the federal Iraqi region (O'Leary 2006). The Iraq constitution that was adopted in 2005 divides Iraq into federal units responsible for their own internal social, economic and political affairs, while the central government of Iraq handles international affairs.

However, the biggest issue of contention between the KRG and the central Iraqi government is with respect to oil resources (Bilgin 2012).

The KRG has signed a number of oil contracts with foreign companies, which has resulted in disputes, as it maintains that the contracts are lawful under Iraqi law (Bilgin 2012).

Nonetheless, the role that the KRG has played in Iraq was very evident in 2003, when its parties and the *Peshmerga* liaised with the United States when it led the invasion of Iraq, leading to the ultimate collapse of Saddam's regime and the end of his rule, after many decades of brutality against Kurds (Eccarius-Kelly 2011). The death of Saddam Hussein and the collapse of his regime marked a critical turning point in the history of the Kurds.

The KRG currently exercises constitutional authority over Silemani, Erbil and Duhok provinces. Furthermore, it has de facto authority over some parts of Kirkuk, Ninawa and Diyala provinces (Dabrowska and Hann 2008). As the KRG seeks to strengthen its grip in Iraqi regions, one significant challenge remains: the future boundaries of Iraqi Kurdistan. Many Kurds are of the opinion that the territories of Iraqi Kurdistan should be extended so that it covers cities inhabited by Kurds, such as Kirkuk and Mosul (Dabrowska and Hann 2008). The Assyrians, Turkmen and Arabs who inhabit those cities, coupled with opposition coming from Turkey, make the possibility of including these cities into the territories even more delicate. Evidently, Turkey fears that the inclusion of those territories in the Iraqi Kurdistan region would facilitate the founding of an independent Kurdish state, which it does not support (Galbraith 2008). This can be explained by the fact that Turkey has a small Kurdish minority, who may want to be part of a Kurdistan state. Turkey's fear is that its Kurdish minority may cause political instability within its territories, should an independent Kurdish state break away from Iraq. However, with the increasing possibility of the independence of Kurdistan, Turkey is trying to change its attitude.

The KRG has also established a movement to make it distinct from other parts of Iraq; the movement is referred to as 'Kurdistan – The Other Iraq', the main purpose of which is to

highlight the commercial viability of Iraqi Kurdistan (Voller 2014). The movement is under the leadership of the Kurdistan Development Corporation, which aims to portray Iraqi Kurdistan as a safe investment hub in the midst of the violence and insecurity occurring in other territories of Iraq (Voller 2014). In this regard, its achievements include an increasing number of foreign investors injecting their capital in the region. In order to gain credibility, the KRG embarked on building the security and defence of the Iraqi Kurdistan region, especially along its borders with Iran and Syria (Ahmed 2012). The most important role of the KRG, under the leadership of President Masoud Barzani, is to represent the Kurds at national and international level (Charountaki 2010).

The KRG oversees the relationships and cooperation between regional authorities as well as at the Iraqi federal level (Charountaki 2010). It also continues to advocate for an independent Kurdish state, even though it is evident that some Kurds prefer Iraqi Kurdistan to remain as an autonomous region within the territory of Iraq. President Masoud Barzani even announced that Iraqi Kurdistan would have an independence referendum in 2014, although this was postponed to a later date (Russell 2014).

## **2.10 The Iraqi-Kurdish referendum: Revealing the desire for independence**

Following the peshmerga's role in fighting alongside the international community against Islamic State in Iraq, the Kurdish political leadership believed the time had come to declare its people's desire for an independent Kurdistan. In June 2017, Masoud Barzani arranged a meeting with the Kurdistan Democratic Party, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and other political parties. Barzani believed that the USA, the countries of Europe and the rest of the world would back the Kurdish people's decision as a reward for their role in defeating Islamic State and other terrorist groups (River 2017). The Kurdish politicians' misinterpreted the rest of the world's support for their move towards an independent Kurdistan.

Despite furious Iraqi, regional and international objections, Barzani announced 25 September as the date for the referendum.

Instead of paving the way for statehood or strengthening the Kurds' bargaining power in negotiations, it has precipitated a turnaround in the struggle towards independence (Morris 2017).

Some analysts suspect that Barzani's determination was, firstly, because he thought this was the best and last chance to achieve the Kurdish dream of an independent Kurdistan and for him to be the first leader of such a state. Secondly, Barzani sought to regain his power as the president of the Kurdistan region by claiming legitimacy via the vote of the people. Finally, Barzani assumed that the referendum would solve internal disagreement with the opposition parties, mainly Goran and Islamic groups, about the legal period of his power, which would position him as a de-facto president of the Kurdish state.

According to Hiltermann, Barzani went ahead with his decision as he feared that when and if the Islamic State were defeated, the diplomatic leverage the Kurds had with the USA and Europe would also dry up (Hiltermann 2017).

On 25 September 2017, Kurdish people in the governorates of Sulaimani, Kirkuk, Erbil and Duhok voted for independence with a majority of 93 per cent. The tri-colour Kurdish flag was everywhere. Kurdish leader Masoud Barzani claimed a historical victory in the referendum and asked the Iraqi government to start talks for practical steps towards the division of Kurdistan, including Kirkuk, from Iraq (Chulov 2017). Next day Iraq, Iran and Turkey rejected the results, doubted the legitimacy of the whole process and insisting that Barzani should freeze the outcome immediately. On 29 September 2017, Secretary of State Rex Tillerson declared that the United State of America did not recognise the decision of the Iraqi Kurdish independence referendum (River 2017).

The Turkish and Iranian governments reiterated that they would assist the Iraqi government against Barzani's decision.

The Iraqi government ordered the Kurdistan Regional Government to hand over their international airports in Sulaimani and Erbil to the central government and stopped all international flights from those air ports (Zuchinno 2017). Turkey cut off access to oil pipelines, choking the oil-reliant Kurdish economy. Iran has performed military drills with the Iraqi army on the border of Iraqi Kurdistan, near the town of Haji Omran on the historically named Hamilton Road in the hope of forcing Iraqi Kurds to step down (Tabatabai 2017). The Kurdish quest for independence backfired. On the night of 15/16 October 2017 the Iraqi army and Shiite militia attacked the oil-rich city of Kirkuk and captured it with no resistance. The peshmerga retreated and apart from some casualties around the town of Tooz-Khurmatoo, no-one was killed in Kirkuk's operation. In November 2017, Masoud Barzani condemned the Iraqi invasion of Kirkuk and accused a group in the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, the second big political party in Iraqi-Kurdistan led by Jalal Talbani of conspiring against him and secretly signing an agreement with the Iraqi government backed by Iran (Pechana 2017).

According to Michael Gunter, the Kurdistan region has significantly developed since 1991 and especially after the fall of Saddam's regime in 2003 (Gunter 2017). A civil society has emerged with many newspapers, magazines, television and radio stations. Kurds have avoided civil war in Iraq and in contrast became a safe haven to Iraqi people fleeing from the middle and south of Iraq as a result of sectarian divisions and fighting. Therefore, the international community should not have been surprised by Barzani's or the Kurds' decision as they have concentrated on generating stability and autonomy amidst much chaos in the region (Gunter 2017).



In contrast, according to Lisel Hintz, Assistant Professor at John Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, and Kate Klain, Barzani miscalculated the disunity among the Kurdish parties and failed to anticipate the partial support of his traditional rival the PUK (Klain and Hintz 2017). Barzani underestimated the division among the Kurdish Iraqi Parties, which led the Kurdistan Islamic Group known as Komaly Islami, and the change movement, known as Goran, which announced a boycott of the referendum just hours before the vote began. Furthermore, Barzani undervalued the economic situation and the financial crisis in Kurdistan and the fact that government had failed to pay employees regularly since 2015 (Klain and Hintz 2017). Moreover, the legal presidential period for Barzani ended in August 2016 and the parliament was suspended by the KDP in October 2016. when the head of Parliament Dr Yousif Mohammed was not allowed to proceed to the parliament by KDP forces at a check point near Erbil.

Additionally, Barzani believed that Iraq would be open to the Kurdish decision as a result of the peshmerga's collaboration in the battle against ISIS.

He also assumed that the economic relationship and business associations with both Iran and Turkey would force them to accommodate his resolution. In a final miscalculation, the KRG thought that the retirement of Masoud Barzani and the introduction of Nachervan Barzani, who served as a Prime Minister beside his uncle, would mute regional and international resistance or opposition to the referendum. However, tension and instability after the referendum remained high and the situation has further escalated. In the end, the KRG agreed to respect the Federal Iraqi Court's decision that the vote was unconstitutional (Klain and Hintz 2017).

Finally, with the slim possibility of any shift in regional support, permission from Baghdad, or unity among Kurdish groups anytime in the near future, as well as losing territory to the Iraqi army which means losing a big part of the revenue the KRG hoped to

generate for an independent Kurdistan in Kirkuk's oilfields, Iraqi Kurds' independence hopes now seem more distant and less likely than ever.

## **2.11 The Present Region of Iraqi Kurdistan**

The present region of Iraqi Kurdistan was originally referred to as the Kurdistan Region, because the majority of the inhabitants were Kurdish people. It is currently the only autonomous region in the federated state of Iraq, as has been explained in earlier sections. Iraqi Kurdistan is not yet an independent state, which makes Kurds one of the largest populations in the world with no autonomous state of their own.

However, with the latest developments in Iraq, the Kurds' hope for their own state is high. The overthrowing of Saddam Hussein and the collapse of his regime in 2003 raised the hope of Kurdish independence. In 2005, the already established Kurdistan Referendum Movement conducted an unofficial independence referendum covering the three main regions under KRG (Voller 2014).

The results of the referendum showed that about 98 per cent of Kurds wanted an independent state. However, the two leading Kurdish parties, the KDP and the PUK, rejected the outcome of the referendum and instead advocated for a unitary Iraq (Voller 2014). The position that was taken by the two parties was clearly contrary to what they had been fighting for, the independence of the Iraqi Kurdistan.

The position can be attributed to the fact that the referendum was unofficial and that it might have been done at the time when their political interests would not be served by agitating for an independence referendum (Galip, 2015). The referendum was an initiative of the Kurdish elites, among whom were local and international supporters who advocated for the independence of the KRG-controlled regions.

The growing likelihood of the US invasion of Iraq after the 9/11 attacks on its soil motivated Kurdish political leaders to abandon their differences and work together for the common interest of all Kurds (Romano 2006).

They were readying themselves to take advantage of the opportunities and deal with challenges that would arise after the collapse Saddam's regime (Romano 2006). The al-Anfal campaigns and all forms of brutality against Kurds were a policy of Saddam Hussein's regime. Therefore, the collapse of his Baath Party regime and his death meant that the historical injustices against the Kurds were also ending. Importantly, since the collapse of Saddam's regime, Iraqi Kurdistan has been gaining ground with respect to its territorial expansions. For instance, in 2014, the region captured the city of Kirkuk and other neighbouring regions; Kirkuk has large oil deposits (Russell 2014).

After Saddam Hussein, Iraqi Kurdistan's leaders established a presence outside the traditional Kurdish regions. Masoud Barzani and Talabani have increased their political role in Iraq's central government (Katzman 2010). Notably, the Kurds, especially the peshmerga, played a major role in the collapse of Saddam's regime, playing a major role in the ground battle, as the United States provided air support (Rayburn 2014).

It is worth noting that Saddam's forces were the major obstacle to the Kurds' statehood (Rayburn 2014). Therefore, after the collapse of the regime, the Kurds had the best opportunity advance their political, social, cultural and economic interests, particularly with respect to the autonomy of the Iraqi Kurdistan (Rayburn 2014).

### **3. Literature Review**

#### **3.1. Social and cultural capital**

One of the main strengths of this research, which concentrates on return migration to the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) controlled region, is its highlight on narratives of participants' views and experiences in their parental homeland. However, this kind of empirical investigation can be challenged because of its limited exploration of theoretical models that position return migration. It is not within the scope of my discussion to critically interrogate the complexity, multiplicity and diversity of migration theories. However, it is important to acknowledge two theories which have informed my analysis: that of social capital and cultural capital. The phenomenon of social and cultural capital can be seen as one of the reasons that stimulates refugees to return to their homeland.

One of the main theoretical perspectives in research on return migration is the returnees' impact on the development of the country of origin. King's (1986) edited volume considers the impact of return migration on economic development in the host society. "The directionality and continuity of migration flows benefit the original sending society because migrants accumulate human, economic and social capital in their host country" (Reynolds 2008: 8). Therefore, it could be stated that one of the benefits of second-generation return to the parents' homeland is that it facilitates inter-generational accumulation of cultural, social and economic capital for the original sending society (Reynolds 2008). Reynolds indicates in his research the significance of cross-generational accumulation of capital achieved through return migration within the Caribbean region.

Bourdieu's *The Forms of Capital* (1986) outlines the concepts of cultural capital and social capital and has been useful for exploring the role of capital in the social sciences in general.

In his comprehensive theory Bourdieu identifies a number of different forms of ‘capital’ that serve both as material and symbolic resources in human exchanges, and which returnees bring back to their home countries.

Social capital is important for understanding the ways in which individuals are positioned in society. Furthermore, it is an essential concept in exploring the relationship between intent, opportunity and resources. The concept of social capital, which Bourdieu defines in terms of durable network relations (Bourdieu 1986: 248), is: ‘The sum of the recourses, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition. It is built on mutual obligation and expectations, norms or reciprocity, trust and solidarity’ (Bourdieu, Waquant 1992:11). Bourdieu focuses on membership on formal organizations where people obtain skills, reciprocity, and establish contact with people of other groups.

Social capital can be broadly defined as ‘the values that people hold and the resources that they can access, which both result in and are the result of collective and socially negotiated ties and relationships’ (Reynolds 2008: 15). Social capital builds connections between family and society. Robert Putnam (2000), often regarded as one of the founding fathers of social capital theory emphasizes the importance of social capital in relations to societies, communities and families. Networks of trust, values and reciprocity are significant to making family and community relationships work and sustaining the connections that bind societies together (Reynolds: 2008:15). Family networks comprised of ties of trust and reciprocal relationships enable social capital to be built up over time and transmitted across generations.

‘Bourdieu’s theorizing of forms of capital has been useful in social sciences, for exploring the role of capital, asset and resources in the study of social stratification.

Within migrant groups, cultural capital is differentiated according to gender, class, educational status and ethnic affiliation and this influences how social and cultural capital can be mobilized' (Erel 2010: 646). Weenink (2008) employs the notion of cultural capital to analyse how Dutch parents construct a cosmopolitan habitus for their school-age children and project its usefulness for a globalized job market.

According to Koo, Ming and Tsang, 'cultural capital usually refers to symbolic expressions and behavioural dispositions, such as the possession of nuanced language, aesthetic preferences and cultural goods' (Koo, Ming and Tsang 2014: 4). Cultural capital, according to Bourdieu (1986), "appears in three states: embodied, institutionalized and objectified. Yet cultural capital consists also of informal education transmitted through the family, political parties, cultural groups, etc. The convertibility into other forms of capital (economic, social, symbolic) distinguishes mere cultural resources from cultural capital" (Erel 2010: 643).

Bourdieu states that, 'cultural Capital is accumulated by means of formal education and comprises language proficiency of culture competence and takes the form of diplomas, certificates or academic titles' (Bourdieu 1986). The main concept of Bourdieu's theory is that different forms of capital (social, cultural, economic and symbolic) are interlinked.

Research has often identified cultural capital as reified and ethnically bounded, assuming individuals bring a set of cultural resources from the country of migration to the country of origin that either fit or do not fit. There is an important link between social and cultural capital, the latter of which comprises ways of thinking and being as well as cultural goods produced, that generate social resources for individuals, families and communities (Bourdieu 1986). Potter notes 'return migrants are best viewed as people endowed with social capital, potential and realized' (Potter 2005:14). Other studies also highlight that strong family ties and strong connections to the family homeland provide the primary reason for

return over and above other economic, social and political considerations (Gmelch 1980; Foner 2002; Fog-Olwig 2007).

Social capital studies underscore ‘the social embeddedness of actors in specific networks to get access to available resources’ (Keles 2016: 10). The cultural, political and economic positions of the individuals and their engagement in the homeland society determines such access (Coleman 1988). For instance, Woolcock discussed the ‘linking’ social capital and argued that it is the ‘capacity to leverage resources, ideas and information from formal institutions’ (2001: 13). Hepworth and Stitt (2007) found that this ‘linking’ social capital connects national and local decision and policy makers. Social capital theory has been critically and broadly tackled in previous literature (Portes 1998; Fine 2001). It can be summarised as the connection and relation of people who share common attachments, sentiments and values as members in a particular community and network for mutual benefits. Despite this, the relationship between network membership and individual economic outcomes remains contentious. Altogether, this is based on the premise that taking membership in social networks and engaging in coordinated actions are the most common social capital investment forms.

### **3.2. Theories of return**

While Hall stated that ‘migration is a one-way trip, there is no “home” to go back to’ (Hall 1987: 44), historically migrants have often returned to their country of origin or parental roots. A significant number of migrants have returned to the land of their family roots either soon after arrival or some years after migration.

The migrant’s decision to return is usually made after comparing information about conditions and prospects in the host country with those in the country of origin, as well as

information about policy interventions that constitute extra incentives or disincentives to stay or return (Harild, Christensen and Zetter 2015).

A large amount of new research has been published in the last few years on return migration. But still many gaps remain: 'Return migration is obviously an important phenomenon and therefore, the lack of empirical work on the topic is surprising' (Klinthäll 1999: 2). According to Christou "Return migration", as the term suggests, is understood as the process of migrants' return to the country/place of origin, parental/ancestral extraction, or to the "symbolic homeland". This implies a voluntary decision but it may also be involuntary, forced on the migrant by either environmental/personal disaster or political action; in this case it is commonly referred to as "repatriation" (Christou 2002: 64).

Whether second-generation migrants or refugees accomplish this process voluntarily or via repatriation is a matter of interpretation depending on the circumstances (Portes & Rumbaut, 2005). Thus, second-generation migrants and refugees may return home to reconnect with their families and friends and to regain the sense of identity or achieve any other personal or group goals (Ali, 2011). Alternatively, second-generation migrants and refugees may return home as a result of repatriation due to political crisis, criminal justice proceedings such as court orders, socio-economic turbulence and many other triggers (Chiswick 2007). Common terms often interchanged with return migration are, 'remigration, re-emigration, return flow, return movement, reflex migration, retro-migration, back migration, counter migration, counter-current, counter-flow, counter-stream migration, second time migration, U-turn migration and others' (Christou 2006: 57 – 58).

While academic approaches related to return migration can be traced back to the 1960s, there is no question that, with hindsight, it was in the 1980s that there was a stimulating scientific debate among researchers over the return phenomenon and its impact on origin countries (Cassarino 2004).



Various theoretical approaches have been applied in the conceptualisation of return migration beyond the Kurdish context. The New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM) and the neo-classical economic approach consider return migration notion from an economic view (Constant and Massey 2002). The neo-classical economic approach considers that returning immigrants are individuals with long-term migration strategies, which entail accessing better opportunities for earning and staying permanently in destination countries where wages are higher than in their countries of origin. Accordingly, the earning factor becomes critical in causing migration to countries with higher probabilities of earning than in sending countries. Altogether, returnees do not meet these expectations. Unfulfilled expectations or a failure to recognise migrant human capital motivates the return of the migrants to their countries of origin (Todaro 1969). The issue of preoccupation with the 'myth of return' in settlement countries also inspires return, according to Gundel and Peters (2008). It is noteworthy that the neo-classical economic approach only focuses on labour migrants. Thus, this approach is limited to the consideration of return labour migrants following a failure that is traceable to the individual underperformance that causes exclusion from the labour market (Constant and Massey 2003). This approach is also rooted in migrants' dissatisfaction with their expectations and inability to accomplish the goals that motivated their migration to other countries (Keles 2016).

On the other hand, NELM portrays migration as a well-thought out short-term strategy by individuals who moved to destination countries where wages are higher than in their countries of origin to contribute to their households (Stark 1991). After achievement of their original immigration goals of increasing target earnings, savings and wealth accumulation abroad, such individuals return to their homelands where their social, emotional and family attachments are more profound (Constant and Massey 2002).

The overarching assumption is that their remittances, acquired training and skills, and their conversance with the host countries enhances the success of the returnees in using their cultural, social and human capital in their homelands (Cassarino 2004). These two theoretical approaches have clear limitations because NELM portrays returnees as financial intermediaries only and the neo-classical economic approach only accounts for return migration based on erroneous economic expectations (Cassarino 2004). Theoretical approaches inclined towards individualist perspectives do not account for any political, economic and social experiences of the returnees to the homeland. Such approaches also overlook the political and economic stability in their homeland that make return migration feasible and profitable (Keles 2016).

The structural approach to returnee migration extended individualist theoretical approaches in evaluating the decision to return in the context of remittances and homeland realities, including societal and economic structures (Cassarino 2004). Political and economic structures could result in returnee success in their homelands. However, the unfulfilled expectations, disappointments, alienation and exclusion in their homelands could also cause re-emigration. Proponents of the structural approach underscore the fact that realities and changes in the migrants' homelands are vital in the processes of decision-making by immigrants looking to return 'home'. Additionally, these realities and changes play moderator or mediator roles, although negative structures and realities locally could cause returnee re-emigration. Nevertheless, the structural approach disregards the migrants' interconnection with their countries of origin over space and time, across expansive national borders following the increased communication development, globalisation, transport technologies and transnational human mobility between country of origin and country of settlement. Scholarly descriptions of this condition refer to it as 'transnationalism'.

These transnational networks traverse borders and comprise multifaceted associations with over two countries (Wahlbeck 2002; Pries 2002; Keles 2016). The emergence of the transnational social space continues to inspire partial transcendence of the nation-state and extends to many continents, societies and nation states. Consequently, this expansion has blurred and expanded nation states' boundaries leading to the creation of what Keles (2015) describes as 'deterritorialized identities that are not contained within the nationally-orientated majority culture of either the country of settlement or country of origin' (p.25). The repercussions of this novel social interaction via transnational networks are evident in both countries of settlement and countries of origin, as well as between countries.

Scholarly works in the field of transnationalism view return migration as a crucial part of transnational mobility, in addition to identifying return migration as a transnational circular process anchored in multi referential relationships and multi connectedness between the country of settlement and the country of origin (Keles 2016). Rapid advancements in transport and communication technologies promote the sustenance of networks and connectedness in and with the homeland through consumption of transnational media, regular (often short-term) visits and engagement in political, cultural and civic life in the homelands. Such transnational interaction enables descendants of migrants a high level of familiarity, continuity and connectivity with their homeland. It also promotes the building of networks and the capacity of migrants to negotiate their status, position and identity in both their countries of settlement and origin. Unlike the belief upheld by structuralists, NELM and neo-classical economic proponents that returnees need adapting and re-integrating to the structures and society in the homeland, proponents of transnationalism view returnee connection and deterritorialized identity as cultural and social capital which can be used for accessing resources (Keles 2016).

The shared norms, experiences, language, values, political aspirations, ethnicity and kinship constitute the requisite sociological glue for contributing to the sustenance of cross-border linkages, connectedness and development of cross-national social capital and networks (Keles 2016). Scholars have also applied social network theories in attempts at explaining the strong emotional, political, financial, cultural and interpersonal interconnectedness of ‘connected’ migrants across nation-state borders. These multiple ties could suffice as motivations and opportunities for Kurdish returnees to come back ‘home’. As discussed, social capital entails the resources available to social groups and/or individuals, which is convertible to human and economic capital through mobilisation of membership, well-being, belonging and attachment. The main aspect of social capital in the context of return migration is investing in relationships and maintaining networks to ensure that returnees have access to the resources enshrined in networks. Interpersonal and between-people interactions and relationships are the main components of social networks including those between organisations and groups (Putnam 2000).

Laumann et al (1978) observed that network theories consider returnees as actors conferring ‘a subjective meaning to their embedded actions, in a given context [and] network relationships can be based on the principle of “complementarity”’ (p.462). This principle could manifest in situations where actors with different ascribed attributes, personal traits and resource access decide to partner with symbiotic parties (Cassarino 2004). Based on this understanding, returnees as portrayed in social network theories are social actors with multi connectedness and multi-referential traits that determine their success and failure in their homeland. The establishment of steady long-term linkages and involvement in these networks, both in real-life or virtually, influences the desire to return ‘home’. The foundation of such networks is common experiences, identity and ethnicity based on common interests.

Communality in interests allows returnees access to local homeland networks and affects the nature of organisation structures and networks. At the same time, returnees gain the capacity to fulfil their expectations.

There are conceptual problems regarding the definitions of return migration. Neoclassical economics and the New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM) approaches view return migration either as an ‘anomaly, if not the failure of a migration experience’ or a ‘calculated strategy (Kılınç 2013). As Cassarino states,

In so far as the neoclassical approach to international migration is based on the notion of wage differentials between receiving and sending areas, as well as on the migrant’s expectations for higher earnings in host countries, return migration seems to be viewed as the outcome of a failed migration experience which did not yield the expected benefits. In other words, in a neoclassical stance, return migration exclusively involves labour migrants who miscalculated the costs of migration and who did not reap the benefits of higher earnings. (Cassarino 2004:255).

In other words, return is a consequence of their failed experiences abroad or because their human capital was not rewarded as expected. In contrast, the structural approach brings the success/failure paradigm a step further, while arguing that the area of settlement, once return takes place, shapes the adjustment process of returnee (Kılınç 2013). In other words, return is not only a personal issue, but above all a social and contextual one, affected by situational and structural factors. Hence, the return migrant’s success and failure is analysed by his/her expectations of the home economy and society and the ‘reality’ of these cases in the homeland. Research has identified various reasons why refugees return home and these replicate across the world (Saito, 2007). Cassarino points out that: ‘This structural approach argues that return is not solely analysed with reference to the individual experience of the migrant, but also with reference to social and institutional factors in countries of origin. In fact, return is also a question of context’ (Cassarino 2015: 257).

Furthermore, return is not only conceptualised via individual experiences of migrants, but also with reference to social and institutional factors in home countries (Kılınç 2013). Thus, the return migrant's success and failure are analysed by his/her expectations of the home economy and society and the 'reality' of these cases in the homeland. Cerase presents four different categories of returnee, highlighting their aspirations, expectations and needs:

1. *Return of failure:* relates to those migrants returning because of a failure to integrate into the host countries, owing to discrimination from the host society or having personal difficulties in being an effective part of the society they live in or adapting themselves to host communities.
2. *Return of conservatism:* pertains to those migrants who left home with the aim of returning home with enough money to buy property in their home country. Because of these aspirations and targets, conservative returnees only tend to satisfy their personal needs, as well as those of their relatives.
3. *Return of retirement:* refers to those migrants who decide to return to their homeland when they are retired and their intension is to buy land or property in the home country and spend their old age there.
4. *Return of innovation:* this refers to those migrants who integrated well in the host country and use the skills that they have acquired during their stay in the host country when they return to their homeland. (Cerase 1974)

Cerase's (1974) categories of returnees obviously represent an attempt to indicate that circumstances or contextual factors in the homeland need to be taken into account to identify whether a return experience is a success or a failure. There is no doubt that Cerase's explanations have been vital to subsequent approaches to returnees and return migration.

### **3.2.1 Return from an economic perspective**

One of the issues raised by migration theories is the relationship between remittances and return migration. In economic terms, migrants return to the country of origin with particular types of economic remittances which in turn impact on local development and future migration flows (Jones 1998; Carling 2002). There are refugees who return in pursuit of economic prosperity, after finding that the living and working conditions in the host nation are untenable (Ali, 2011). One example is the research on second-generation return migration from the UK to the Caribbean conducted by Reynolds, which outlined the economic benefits of return. These young people felt that they were in a better position to utilise the skills and qualifications gained in the UK to set up their own businesses and develop their entrepreneurial skills in the Caribbean (Reynolds, 2008).

Research shows that fluctuating economic conditions across the world are known to either absorb or shed labour from the markets (Anthias, 2008). When the latter takes place and migrants run out of employment opportunities, one option is to return to country of origin if there are no other jobs at hand (Saito, 2007; Waldinger et al., 2007). This factor explains why many migrants abroad keep multiple part time jobs, as a cushion from the risk of unemployment, which predisposes them to harsh living conditions and imminent return home (Stark, 2004). Moreover, when there is organizational restructuring such as the mechanization of previous manual jobs, the desire to return home can be triggered when individuals cannot find alternative placements.

### **3.2.2. Emotional Reasons**

Research has identified emotional reasons and length of time lived abroad as a major factor in the return home of migrants (Christou 2006; Engbersen et al. 2014). Over time, migrant might begin to feel detached from their home community, culture and lifestyle which can be

a major trigger for their return home (Dupree, 2002). For example, refugees from Afghanistan who seek opportunities in neighbouring nations may decide to return after decades of goal accomplishment (Abbasi-Shavazi et al. 2008). While away, these refugees often feel 'home sick' and have a strong desire to reconnect with family and friends face-to-face as a departure from the telecommunication mode (Ali 2011). Depending on the strength of assimilation and success in changing nationality in the host nation, migrants have the privilege of returning to their home of choice (Saito 2007; Alba 2005). The study of second generation return from Germany to Turkey by King and Kılınc is characterised much more by whole-family return. This route to return was the most common feature amongst their sample, accounting for half of the participants' relocation to Turkey. Returning through this mechanism generally brought the second generation to Turkey whilst they were teenagers, either still at school or at the end of their school years. Usually they were not consulted; they were simply presented with a fait accompli. Most were not happy with the decision, wanting to remain in Germany with their friends and classmates (King and Kılınc, 2014)

### **3.2.3 Epidemic outbreak**

Research shows that an epidemic outbreak in a host nation can trigger migrant return back home (Sirkeci 2012). The recent outbreak of the deadly Ebola virus in parts of West Africa caused second-generation migrants to return home from nations identified by the World Health Organization as high risk. This epidemic caused panic among the second-generation migrants and thousands returned from Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and other neighbouring nations. However, when they reached their homes, there was thorough screening and isolation for those who showed symptoms. This situation caused significant apprehension about their identity and sense of belonging (BBC, 2014).



### **3.2.4 Political Reasons**

Research has cited political extremism and ideology as a major cause of second-generation migrant return (Al-Ali et al, 2001). Many second-generation migrants seek to live and work in nations with high standards of democracy. However, after living there and having children, there may be political regime change, as a result of election or a coup. If the new leader is autocratic and disrespects human rights, second-generation migrants could be forced to return home and face a culture shock if there was no prior orientation (Dupree, 2002). Specifically, when there is violent political unrest, such as the current situation in parts of the Middle East like Syria and Yemen, this causes serious human displacement; the second generation can be confused, angry, disorientated and disillusioned because the timelines for returning home are not under their control (Gebremedhin & Mavisakalyan, 2010).

### **3.2.5 Family Reasons**

Research has shown that many second-generation migrants return home to marry and protect family wealth. Depending on the cohesion within the family, some second-generation migrants who seek to maintain close roots with their homes are opposed to intermarriage with host nation citizens (King & Christou, 2008). The issue of migrant return for marriage is evident among some Muslim communities, especially in tribal places such as Afghanistan, where arranged marriage is the norm. Parents of Afghan second-generation migrants in Iran expect their children to marry spouses, follow the guidance and criteria of their parents in choosing a partner, and behave in a manner that ensures a satisfactory conjugal life (Abbasi-Shavazi et al, 2008). Overall, the choice of marriage partners can be a case of personal discretion or a community decree that some second-generation migrants must comply with, leading to a return home.

### **3.2.6 Career failure**

Career failure, compounded with nostalgia and reaching retirement age, is a common reason for second-generation migrant return to the country of origin (Horst, 2006). Many people who decide to immigrate to nations like the United States of America have big dreams informed by prior information or perceptions about the nation. However, depending on their skills and qualifications, some second-generation migrants fail and are forced to return home (Al-Ali et al 2001). Additionally, when second-generation migrants remember the things they expected to achieve but failed, many resort to return home even if the feeling of shame prevails (Engbersen et al. 2013). In addition, some careers are specific about the retirement age of employees. Hence, second-generation migrants who reach that age and have no savings or alternative income must return and settle back home where living conditions are more affordable (Saito, 2007).

Case studies of the reasons for return to Greece by second-generation migrants from nations like Germany and Sweden shed some light into this research area (Panagakos, 2003). Apart from migrants who were returning home after war, there is evidence that labour fulfilment is a major factor (Glatzer, 2001). The case of Eritrean returnees serves as a good example of how labour shortages have resulted in a return of second-generation migrants. However, a significant number of cases of repatriation have lead migrants to return home and these too are of socio-economic importance, especially because the returning second-generation migrants do not feel at home due to the forced repatriations (Kibreab, 2002).

## **3.3 'Home' and 'Belonging' – the generational dynamic**

### **3.3.1 The notion of home, homeland and place**

This section will include a brief discussion of the various ways that notions of home, homeland and place have been discussed in the literature.

Very often the idea of place is dominant in migrants' constructions of belonging. It also plays a fundamental role in collective and individual identity narratives that remain loyal to a place and reference a place of common origin or homeland, be it real or fictive (Lovell 1998).

Home is no longer considered to be located necessarily in one place; instead, multi-scalarity of belonging characterises the current theorisations of 'home' (Blunt & Dowling 2006: 257).

Brah (1996: 192) claims that the concept of diaspora involves a notion of home, with displacement and dislocation from that home is at its core; although, she explains that home is 'a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination'. This means that home 'is a place of no return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of "origin"'. Furthermore, she argues home to also be 'the lived experience of a locality. Its sounds and smells, its heat and dust [...] all this, as mediated by the historically specific everyday of social relations'. Therefore, home appears to have two meanings for Brah – it can be an imagined, mythic place located at a distance, yet at the same time feeling at home in a place can stem from lived experiences in that particular place (Lovell 1998). According to Brah, the feeling of 'home' is constructed around experiencing a certain locality, around being familiar with its materiality and physicality – for instance, its landscapes and roads. Brah also suggests that social relations constitute a sense of home in a locality. Antonsich argues that the sense of 'belonging' is an emotional feeling, it comes to be attached by an individual to a particular place. "In this context, place is felt as 'home' and, accordingly, to belong means to find a place where an individual can feel 'at home'" (Antonsich 2010: 6). Furthermore, he states that " 'home' here does not stand for the domestic(ated) material space only, 'home' here stands for a symbolic space of familiarity, comfort, security, and emotional attachment" (Antonsich 2010: 6).

According to Brun and Fabos, "home and place are complex and interrelated notions to which the experience of forced migration adds an additional layer to the puzzle of

belonging and identity” (Brun and Fabos 2015: 6). Brun emphasizes in her article that, for refugees and forced migrants, place is a specific articulation of social relations stretched out beyond one location (Brun 2001). A place encompasses physical, social, economic, and cultural realities; a home in this understanding is ‘a particularly significant kind of place with which, and within which, we experience strong social, psychological and emotive attachments’ (Easthope, n.a.).

Home is the place where a person feels at ease; it is a comfortable and familiar environment where individuals can be themselves (Kebede 2010:12). However, home is not merely about a place; it “is the association of an individual within a homogeneous group and the association of that group with a particular physical place” (Warner 1994:162).

This shows that home relates to both place and society. Kebede states that ‘identity is a sociocultural marker, when a person identifies him/herself as belonging to a particular group, he/she is also pointing out that he/she does not belong to the other group’ (Kebede: 2010: 10).

‘The increased scholarly interest in home in the social sciences and humanities has led to a critical scrutiny of the often taken-for-granted and idealized notion of home as haven. Home is now established as a more unsettled and problematic entity where tension and conflict are replete’ (Brun and Fabos 2015:7). ‘Home may be a house, but it may also refer to family, community, nation, and a number of other sites with which we associate and experience contingent acceptance. Home is thus not a site protected from the outside world; rather, its boundaries are porous and may be defined in relation to wider social and political locations. Home may be understood as a site in which power relations of the wider society, such as relations of gender, ethnicity, class, and generation are played out’ (Brun and Fabos 2015:7).

Established conceptions in which home was the steady physical centre of one's universe - a safe and still place to leave and go back to (whether house, village, region or nation) – are now recurrently challenged by more fluid and fragmented processes of identification and belonging (Rapport and Dawson 1998: 6). Home is often related to relationships and family, self, safety. (Mallett 2004) associations which shift the anchors of 'belonging' away from the purely geographical. Taylor has shaped the concept of 'home' according to four main perspectives: the spatial, temporal, material and relational, to reveal that "home for the refugee is complex, multiple and in process" (Taylor 2009: 2). What the refugee loses when they are displaced is not only the "physical property of the spatial home; but also, the networks and social capital of the relational home; the framed memories, repetitions of daily life and future potential of the temporal home; as well as the tastes, scents and embodied experience of the material home" (Taylor 2009: 4).

Furthermore, La Vecchia defined the concept of home according to three main perspectives – physical, social and cognitive (La Vecchia 2011). "In the first case, home is coincided with the country of origin or a specific territory in which a homogeneous community, with a specific culture, lives and organizes itself to develop a peculiar identity and practices" (Warner, 1994). Klis Van Der & Karsten (2005) pointed out that home may be both a spatial and a social place. The spatial place is composed of a physical unit or a house which is grounded in a geographical space, for instance, the birth place or the home country. On the other hand, the social place, the household, is the social construction, in which people who belong to the same family interact with each other. Home is therefore a place of identification defined in terms of social relationships (Fullilove, 1996). It is a place in which a set of practices, in a repetition of habitual social interactions are created and recreated (Rapport & Dawson, 1998:27).

Other social scientists preferred to analyze the concept of home via its cognitive perspective, and therefore associate it to pleasant memories, intimate situations, a place of warmth and protective security amongst parents, brothers and sisters, loved people (Sarup, 1994: 94), or nostalgia and longing for self and origin (Ray 2000; Akhtar 1999).

According to Christou (2006), the term home is the feeling to connect with one's cultural roots, while associating with what the people do, believe and identify with. Therefore, the term home has an aspect of cultural orientation, which binds a person to behave in a certain manner (Dupree, 2002). If a person conforms to a prescribed culture or community, there is a feeling of being at home, whereas an alternative conduct is perceived as a person of alien or external origin (Saxenian, 2006).

A person who does not feel at home has a sense of insecurity and dissociates from random identity (Favell, 2008). The concept of 'home' became a global phenomenon, instead of regarding home as a stable, safe and physical centre of the universe to where return to (Rapport & Dawson, 1998: 27), new studies highlighted how the notion of home becomes more and more mobile. It is simpler to understand how second-generation migrants and refugees feel whenever they are away anticipating return (Gillhespy & Hayman, 2011). The idea that people are encapsulated into demarcated territories with specific cultures is no longer suitable in the world in which people and borders move. Therefore, home does not have a crystallized vision, but it can be extrapolated from a specific territory to others in which people experience special attachments and develop a specific identity (La Vecchia 2011:25).

For instance, Habib (1996) considered her personal experience of Lebanese living in an exile, from which she argued that home changes over time and it is not only related to a geographical place. During her travels across different countries such as Greece, France, Cyprus and United States, she was able to find a piece of home in all of them.

Also, Black (2002) explored the case of refugees from Bosnia-Herzegovina and argued that it would be more appropriate to refer to the ‘concepts’ of home rather than the ‘concept’ of home, because “home can be made, remade, imagined, remembered or desired; it can refer as much to beliefs, customs or traditions as physical places or buildings. But, in order to get its significance completely, people need to think about it as a concept in flux” (Black, 2002: 126).

Alinia (2004: 330), in her study on the Kurdish diaspora in Sweden, determines that ‘their transnational networks and communities, social relations and activities regarding the politics of location have in this process become their “home”’. The fact that Kurdistan does not exist as a state can lead to feelings of ambivalence toward the societies of departure, geographically located within the states of Iraq, Syria, Iran, and Turkey (Alinia 2004: 211–212). According to scholars the connection with the society of departure can differ tremendously from one member of a given generation to the next. Brah (1996: 193) considers a significant question in this regard: ‘What is the difference between “feeling at home” and staking claim to a place as one’s own?’. She differentiates between the homing desire and the desire for a ‘homeland’ (as not all diasporans aspire to return to the homeland) and offers a distinction between ‘feeling at home’ and declaring a place to be home (Brah 1996: 197).

Eliassi (2014) defines the meaning of “homeland for younger and older generations of Kurds living in Sweden. He notes that homeland for the older generation ‘is something real, a physical place from which they have lived experiences and to which they have real and material bonds. For the younger generation or second-generation, on the contrary, homeland is imaginary, something they “create” according to their wishes and needs or experienced in reality through trips made by the second-generation’ (Eliassi 2014:78). Alinia (2004) also highlights that the notion of homeland distinguishes several different positions among the first generation of the Kurdish diaspora based on ideological and political beliefs and

orientations. Alinia writes: '[T]here does not exist any given place that they all can refer to when they are facing the question about where/what their homeland is. Their meaning of homeland is a blend of political discourses and individual wishes, conceptions, longings and experiences. Their attachments to place are multiple: Sweden, Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria, the place of birth, Kurdish diaspora communities, and "Kurdistan". "The political notion of homeland and home are associated with different political discourses but also with politicised narratives of belonging that are produced in the diaspora space" (Alinia 2004: 329). Therefore, understandings of homeland can differ greatly, depending on several factors, among them the diaspora's historical context, the current state of the perceived homeland, and individuals' personal experiences.

In general, it could be said that for the second-generation there is no existence of an emotional and political homeland, but "homeland can be described as more than one place both real and imagined. Homeland, in the sense of the places to which they are emotionally attached, is inaccessible for many of them in different ways. It is also often associated with traumatic memories, danger, and risk" (Alinia 2004: 219).

Research reveals that many refugees learn about their homes from narratives or other types of media (Engbersen et al 2013). Some of the important lessons they learn include language, dressing, food, lifestyle and others. Therefore, even if refugees are away from home, it is common to find them dressing in national colours and learning or speaking their indigenous languages (Al-Ali et al 2001). Others cook and eat traditional foods while enacting any ceremonies or functions that underpin the lifestyle of their 'homes'. However, it is common to find refugees mixing the attributes of home with cultural norms of the host nation, as long as it enhances a sense of homeliness (Christou, 2006).

A survey on second-generation Greek-Canadian returnees established that nearly 30% of women went back to Canada within weeks of being in Greece because they did not feel at



home. The primary motive for returning to Greece was to get a feel of the real Greek lifestyle, which was not possible in Canada. Additionally, married female respondents indicated a lack of spousal respect in Canada (Panagakos, 2003). Therefore, common reasons for people returning home are ethnic identity and closing the gender gap (Kilinc, 2014).

Studies show that for second-generation migrants who live abroad for a long time, the desire to see their homelands is influenced by what they hear or read on social media (Favell, 2008). If the images are positive, second-generation migrants will often want to associate with home and the converse is also true. Many second-generation migrants struggle to understand how the natives of their host nations talk and treat them, and this quickly degenerated to the feeling of not being at home (Smith & Bakker, 2007).

In this way, home becomes a link between the second-generation migrant and their cultural roots, as far as the recognition of identity is concerned (White, 2013).

Refugees seek their own space of belongingness, where their comfort is guaranteed and security of basic needs assured (Teerling, 2011; Saito, 2007). Refugees get inspiration from their culture, which stimulates the consciousness of belongingness and fulfilment when they return home. When refugees are abroad for a long time, they do not feel at home because the relatives and friends who enhance the sense of belonging are physically absent (Crul & Schneider, 2010). This feeling of a lack of belongingness could delay the refugees' adaptation to the host nation because their heritage is far away in their homeland (Sardinha, 2011). The fact that refugees live far from home creates a feeling that some part of their roots are missing, hence the gap in belongingness (Horst, 2006).

Many second-generation migrants or refugees have chosen to return to their home at some point in time (Abbasi-Shavazi et al, 2008). This urge to return to the ancestral or parental home is driven by strong roots and contacts (Saito, 2007).

The rationale of returning home is to re-establish the cultural linkages and reconnect with people, after having been away for a significant period (Engbersen et al., 2014). Some second-generation migrants or refugees may choose to return home permanently (Ali, 2011), while others with stable occupations abroad may choose to return home during summer holidays, as a tourist every other year (Wessendorf, 2007). Whereas there are significant studies on the justification for second-generation migrants and refugees to return home, many gaps also exist and the reasons extend from poor empirical research to incompetent analysis of the circumstances (Sirkeci, 2012).

When second-generation migrants have been away from ‘home’ for a long time, there is a cultural detachment between the individual and their community still living in the ancestral land (Collyer, 2005).

The most obvious way to achieve closure is for the second-generation migrant to return home, to visit or permanently, to strengthen their sense of belongingness. The urgency of this closure depends on the bond between the second-generation migrant and the community, and it increases with the second-generation migrants’ age (Crul & Schneider, 2010). The duration of the stay at home by the returning second-generation migrant does not matter as long as there is reconnection with the home culture and heritage (Kanna, 2010). For second-generation migrants, there is greater sense of belonging achieved by going back home in person, as compared to accessing narratives while abroad. Many returning second-generation migrants consider this step as a great milestone of personal development, because the state of belongingness is as important as that of tracing one’s identity (Al-Ali et al 2001).

### **3.3.2. Problematizing the notion of ‘belonging’ and ‘home’**

This part begins with problematizing the notion of ‘belonging’; then follows to connect ‘belonging’ to the notion of ‘home’.

Hedetoft reveals the contradictory notion of ‘belonging’ and ‘migration’ by declaring that “‘belonging’ denotes “roots”, “stasis” and “traditionalism” in the context of bounded territoriality and national identity, whereas “migration” is linked to “mobility” and “postmodernity” in the context of porous borders and the insecurities attendant of globalization’ (Hedetoft 2004: 15). This contradiction is a useful starting point for the discussion when examining ‘home’ and ‘belonging’ in the case of the second generation because it can also clarify the contradictory nature of ‘return’ to ‘home’. Hedetoft claims that, ‘the English word “belonging” is a fortuitous compound of “being” and “longing”, of existential and romantic-imaginary significations and associations, configured in multiple ways by the international system of nationalism as simultaneously a political and a cultural ordering principle’. (Hedetoft 2002:15)”

Belonging is equated with ‘feeling at home’, both in academic discourse (see for example Yuval-Davis 2006) and in everyday language. As Michael Ignatieff (2001) points out, ‘belonging is about emotional attachment, about feeling “at home” and, about feeling “safe”’. Most importantly, ‘home’ and ‘belonging’, thus conceived, carry effective rather than cognitive meaning; the statement, ‘home is where we belong’, really means ‘where we feel we belong’ (Hedetoft 2004). Yuval-Davis (2006) has produced one of the most comprehensive studies of the notion of belonging. In her research, she has distinguished between *a sense of belonging* and *the politics of belonging*.

### **3.3.3 Sense of belonging and the politics of belonging**

In researching the notion of belonging, it is important to understand how, as an emotional feeling, it comes to be attached by an individual to a particular place to generate what Antonsich (2010) called in his research “place-belongingness”. He states that ‘home’ here stands for a symbolic space of familiarity, comfort, security, and emotional attachment

(Antonsich 2010) . This seems indeed the way in which the term is used by those authors, including Yuval-Davis (2006, 197), who refer to belonging as feeling ‘at home’. Yuval-Davis argues that ‘identity narratives can be either individual or collective, with the latter often serving as a resource for the former’ (2011: 14). In this connection, the emotional and the political dimension, along with individual and collective aspects, need to be considered in the conceptualisation of belonging.

Yuval-Davis (2006:197) argues that the term ‘belonging’ refers to “emotional attachments at individual level and to feelings of being at home, and it entails several levels of analysis”. The latter stems from the abstract form of community and refers to specific political projects that construct the boundaries for the political community of belonging (Yuval-Davis 2006a).

To understand the sense of belonging, Yuval-Davis has differentiated between three major analytical levels on which belonging is constructed: ‘The first level concerns *social locations*; the second relates to individuals’ *identifications and emotional attachments* to various collectivities and groupings; the third relates to *ethical and political value systems* with which people judge their own and others’ belonging/s’ (Yuval-Davis 2006: 197).

The social location to which people belong positions them differently in society on the basis of its internal power grids and the contextual meanings that the intersecting locations carry (Yuval-Davis 2006). For example, the gender, race, class or nation, age-group, kinship group or a certain profession that an individual belongs to are classified differently within the grids of power operating in one’s society (Yuval-Davis 2006). The second level is identification and emotional attachment. Identities and emotional connections can be examined from narrative and performative perspectives.

(Yuval-Davis 2010: 271) pays attention to the dialogical dimension of identity constructions, stating that the identity construction here is both reflective and constitutive, in

that it encompasses both individual and collective ‘in an in-between perpetual state of “becoming”’.

‘Therefore belonging, is not just about social locations and constructions of individual and collective identities and attachments but also about the ways these are valued and judged, it’s about ethical and political value’ (Yuval-Davis 2006:203). On the other hand, Antonsich’s (2010) research on individual feelings of place-belongingness leads him to highlight five factors which can contribute to generate such a feeling: auto-biographical, relational, cultural, economic, and legal.

‘Auto-biographical factors refers to one’s past history – personal experiences, relations and memories which attach a particular person to a given place’ (Antonsich 2010: 8). ‘Relational factors refer to the personal and social ties which enrich the life of an individual in a given place’ (Antonsich 2010: 8).

For cultural factors, language is usually considered as the most important (Antonsich 2010: 9). Therefore, language can be seen as a factor of ‘intimacy which resonates with one’s auto-biographical sphere and, as such, contributes to generate a sense of feeling “at home”’ (hooks 2009: 24).

‘Economic factors matter since they contribute to create a safe and stable material condition for the individual and her/his family’ (Antonsich 2010:9). These economic factors are important not from a financial perspective, but also make a person feel that s/he has a stake in the future of the place where s/he lives. “Legal factors (e.g., citizenship and resident permits) are an essential component in producing security, which is regarded by many as a vital dimension of belonging” (Antonsich 2010: 9).

In order to be able to feel at home in a place is not just a private matter, but also a social one. People’s sense of belonging would certainly be damaged, if the person feels excluded or rejected from a society or not welcomed by the community who live in that place

Antonsich 2010: 12). As put by Yuval-Davis and colleagues, the ‘sociology of emotions’ should come to terms with the ‘sociology of power’ (Yuval-Davis 2005, 528). The politics of belonging refers to ‘specific political projects that construct the boundaries for the political community of belonging, the boundaries that separate the world population into “us” and “them”’ (Yuval-Davis 2006a).

“Membership (to a group) and ownership (of a place) are the key factors in any politics of belonging” (Crowley 1999: 25). Therefore, the politics of belonging also struggles to determine what is involved in belonging, in being a member of a community, and what roles specific social locations and specific narratives of identity play (Yuval-Davis 2006). According to Antonsich, ‘even when political belonging is granted, this might still not be enough to generate a sense of place-belongingness’, belonging is indeed a ‘thicker’ concept than citizenship (Antonsich 2010).

Empirical researches reveal that in order to belong, “people should feel that they can express their own identity and be recognized as an integral part of the community where they live, as well as being valued and listened to” (Sporton and Valentine 2007:13). This means that the role of political institutions is not sufficient, if the rest of the society fails to ‘grant’ this recognition.

### **3.3.4 ‘Home’ and ‘belonging’ for second-generation migrants**

Empirically, the relationship between ‘belonging’ and ‘home’ clarifies more about people’s attachments to locations and the norms of these locations. Hedetoft defines ‘belonging’ in terms of the notion of ‘home’ and indicates that:

‘belonging’ is a concrete, innocent, almost pristine notion, closely interwoven with and imbricated in the notion of ‘home’. In fact, our home is where we belong, territorially and culturally, where ‘our own’ community is, where our family, friends and acquaintances reside, where we have our roots, and where we long to return to

when we are elsewhere in the world. In this sense, belonging, as already pointed out, is a notion replete with concreteness, sensuality, organicist meanings and romantic images... In the ways that it circumscribes feelings of 'homeness', it is also a significant determinant of individual 'identity', that elusive but still real psychological state of feeling 'in sync with' oneself under given external conditions. Most importantly, 'home' and 'belonging', thus conceived, carry affective rather than cognitive meaning; the indicative and simplistic statement above, 'home is where we belong', really means 'home is where we feel we belong' (Hedetoft 2002 4-5).

After this conceptualization, he asks an essential question: 'But what, for instance, if where we feel we belong (our "cultural" or "ethnic" home) does not match objective ascriptions of membership (our "political" or "civic" home), because "belonging" separates into its two constituent parts: "being: in one place, and "longing" for another?' (Hedetoft 2002 4-5). The concept of 'home' is related to a 'feeling' of belonging.

This 'belonging' might be created through family, school, media, politicians, but it will be assumed that not everyone gets affected by these factors in the same intensity.

According to Hedetoft (2002) the term belonging is associated with how a person feels at 'home'. Regarding second-generation migrants and refugees, the term belonging is a very strong bond or perspective that binds a person to other people, a place, culture, region and other varied familiarities (Dupree, 2002). Therefore, when a second-generation migrant or refugee belongs, there is a notion of entrenched roots and this always pulls back from far distances across the globe (Crul & Schneider, 2010). This implies that belonging is a synergistic realization where a second-generation migrant or refugee asserts their place in an organic society or group beyond romantic conceptualization (Saito, 2007).

Studies indicate that a sense of belonging makes refugees stay connected abroad and back home with their families and friends (Sardinha, 2011; Saito, 2007). Belonging stimulates the refugees' right of ownership of homeland, espoused as a deep cultural value.

Belonging often ranks high among refugees' priorities when faced with decisions such as staying abroad or return home. Refugees with high regard for heritage express a deep sense of belonging alongside their home traditions (Sardinha, 2011). Furthermore, refugees with a high sense of belonging often have deep roots irrespective of where they are abroad and will return home at one time (Long & Oxfeld, 2004).

Refugees share views with their relatives and friends back home as a sign of their belongingness (Crul & Schneider, 2010). Family (immediate and extended) is at the core of refugee belongingness and this inspires the need to return home either permanently or temporarily while alive (Sardinha, 2011). Some refugees demonstrate deep loyalty to their countries and a desire to return home after long stays abroad as a sense of belonging (Anthias, 2008). Some refugees after returning home no longer harbour the feeling of being a 'stranger' because the surrounding community enhances their sense of belonging (Saito, 2007). The realisation that home, where the refugees' ancestors came from is also another dimension of belongingness creates the urge to return (Crul & Schneider, 2010). There is a deep sense of belonging when a refugee returns home and is able to communicate in the native language with the community (Sardinha, 2011). This belongingness calms down the refugee's previous worries about failing to reconnect with their ancestors. This sense of belonging is a dream that many refugees have been reflecting upon for long time (Laliotou, 2004).

Research shows that the concept of refugee belongingness is a constant personal negotiation between the reasons for being abroad and the cultural roots back at home (Saito, 2007). Some of the common negotiations are the merits and demerits of returning home as compared to continuing to stay in the host country (Sardinha, 2011). The refugees' familiarity with the host nation and home culture is another negotiation as it defines the extent of belongingness (Thomson & Crul 2007).



The reality between the refugees' agony of staying abroad and the nostalgia about what could have been achieved but failed, deepens the refugee's urge to seek belongingness from their homes, more often than staying abroad (Crul & Schneider, 2010). The restriction facing many refugees abroad, compared with the freedom back at home, are defining moments of belongingness and come to play when deciding whether to return home (Teerling 2011). Depending on the standards of living, the refugee's feeling of gaps between unfamiliar events of the host nations compared with their homeland trigger a reflection about belongingness and often, many will settle for returning home (White, 2006).

The end game is the sense of belonging where the refugee comes back home to express emotion at being reunited with family members (Razum et al. 2005). This explains why some returnees shed tears of joy at the airport as soon as they reconnect with the loved ones who create a deep sense of belonging (Sardinha, 2011).

On their return home, refugees are able to take charge of their destiny, a process that was elusive while abroad, due to lack of belongingness (Panagakos, 2003). Simple acts like limited mobility for refugees who have stayed abroad for a long time create anxiety about belongingness and feeling unwanted due to their conditional stays (Duvell, 2005; Kanna, 2010).

Research shows that depending on the cultural background of the second-generation migrant who is returning home, there could be some ceremonies performed on arrival to enhance the sense of belongingness (Bascom, 2005). The feasting and celebration go a long way in reintegrating the son or daughter back to the community and the entire event comforts the second-generation migrant's emotions with a great sense of belonging. The cultural activities, gifts and artefacts given to the returning second-generation migrant are welcoming gestures from the community and go a long way in enhancing a sense of belonging. There could be some traditional dances and performances during this ceremony as these makes the second-

generation migrant identify with and belong to the community after returning home. During the welcoming phase of the return of the second-generation migrant, events are synchronized to speed reintegration and belonging to community. It does not matter if the second-generation migrants are of multi-racial decent, the feeling of belongingness prevails upon returning home and experiencing the authentic cultural roots of their ancestors (Laliotou 2004). Indeed, home is intrinsically linked to the processes of inclusion and exclusion and to subjective experiences of them. In other words, feeling at home is directly linked to our struggles to belong. The notion of belonging is often equated to – and readily conflated with – the concepts of identity and home. The connection between home and identity is complicated, especially in the case of second-generation. Next chapter will highlight the concept of identity and its complicity to second-generation returnees.

### **3.4 The concept of identity**

#### **3.4.1 Defining the term identity**

Stets and Burke define identity at its core as, ‘the categorization of the self as an occupant of a role, and the incorporation, into the self, of the meanings and expectations of that role and its performance’ (2000: 2).

Furthermore, identity can be taken as a term, ‘to reference how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is constructed across time and space, and how the person understands possibilities for the future’ (Norton, 2000: 5). A third viewpoint states that identity encompasses, ‘one’s conception of self in the world’ (Mooney et al., 2011: 174). Moreover, it is claimed that in post-structural perspectives, identity is, ‘fluid, context-dependent, and context-producing, in particular historical and cultural circumstances’ (Norton & Toohey, 2011: 419).

Concerns of identity could be problematic for asylum seekers, refugees and another migrant groups in general. “Finding oneself dislocated from the place where one was born and grew up, from the community where one’s ancestors had deep connections and ties, and perhaps where one feels that one belongs, is difficult to deal with” (Kebede 2010:4). The process of relocation from one place to another can be very challenging when the social perception in the host countries emphasizes this feeling of belonging.

However, many second-generation migrants might integrate into the host countries’ culture easily compared to their parents’ generation (Rumbaut 1994; Ying and Han 2007). The host society may identify them as an asylum seeker, refugee or immigrant, or simply as a foreigner or outsider who has another place of birth or another place of belonging. It is also when this happens, i.e. when self-identification fails to match the labels placed on a person by outsiders, that issues of identity occur (Du Bois 1994; Howard 2000; Kumsa 2006).

The fully unified, completed, secure and coherent identity is a fantasy. Instead, as the systems of meaning and cultural representation multiply, we are confronted by a bewildering, fleeting multiplicity of possible identities, any one with which we could identify ourselves – at least temporarily (Hall 2006:251). Usually it has been acknowledged that individuals “form and reform their identities as they pass through different stages of their lives.

During childhood, a person’s self-awareness grows and alters, while in adolescence this awareness of ‘who I am’ becomes more complex, beginning to take into account the physical, cognitive and social changes that occur” (Kebede 2010:5). Generally, the process of identity formation might be difficult, but this process becomes more complex in the case of the second-generation.

Identities are fixed to the space and social environment of a given time. Thus, a person could have multiple identities with each one having a particular dynamic of its own. On many occasions, these different identities intersect.

Therefore, identities will always be fluid and change in accordance to the shifting relations a person has in temporary moments in time and place (Kebede 2010).

As Howard states, ‘identities are relational, defined by their difference from something, processual, and multiple’ (Howard 2000:386). Also, as Park notes, identity is not a thing out there to be discovered and reserved, and it is not an end in itself but rather is located in the lifelong process of becoming ourselves (Park 1999). Furthermore, Côté (1996) stated in his research that social identity can be ascribed, achieved and/or managed: “These terms can be defined as follows: ‘ascribed’ means assigned on the basis of some inherited status; ‘achieved’ is used in the sociological sense by which social position is to be accomplished on one’s own; and ‘managed’ means reflexively and strategically fitting oneself into a community of ‘strangers’ by meeting their approval through the creation of the right impressions” (Côté 1996: 420-421).

He claims that, in premodern society, ‘social identity is largely determined by one’s characteristics or attributes (like race, sex, parent’s social status)’; in the early-modern, it is ‘increasingly based on personal accomplishment and material attainment’ (both of which are ostensibly based on appraisals of merit); while in the late-modern society, it becomes a matter of impression management (that is, in certain social encounters, situational appraisals can become more important than one’s social background or accomplishments) (Côté 1996). For Côté (1996), managing identity is the most important element, but he may be underestimating the role that ascribed and achieved statuses play. It could be said with certainty that achieved social identities are actually just as important.

Gee (2000) notes that identity can be observed in four different ways: Nature-Identity as a state developed by nature (skin colour, for example); Institution-Identity as a position authorized by authorities (which I refer to as institutionalized identities, for example, ‘refugee’); Discourse-Identity, which is an individual trait recognized in discourses (‘the

rational individual’); and finally Affinity-Identity which includes experiences shared in the practices of groups ( Gee 2000:100). Though Gee would agree that all of the above elements are vital.

While it is difficult to describe the concept of identity and the ways in which they are formed, in general terms, “identities are formed and reformed through interrelated but different channels” (Kebede 2010:12). Obviously, identities are also formed through a person’s own character and sense of self (Côté 1996). Similarly, it has been proposed that identity is not actually a simple narrative that an individual tells him/herself about who he/she is and that it is something much more than discovering our inner ‘selves’ (Hall 1995). Hall argues that identities “actually come from outside, they are the way in which we are recognized and then come to step into the place of the recognitions which others give us” (1995:8).

According to research, second-generation migrants and refugees grapple with two paradigms of identity (Waldinger, 2004). These are the self and/or place identities (Walsh, 2007). Broadly, self-identities refer to the person’s class, gender, sexuality and ethnicity (Kilinc, 2014). Self-identity leads second-generation migrants and refugees to question who and what they are, especially when facing difficult life decisions such as repatriation from a foreign country, uncertain refugee status or detention by authorities from the host nation immigration offices (Christou, 2004; 2006). This implies that self-identity troubles the consciousness of second-generation migrants and refugees when faced by some complex problems or events while abroad as they deliberate return home (Hutnyk, 2005).

The self-identity paradigms evolve from a second-generation migrants’ past or perception of themselves in relation to others today (Dimitriu, 2003). Therefore, second-generation migrants may seek answers on how their self-being or transformation determines their fate in life and their compliance with cultural orientations (Al-Ali et al, 2001).

The quest for self-identity extends to how second-generation migrants and refugees synchronize with cultural aspects, whether they are moved emotionally when certain events occur, how they connect with communities and their political inclinations (Engbersen et al 2013). This implies that self-identity has some underlying aspects often ignored by scholars and researchers during observational studies (Long & Oxfeld, 2004). On the other hand, place identities are factors that make people distinct simply because of the place of origin (Samers, 2004; Walsh, 2009).

In the case of the children of forced migrants, the connection between home and identity is complicated. Therefore, it is essential that special attention is given to place identities.

Second generation migrants and refugees can choose to identify with a place due to its people, events, cultures or language (Dupree, 2002). The common phrase referring to a person who is unclear in a conversation as ‘sounding Greek’ is an example of geographical identity due to language diversity (Christou, 2006). Researchers who investigate place identity, defined it as ‘interpretation[s] of self that uses environmental meaning to symbolize or situate identity. Like other forms of identity, place identity answers the question, “Who am I?, ” doing so by countering, “Where am I?,” or more fundamentally, “Where do I belong?”’ (Cuba and Hummond 1993: 548). Place identities are formed as a result of feeling at home in the geographic space in which one is situated. However, people do not always have this kind of choice available to them and it is as a result of accident (i.e. the place of one’s birth) and other circumstances including one’s socioeconomic status and presence of diasporic co-ethnics that people live in certain neighbourhoods and countries (Kebede 2010:12).

The purpose of this chapter has been to bring altogether literature that deal with issues of identity formation and then put this into a general framework that can contribute to a better understanding of the experiences of the second-generation returnees belonging and identity formation.

The next section, identity and translocation positionality, refers to the field of transnational positionality which brings into focus contemporary forms of identity construction.

### **3.4.2 Identity and translocational positionality as a theoretical context**

The notion of belonging is often associated with the concepts of identity and home. My aim in this section is to outline how those concepts are understood and conceptualized within the scope of this study. As mentioned in an earlier chapter “‘belonging’ can mean having multiple homes, not necessarily in one particular geographical locality – or even any geographical locality, for that matter. The question of belonging naturally brings in the question ‘Do/can you belong?’, which emerges from the intersubjective relations of individuals’ surroundings and the reactions to the individual’s perceived positioning that such surroundings produce” (Toivanen 2014:37).

The term ‘translocational positionality’ tries to clarify some of the difficulties discovered within intersectionality approaches and attempts to push the debate forward on theorising identity and belonging. I will focus in this section on the field of transnational positionality which brings into focus contemporary forms of identity construction. I will also reflect on the concept of intersectionality which provides a more integrated analysis of identity. According to Yuval-Davis (2010), identity is a contested subject. When examining classed identities in my thesis, it is essential to define what is meant by the use of the term. Much has been written on the definition of identity in different disciplines, and reviewing all the literature is beyond the scope of this thesis. (Brubaker and Cooper 2000) who claimed that the notion of identity is becoming less useful because it tells both too much and too little about a person, on the other side Anthias believes that people have ‘multiple locations, positions and belongings in a situated and contextual way which does not end up as a thoroughgoing reification or deconstruction of difference’ (2008: 6). Her use of the term translocational is an approach to understanding processes, ideas and experiences relating to the self and others,

and it addresses the shortcomings derived from identity, mainly its treatment in the literature as a fixed concept which does not illustrate the processes and formations of social locations (Anthias 2002: 494–495).

‘Positionality’ comprises a set of relations and practices that imply identification, performativity or action (Anthias 2002: 501). Positionality combines social position and social positioning. Anthias (2000) believes that there are three locales in which migrants are placed: the homeland from where they have migrated, the society of migration and the migrant group. Anthias discusses the concepts of ‘identity’ and ‘belonging’ in the light of her concept of ‘translocational positionality’. She emphasizes that the understanding of the notion of ‘belonging’ and ‘identity’ is changing because national borders are challenged by newer migration flows (with refugees, asylum seekers, skilled migrants etc.) where ‘there exist complex relations to different locales; these include networks involving social, symbolic and material ties between homelands, destinations and relations between destination’ (Anthias 2009: 5). She states:

The concept of translocational positionality addresses issues of identity in terms of locations which are not fixed but are context, meaning and time related and which therefore involve shifts and contradictions. As an intersectional frame it moves away from the idea of given ‘groups’ or ‘categories’ of gender, ethnicity and class, which then intersect (a particular concern of some intersectionality frameworks), and instead pays much more attention to social locations and processes which are broader than those signalled by this (Anthias 2009:6)

For example, an Iranian woman is not fixed to a particular identity, as there is no fixed identity such as being a woman or being an Iranian that could define one in this sense. Her positionality in terms of a sense of belonging should be seen in the social locale in which she finds herself in her daily experiences, for example when she is working in a hospital or when she finds herself at home with her family.



The other locale, according to Anthias, is the country of origin. Positionality should be understood in relation to processes: for example, to a great extent the experience of being Iranian is embedded in the experiences of growing up in Iran or in an Iranian family in the diaspora. Positionality is not fixed or static and is constantly changing because it is being told and retold in different places and times and for different audiences: for example, the ways in which Iranian women activists inside Iran define the notion of an Iranian woman are different to those of Iranian women outside Iran, because the audiences, the social setting and the migration processes all affect such narratives. ‘Who we are’ is produced at the time the stories are narrated and in relation to the multiple audiences for whom they are narrated (Fathi 2017:37).

Anthias trusts that by looking at the narratives of location (such as race, gender or class) in different locales (geographical and diasporic locations), the concern with identity being a fixed possession of individuals rather than a process will be eliminated (Anthias 2008; 2010). Anthias argues that unless we take an intersectional approach to the study of social class, the underlying inequalities that tend to be hidden in the form of hierarchical stratification will not be revealed (2005). From this, one can understand that the sense of belonging and not belonging to certain groupings or social locations is not only local and situated but is also intersectional.

Furthermore, Anthias illustrates that ‘identity; and ‘belonging’ have a difference in emphasis: ‘Identity involves individual and collective narratives of self and other, presentation and labelling, myths of origin and myths of destiny with associated strategies and identifications’ (Anthias 2009: 6).

When one is identifying oneself, the emphasis seems to be on ‘who are you/how you identify yourself’ – i.e., on the collective narratives of self and other that are associated with identifications (Toivanen 2010:37).

It has been argued that a feeling of belonging presupposes access, whereas an individual can identify with collectivities without necessarily being considered part of them (Anthias 2009). Therefore, a sense of belonging is considered to emerge from and become activated in situations of denied membership, with exclusionary boundaries to identity categories, and especially from subjective experience of mechanisms of difference. Feelings of belonging are based on notions of exclusion, inclusion, access, and participation to a greater degree than identity (Anthias 2009a).

On the other hand, as Anthias argues, “‘belonging’ is more about experiences of being part of the social fabric and the ways in which social bonds and ties are manifested in practices, experiences and emotions of inclusion’ (Anthias 2009a: 8). To belong is to be accepted as a part of a community, to feel safe within it and to have a stake in the future of such a community of membership (Anthias 2009a: 8). Theoretically and in practice, identity is situational and fluid. It changes depending on where a person is geographically located and with whom she or he is interacting at a particular time.

### **3.4.3 Reconsidering transnationalism through the second generation**

The concept of transnationalism is used in migration studies to describe the broad variety of connections between migrants and their homeland. Until recently, little attention was given to whether these ties would be continued by the migrants’ children, the ‘second generation’.

‘Generational research on transnationalism is still in its infancy and as a result there are many, essentially unexplored, possibilities’ (Somerville 2008).

Most scholars have agreed that transnationalism may be important only for the first generation, but not for their children (the second generation).

Furthermore, they have admitted, that transnational ties will restrict themselves to the first generation only and they were of the opinion that the children of immigrants are not likely to engage with their ancestral homes with the same intensity and frequency as their parents, nor will they be as influenced by homeland values and practices (Levitt 2009). “Portes states that transnational activities are a “one-generation phenomenon”, but that the involvement of the immigrant generation can have resilient effects on the second generation. Similarly, Rumbaut finds overall, that despite variability among different national-origin groups, the level of transnational attachments among the second generation is quite small” (Somerville 2008:24). Because most of the children of immigrants have no plans to return to live in their ancestral homes, and because they are not completely fluent in their parents’ mother tongue, many scholars conclude that transnational activism among the second generation is of little importance (Levitt 2009: 1227).

A recent study of the second generation in New York City found that transnational practices varied by group, according to geographic distance between the home and host countries, homeland politics and the frequency of visiting and remitting money home (Kasinitz 2008). Differently, other scholars argue that the second generation maintain some knowledge of their parents’ native language and do some traveling back and forth to their parents’ country of origin, so ties may continue, but the magnitude and frequency is unclear (Somerville 2008). Although I agree that the children of migrants will not engage in their homeland with the same regularity as their parents, we should not dismiss outright the strong potential effect of being raised in a transnational social field. When children are raised in families and participate in organisations in which people, goods, money, ideas and practices from their parents’ countries of origin circulate in and out on a regular basis, they are not only socialized into the rules and institutions of the countries where they live, but also into those of the countries from which their families come (Levitt 2009).

“Transnationalism constitutes an attempt to formulate a theoretical and conceptual framework aimed at a better understanding of the strong social and economic links between migrants host and origin countries” (Cassarino 2015:262). “Transnationalism further suggests that migrants return to their homeland because of their social and historical attachment to the place and they identify with it as their ‘home’ or native soil” (Kılınç 2013: 22). Cassarino argues that, ‘common ethnicity, common origin, common kinship linkages appear to be the main factors which lubricate transnational activities and define transnational identities’ (Cassarino 2015). In contrast Portes relates the transnationalism to economy rather than ethnic, kinship, national ties. He claims that “immigrant transnationalism is not driven by ideological reasons but by the very logic of global capitalism” (Portes 2001).

The following academic works are found relevant firstly in terms of discussing the second-generation Iraqi-Kurds’ return and secondly for connecting the previously debated theories together. The first one is Wessendorf’s work on the second-generation Italians in Switzerland that she introduces the concept of “roots-migration” to describe the second generation’s return to the parental homeland (Wessendorf 2007). Her findings demonstrate that roots-migration is related to the second generation’s transnational practices while growing up and the nostalgic imagination for their parental homeland. However, once they return, the reality in the parental homeland can be shocking and the returnees’ struggle start in order to integrate into the society and culture that they always perceived as their own. The second one is Levitt’s *Roots and Routes: Understanding the Lives of the Second Generation Transnationally*. She criticises that it is not only the first generation who practices transnational lives but also the second generation. She argues that the second generation keeps ties with the ancestral homeland, though not with the same intensity as their parents, and the reason is “the strong potential effect of being raised in a transnational social field” (Levitt 2009). She also stresses the importance of understanding the lives of the second

generation through family structures, gender relations, religious, class differences and kin-based strategies.

The third one is 'Rethinking transnationalism through the second generation' by Helen Lee (2011). In her article she explores the transnational practices of second-generation Tongans in Australia, using the research findings to reconsider some of the existing assumptions about what constitutes transnationalism. Lee (2011) has identified in her research three specific forms of transnationalism relating to the second-generation. The forms are described as the following: intradiasporic, indirect and forced transnationalism (Lee 2011:295). Intradiasporic transnationalism refers to the ties maintained across different diasporic populations, which can occur independently of the host-home connections that are the primary focus of transnational studies (Lee 2011: 295). The migrant population do not have any direct connection to their homeland, however their indirect engagement occurs through activities such as contributing to family remittance pools, fundraising activities and church donations, which ensure that they remain enmeshed in transnational webs of connection, both intradiasporic and with the homeland (Lee 2011). 'This indirect transnationalism can include involuntary involvement, or forced transnationalism, a term that also describes practices such as sending children and youth from the diaspora to the homeland against their will' (Lee 2011: 295). Both of these forms of transnationalism can be discovered in the migrant generation, but they more usually characterize the transnational engagements of the second generation.

Firstly, there were arguments in the literature that transnational migrants felt at 'home' both in their country of origin and the host nation. Only recent work on the 'second generation' has shown that for the children of migrants, this may not always be the case, even when they maintain transnational ties. Transnationalism has become an important dimension for the second generation and can be experienced in significantly different ways by migrants

and their children. Glick-Schiller et al. argued that the term ‘transnational’ describes people who ‘take actions, make decisions and feel concerns within a field of social relations that links together their country of origin and their country or countries of settlement’ (1992: ix). In their definition they did not mention the frequency of such actions, but they make it clear that they regard transnationals as intensely engaged with their home country in ways that affect their everyday lives (Lee 2011).

This is an important statement in terms of migrants, especially when we think about second generation – ‘identity’, ‘belonging’ and the concept of ‘home’ do not essentially take their roots from the feeling of attachment to their parents’ home country. A second-generation Turkish-German might feel belongingness for religious understanding of Islam and relate more to the religious practices of Turkish people, but the same person might not feel belonging to the gender norms of the Turkish society. On the other hand, these home and host countries we mention are not homogenous in terms of norms, culture, ethnicity and religion either. The person might not feel safe within the gender norms of the general Turkish society, but let’s say he/she might claim that he/she feels safe in a specific city, or a specific community in that city or town (Kilinic 2013).

An increase in transnationalism, the individual’s and family’s ability to visit their parental homeland and build connection with their families across national borders, has led to questions about its impact on identity especially for the second generation. One consequence of transnationalism is that identity is influenced by social relationships that are maintained across national borders and in more than one national context. In other words, by definition transnationalism means: ‘identities and cultural production reflect their multiple locations’ (Byng 2017).

Accordingly, the visits of the second generation to their parental homeland can increase their identification with that nation and decrease their identification with the nation where they are raised.

Second-generation Iranians in the United States of America defines their religious and national identities as synonymous (McAuliffe 2007). A comparative study of Turkish second generations in Australia finds that they have a sense of not fully belonging (Zevallos 2008). However, when they visit Turkey their Australian identity is more valuable than their Turkish one. In other words, being Muslim is more important than being Australian but being Australian is more important than being Turkish (Zevallos 2008). Western cultural values and democratic ideals allow for religious choice.

The research indicates that second generation migrants can have transnational identities. It also shows that identity can be fostered by social networks, travel and other transnational activities. Further research suggests that transnational orientations among the second generation can develop depending on the social context of the family in which they were brought up (Chams 2015). The family is the primary socializing agent and plays an important role in shaping the identity of the second-generation (Tuan, 1998).

In general, we can say that transnationalism is a vital phenomenon for both first and second-generation immigrants. However, research findings on the significance and prevalence of transnationalism among the second generation has varied. Some studies find considerable evidence of transnational activities amongst the second-generation, while others hold that members of the second generation only loosely tie their ethnic identity to their parents' country of origin. This research has addressed this contradiction in the literature, seeking answers to the following questions: Do second-generation individuals have transnational identities? Exploring identity construction among second-generation migrants illustrates the importance they place on ties to their parents' homeland in their construction of

identity and belonging in diaspora countries. The second generation still feels a personal connection to their parental homeland, and they express this connection through their identity options, their clothing choices and their dual allegiances. The children of migrants are able to stay connected to their parents' birthplace at the same time that they build a strong connection to their own country of citizenship. It is through frequent transnational communication and information flows that the second generation is able to remain embedded in both in diaspora country and homeland, and which facilitates their process of identity formation within this active transnational social field.



## **4. Methodology**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Social scientists use different methods to describe, discover and understand social life. The research methodology is a vital component of the process of research, providing the philosophical grounding for the research methods. Furthermore, the methodology contains values, assumptions and criteria utilised in interpreting data and drawing conclusions (Bailey 1995). Specifically, the conducting of qualitative research, such as this research, entails efforts to understand the manner in which participants construct the world socially and the meanings they accrue from such constructions (Creswell 2014). The notion of the constructed world' means that people live in a private, social and relational world, which is viewable and constructible from various perspectives. Systems of meaning, language and memory, among others, are channels for constructing and shaping the world. This renders data collected through the qualitative framework diverse, rich and complex (La Vecchia 2011).

This chapter sets out to discuss the association between the methods and the research methodology employed in this study. It contains information on the rationale behind the application of qualitative methods in data collection. Additionally, I will use this chapter to elaborate on the practicalities related to the entry strategies into the research field and the data collection and analysis procedures. Questions related to reflexivity and positionality feature in this chapter along with discussions on validation, representation, ethical considerations and approaches towards ensuring validation in this qualitative research using a narrative methodology.

## **4.2 Narrative Methodology**

Narrative modes informed the research methodology, which facilitated the development of this work.

Narrative modes underscore the idea that a person lives a storied life and that the sophisticated nature of human experiences is best understood through story gathering. In accordance with Connelly and Clandinin (1990), narrative constitutes both a method and a phenomenon. Bruner (1987) who is among the epistemological founders of narrative methods offered an overarching summary concerning the role played by narratives in assisting people to comprehend their life experiences. He argued that life narratives offer a reflection of the prevalent theories concerning ‘possible lives’, which form a portion of a person’s culture. In fact, one vital means for the characterisation of a culture entails use of narrative models that avail life through the description of a life course. Furthermore, he states that ‘the tool kit of any culture is replete not only with a stock of canonical life narratives, but with combinable formal constituents from which its members can construct their own life narratives’ (Bruner 1987, p.15).

Narratives are evident at both macro and micro levels. Macro levels include institutional, cultural or societal stories, whereas personal stories define the micro level (Squire, Andrews and Tamboukou 2008). Personal narratives assist in constructing the micro level narratives although they are subject to the influence of macro level narratives. Narratives are reproducers, constructors and mediators of cultural conceptions and personal meanings (Eerola 2015). When narrative approaches expanded, which is known as the ‘narrative turn’, narrative methods began featuring in various social science disciplines (Squire, Andrews and Tamboukou 2008; Brannen 2013).

As opposed to referring to one single approach, narrative methods refer to a combination of various approaches whereby researchers study the research subjects as

narratives or understand them in the narrative context (Eerola 2015). The fundamental stance of narrativity centres on telling as a familiar and innate means through which people can produce meanings and portray their views concerning the world.

Therefore, narrative methods apply in gaining an advanced understanding of the way people tell their lives. Due to the socially organised nature of narratives, narrative methods are applicable in gaining advanced insights about how the lives of people connect to the broader social context (Eronen 2012).

Various other researchers who have underscored the significance of narratives in lived experiences also motivated the application of the narrative method. Riessman (2008) highlighted the universality of the narrative impulse within all places, societies and ages. According to Bruner (1987), narrative understanding is the fundamental mode for cognitive functioning, further proposing that narratives organise memory and structure experience and perception. Hiles and Cermak (2008) suggested the essentiality of narrative to the process of making meaning, through which actions and events become understandable. Specifically, events do not feature as stories. Instead, the experiences of an event become stories upon shaping, ordering and giving meaning. Polkinghorne (1988) hailed the use of narratives by arguing that they provide a means for understanding one's own actions and those of others, organising events meaningfully as a whole and linking events and outcomes over a period.

It is essential to understand that narratives may present as multiple, whereas several narratives are capable of giving meaning to one event. People can use narratives for recalling, arguing, justifying, persuading or dissuading, engaging and entertaining. It is possible for such storytelling to engage audiences in the narrator's experiences and this could lead to the creation of experiences for the audience. Speakers form a story by constructing events through the narrative process. Such a story is both interactive and situated (Chase 2007).

Elliot (2005) admitted to the social nature of stories in the sense that they involve listeners and speakers. The listener's social world shapes the narratives due to the construction of narrative via interaction. According to Squire (2009), one speaks to imagined others that understand the story whether one is the storyteller or the telling of the story is to self. This implies that during the engagement with second generation Iraqi Kurds in this research, the world within which their stories of returning home exist would define their experiences and interactions with both home and foreign lands.

Cultural story repertoires that structure and frame the narratives of individuals also shape narratives (Elliot 2005). These narrative frameworks may prove to be less or more restrictive. In some contexts, narratives are bound to adhere to a standard pattern like in the formal medical consultation setting. This connects with Foucault's (1990) work on the institutional environments, which add to the redefinition of the contemporary regulated self. Elliot (2005) proposed that cultural narratives are capable of offering guidelines that affect stories. However, cultural narratives are incapable of determining individual narrative content that has been constructed actively. On the other hand, it is possible to maintain the stability of public narratives with time. Altogether, public narratives may also change and the interrelation between these new personal and extant public cultural narratives might develop alternative probabilities. Riessman (2008) detailed the way stories are capable of creating social change, such as in the case of resistant feminist movements.

There is significant research concerning narrative's role in constructing, maintaining and renegotiating self-identity through stories told by people about themselves and other people concerning who they are (Riessman 2008; Hiles and Cermak 2008; Elliott 2005). According to Riessman (2008), people are likely to edit and revise their memories concerning the past to suit their present identities. In Polkinghorne's (1988) view, identity comprises both a self-narrative concerning the past of an individual and the construction of expected,

incomplete future stories. In this research, it was in the best interest of gaining as much insight as possible from second generation Iraqi Kurds returning home, based on their identities in relation to Iraqi Kurdistan and their foreign ‘homes’ and the role their past played in defining their present and future experiences.

### **4.3 Rationale for narrative methodology**

In this research, the rationale behind the application of the narrative methodology connected with the aim of producing knowledge concerning the returning home of second-generation Iraqi Kurds. Despite the inherent difficulty in drawing direct inferences from narratives concerning lived realities, the use of narratives can provide insights concerning the manner in which things are said, lived through and experienced. In this research, narrativity features in numerous forms across various research process phases. I was drawn to narrative methodology based on the conviction that it offered an approach that appreciated the complex nature of life without any attempts at reducing it. In the context of this study, this connected research with practice and practicality. This is because, as a sociologist, there is an obligation to expose contradictions, complexities and the messy nature of life and the situations that offer multitudes of possibilities instead of scaling down lives to one issue.

Likewise, I had no interest in fragmenting lives and experiences through isolation and categorisation of other aspects of the lived experiences of second-generation Iraqi Kurds. This rendered the narrative methodology and subsequent analysis as an approach that respects the stories of the participants and is capable of contributing towards the development of an understanding of the accounts of second-generation Iraqi Kurds from their own perspectives. The application of narrative analysis also incorporated the flexibility of the researcher’s role in the co-construction of the stories told by the second-generation Iraqi Kurds returning home.

This was in line with the theoretical foundations of narrative methodology, which appreciate that narratives are inherently social (Squire, Andrews and Tamboukou 2013).

Of course, it was also possible to select other qualitative methodologies such as interpretative phenomenological analysis or discourse analysis that is able to integrate narrative interviews for data collection. However, I concluded that this did not fit with the epistemological stance presumed in this research. It was my opinion that the theoretical approach implicated in interpretative phenomenological analysis fails to embrace fully the socially constructed characterisation of the interactions happening in the research interview. In addition, there is a separation and removal of the words used by participants in the process of analysing excerpts from their interview context in the case of interpretative phenomenological approach. Moreover, there is a loss of the latency of gaining rich descriptions of all individuals and agencies possible through the pooling of statements of multiple interviewees (Parker 2008).

Concerning discourse analysis, language features as performative and functioning to request, order, accuse or persuade (Potter and Wetherell 2007). In so doing, this constructs positions that establish the power that one meaning position has over another. The conceptualised accomplishment of this is through inferring interpretive repertoires that could be embedded culturally. Analysing the text and talk of individuals highlights the discourses that they draw upon and the means through which they construct identities. In spite of this approach being capable of demonstrating the social discourses' functions, it overlooks the way an individual might assert agency in his or her life (Emerson and Frosh 2009). Thus, I rejected discourse analysis as a methodological approach.

Instead, this led to the adoption of the version of critical narrative analysis proposed by Emerson and Frosh (2009), as a development of the linguistic approach to narrative described by Gee (1991).

This approach embodies the retention of the crucial gains of discourse analysis through social construction and understanding. It also includes an emphasis on the active construction processes of an individual in their narratives. Interpreting meaning commences with the close examination of the way a participant speaks the narrative (Emerson and Frosh 2009).

Riessman (2008) found this approach to be valuable in research that entails analyses of extended experience narratives. These may include flash forwards, flashbacks, asides and multiple episodes. Riessman (2008) indicated that this approach assisted her in identifying thematic issues in two studies concerning divorce and infertility among Indian women.

There are three principal methodological issues necessitating consideration in this thesis. The first issue relates to the relations between the cultural and personal narratives of the second-generation Iraqi Kurds. Secondly, the role narrativity played in analysis. Finally, there was the research topic's intimate character. The subsections that follow below contain discussions in line with these three principal methodological issues.

#### **4.3.1 Relations between cultural and personal narratives**

Since narratives are locatable on both a personal and a cultural level, they may present with a narrow or broad scope, be explicitly told or protected and internal (Eerola 2015). In the context of this research, the interest was at both levels. In other words, the research was concerned with narratives told by second generation Iraqi Kurds and the cultural narratives presently circulating in relation to their experiences of returning home. Subsequently, the purpose was not to extract the inner narratives of their returning home experiences or interpret what lies underneath them. Instead, the purpose was to analyse such experiences within the frames of extant and diverse cultural frameworks.

Narratives in this case were understood as social constructions whereby personal feelings, meanings and experiences feature in the narratives with respect to the cultural and external norms and expectations. This statement has common grounds with the profound and popular conceptualisation developed by Abbott (2009). Abbott (2009) asserted that narratives represent events that comprise a story, which defines what happened, expressed through the way one tells it (narrative discourse).

In other words, second generation Iraqi Kurds produce narratives based on personal experiences albeit negotiated with respect to cultural understandings of returning home.

Previous research also presents numerous discussions concerning the association between cultural and personal narratives. As cultural and social habits and norms influence the narratives one produces, Ewick and Silbey (1997) describe narratives as ‘social acts’ that are generated based on situation within a given social context. There are various alternatives for telling within the cultural stock of stories (Ewick and Silbey 1997). However, some alternatives are relatively more established (Bamberg and Andrews 2004). Master, hegemonic or dominant narratives might appear as common knowledge for most individuals over a large geographical area, or they might be localised and occupy hegemonic positions for a select few only. They may also be useful in making sense of an individual’s own life, in addition to narrating that life to other people (Hänninen 2004).

#### **4.3.2 The role narrativity played in analysis**

I viewed the interview accounts offered by second generation Iraqi Kurds about their returning home as narratives. Equally, I constructed narratives from the accounts of the participants and outlined the highlights for understanding the experiences of second-generation Kurds returning home. This implied that two narrative approaches were employed in the execution of the research methodology.



These included a narrative analysis and an analysis of narratives. Polkinghorne (1995) distinguished between these two approaches. In the case of narrative analysis, the researcher analyses data as narratives and generates narratives as results. In terms of analysis of narratives, the researcher collects and examines the narratives as raw data and generates typologies and classifications. An example in this research is that I gathered the data through the narrative interview method as elaborated in the data collection section. Additionally, I analysed the common aspects of the stories given by the participants and constructed the summarised narratives from the accounts offered.

#### **4.3.3 The research topic's intimate character**

Narrativity was selected as the framework in this research due to the opportunities it provides in terms of getting close to the experiences, private accounts and feelings of second-generation Kurds returning home. This approach guided the data collection process of the interview, it also constituted a general precept in the analysis of the accounts of second-generation Kurds returning home. Frank (2002) expressed that individuals can construct their lifespans as timelines through narratives. Abbott (2009) added that individuals could naturalise and normalise the events and experiences in their lives. Loseke (2007) underscored the significance of narratives in creating coherence through connecting irregular occurrences into meaningful wholes. Narrative approaches have been employed in many studies concerning life changes and life stories, in the same way that personal narratives of second-generation Kurds returning home were used in this research (King, Christou and Ahrens 2010; Hyden 2008).

For example, social scientist Hänninen (2004) asserted that studying life changes using narrative methods assists researchers in capturing the meanings people accord to the experiences they consider most sensitive in their lives.

Since returning home for a second-generation Iraqi Kurd is a considerable personal experience and a substantive life change for most, analysing these accounts within the narrative framework enabled me to apprehend the expectations, hopes, meanings and wishes that were expressed in different and more comprehensive terms.

#### **4.4 Practical considerations of the research framework**

Even at the early stages of conceptualizing this research, I appreciated that introduction to the initial Iraqi Kurdish informants would be a delicate matter. Negative attitudes or misrepresentations could affect the subsequent research process phases negatively. Therefore, I appreciated that the issue of trust required continuous consideration from the onset. The evolution of the research framework from theoretical conceptualization into practical implementation, as described in this section, explains the considerations made.

Prior to commencing the interview process, I embarked on pilot interviews with Iraqi Kurdish participants. It is important to indicate that I have been working as a lecturer at University of Sulaimani for three years. I also exchanged ideas with other researchers at the University of Sulaimani and gained useful insights by building contact with second generation Iraqi Kurds who are back in Kurdistan. I also met Iraqi Kurdish researchers, politicians, writers, academics, students and aid workers who offered further insights into the issues set for exploration in this research.

The main purposes behind these interactions are threefold. Firstly, the interactions offered a general picture of the lives of second-generation Iraqi Kurds returning to the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) region. Secondly, the interactions proved useful for the organization and systematization of the interview guide to ensure adequate addressing of the specific research aims and objectives. Thirdly, pilot interviews were accompanied by fieldwork experience allowing me to understand preliminary information concerning the

returning Iraqi Kurds in terms of potential diversity of experiences. These interactions and the positive responses, therefore, inspired the confidence that appropriate informants for this research would be accessed.

Being a qualitative researcher, I was convinced that exploring the experiences of people through narratives accrues the value of providing vital information on unexpected phenomena. For instance, it was expected that the participants might share experiences about their return to Kurdistan without being openly prompted. Such experiences may contain information about when coming back to Kurdistan became easier or the main triggers of the return to Kurdistan at a given period. However, I paid particular attention to looking beyond the literal meanings of return by trying to discover the fears, possibilities, motivations and hopes that occurred while living in other countries.

Specifically, emphasis was placed on constructing and deconstructing the complex matter of return through the discovery of diverse distinctions. Therefore, Iraqi Kurds' voices emerged as an integral aspect of this research in answering different questions and getting insights into situations that have been previously unexplored. Accordingly, I found it necessary to employ open-ended interviews to analyse the narrated experiences of returning Kurds. The principal rationale behind semi-structured interviews is that the two have the capacity of capturing aspects and processes that may be impossible to cover in depth using quantitative research methods.

My role was not to pursue the extent of truthfulness in the stories shared by the participants. Instead, I was focused on understanding the reason why some of the stories shared by the informants were more important than others and how such stories defined the experiences of the second-generation returning Kurds. Fundamentally, the idea behind this research and the subsequent processes was to discover perceptions concerning the participants' lives without demands for truthfulness and accuracy.

The use of narratives was found to be helpful in situating people in new locations and capturing their perceptions towards return, home, belonging and identity. Simultaneously, narratives allowed me to better contextualise stories associated with relocated individuals, particularly because most of the participants in this research had faced, or were facing, complicated political issues (Vecchi-Mikkola 2013).

#### **4.4.1 Sample selection**

Since this research is about second-generation Iraqi Kurds returning home, it is vital to define who they are prior to considering the sample selection techniques. King and Christou (2008) expressed the challenges in defining the terms second-generation and the aspect of ‘returning home’ in a similar study. This was mainly due to two reasons. Firstly, second generation migrants are not exactly migrants, as they were born in the host (foreign) society of their migrant parents or spent most of their life in the host country. Therefore, second generation return migrants ‘are not “return migrants” in the strict sense, but first-time emigrants to their parents’ country of origin’ (King and Christou 2008, p.2). The second reason is that there are heated contentions concerning who constitutes the second generation among other broader debates about the utility of the ‘generation’ notion in migration and population studies.

Strict or conventional definitions of the second generation implies that they are children born to two immigrant parents in a host or foreign country. This renders the parents the first generation. However, King and Christou (2008) spelt out complications when it comes to relaxation of this definition and inclusion of questions such as children with a single immigrant parent or children brought into host countries whilst still very small. In order to ensure ease of identification and relevance to this study, the second generation in this research were defined in the strict sense of children born to two Kurdish parents while in a host or foreign country or those who left the KRG region before the age of five years old.

I employed both purposive and snowball sampling techniques to recruit the sample for this research. Also known as judgmental sampling, purposive sampling entails the selection of participants that I consider to be holders of information that is relevant to the research topic, aim, objectives and questions (Creswell 2014). Emmel (2013) stated that researchers employing purposive sampling are reflexive and make decisions in reaction to the theoretical developments or empirical findings occurring in the study. Similarly, my decision to apply purposive sampling resulted from an understanding that second-generation Iraqi Kurds were represented as being different from other Iraqi Kurds, including first generation Iraqi Kurds.

Purposive sampling mimics qualitative research in terms of its iterative nature, with the research questions being typically limited to studying a core phenomenon within a specific context (Guetterman 2015). This research was focused on the core phenomenon of returning home to the KRG region by second generation Iraqi Kurds, which explained the suitability of the purposive sampling in this regard. Maxwell (2013) further explained that researchers using qualitative research and purposive sampling do not intend to generalise from the sample to the bigger population. Instead, they focus on explaining, describing and interpreting the phenomenon in question. Similarly, I focused on explaining, describing and interpreting the experiences of second-generation Iraqi Kurds returning home.

Thus, sampling in the case of this research was not a matter of representativeness of opinions. Instead, it will be a question of ensuring richness of information gathered, as explained by Patton (2015). On the other hand, suitability and adequacy were paramount in the recruitment of second-generation Iraqi Kurds returning home to the KRG region. In accordance with Creswell (2013), three considerations were made in this research in relation to purposive sampling. First, the definition of the participants as second-generation Iraqi Kurds returning home to the KRG region.

Second, I employed critical case sampling in terms of the selection of the sampling strategy. Critical case sampling strategy entails the selection of a small number comprising vital cases which would yield 'the most information and have the greatest impact on the development of knowledge' (Patton 2015, p.276). Third, the sample was limited to 20 interviewees from the KRG region where several hundred Kurdish second-generation returnees who were born and brought up in Europe and neighbouring countries were estimated to be living at the time of this research.

Although Guetterman (2015) decried the contingency of sample sizes on numerous considerations, Creswell (2013) recommended collection of extensive details concerning a few individuals or sites in qualitative research approaches. He recommended observation of one or two cases for narrative inquiry. However, Emmel (2013) cautioned against depending on these proposals and urged for the consideration of additional factors. Although Emmel (2013) did not offer any examples of the additional factors that require consideration, Creswell (2013) indicated that the development of a collective story using narrative inquiry might necessitate a different sample size, which I interpreted as being more than two.

Given this standoff in sample size suggestions, I reviewed previous studies such as King, Christou and Ahrens (2010) and Vecchia-Mikkola (2013), which are similar to my study, for further guidance. Vecchia-Mikkola (2013) used a sample size of 48 in a comparative piece of research, whereas King, Christou and Ahrens (2010) featured 50 participants comprising first and second-generation Greek Germans. This implies an average of 24 and 25 participants for each group in the two studies, as they were comparative studies. Thus, I estimated a sample size of 20 for this study, which focused on just one group of participants, was well within the range.

In order to achieve the projected 20 interviewees, I also employ the snowball sampling strategy.

Snowball sampling allows researchers to contact informants that help in suggesting subsequent potential participants in the research (Creswell 2014). Patton (2015) described snowballing as a useful sampling technique for reaching otherwise unreachable participants. Sociological and ethnographic researchers often employ this technique to access populations that are difficult to access (Vecchia-Mikkola 2013). Being a lecturer at University of Sulaimani for over three years was an advantage I used to execute the snowball sampling technique to recruit unknown or inaccessible second-generation Iraqi Kurds returning home.

The relationships established with the Iraqi Kurdish community and specifically with second-generation Iraqi Kurds who are already back in Kurdistan eased the access to their ‘colleagues’ that had also returned. Researchers at the University of Sulaimani were only to be consulted when the second-generation Iraqi Kurds known to me were not able to assist in enlisting an adequate sample. This is because it might have been easier for me to build trust with second generation Iraqi Kurds that have returned and are unknown to me through ‘some of their own’ with whom they share similar experiences.

## **4.5 Data collection**

Both secondary and primary data were collected in this research. Secondary data, including migration and return home triggers and factors, were sourced from the university library, migration databases, credible websites, books, journals and other academically viable data sources. In order to ensure maximum accounts of the experiences of the participants, primary data were collected through interviews.

### **4.5.1 Interviews**

Most qualitative research resources (Creswell 2014, 2013; Bryman 2012; Silverman 2011) discuss three types of qualitative research interviews. These include structured, unstructured and semi-structured interviews.

Edwards and Holland (2013) indicated that structured interviews lean more towards the quantitative end and are more applicable in survey-based studies. The other two, semi-structured and unstructured, are the types that qualitative researchers dwell on the most. In other words, the principal characteristic of interviews in qualitative research entails increased flexibility and reduced rigidity in terms of structure. In brief, the basis of structured interviews is a questionnaire that contains sequential questions that the interviewer poses in the same sequence and similarly for all research subjects with little room for flexibility, if at all. The principal goal revolves around neutral interviewers obtaining comparable information from possibly huge number of interviewees. Typically, researchers using structured interviews lean towards positivist paradigm, its methodical demands for practising and subsequent statistical data analysis methods (Edwards and Holland 2013).

Semi-structured interviews entail the interviewer posing similar questions to the interviewee although with some alteration in terms of sequence. In addition, interviewers using this type of interview to collect data normally follow up additional enquiry lines that may be more focused on the subject (Marsh 2013). Semi-structured interviews assume a less formal form. The benefit is that any difficulty experienced with questions can be countered by changing the wording and assisting in the gaining of further information. However, semi-structured interviews are most suited for interviewing groups that might have difficulty comprehending the questions posed during the interviews (Marsh 2013).

Unstructured interviews are also known as focused or non-standard interviews. While using unstructured interviews, the interviewer prepares a topic list that they desire to deliberate on with the respondent (Marsh 2013). Unstructured interviews allow interviewers the freedom of phrasing questions the best way they deem fit and using any order, which renders the interviewing more conversational and increasingly open.



The main challenge associated with this interview form relates to the difficulty in managing the interview focus especially for inexperienced interviewers (Marsh 2013).

In spite of the huge differences in tradition and style of qualitative interviewing using unstructured and semi-structured interviews, both interviewing forms have three principal shared features. First, they both feature interactional dialogue exchange at least between two parties in either face-to-face or different contexts (Bryman 2012).

Second, both feature a topic-centred, thematic, narrative or biographical approach in which the researcher has the issues, themes or topics that they plan to explore, but with a flexible and fluid structure. Finally, both unstructured and semi-structured interviews see knowledge as contextual and situated. Such knowledge requires the researcher to make sure there is emphasis on all relevant contexts in order to guarantee the production of situated knowledge. Through interaction, in a co-production process that entails knowledge reconstruction or construction, understandings and meanings are created (Mason 2002).

There are several strengths associated with the use of interviews as primary data collection methods. According to Gobo (2011), ethnography is an increasingly well-known data collection method made popular by the dominance of the interview society. Qualitative interviews bridge the gap in the necessity of methods that are capable of giving insights into the meanings that groups and individuals attach to their experiences, events and practices, and social processes. This has triggered the understanding and appreciation of the relevance and value of qualitative findings and research in contextualising people's lived experiences (Neale, Henwood and Holland 2012). These were critical benefits in relation to the lived experiences associated with the returning home of second-generation Iraqi Kurds.

Mason (2002) contended that qualitative interviews allow for the exploration of four main issues that are otherwise invisible to researchers. The first one is the weave and texture of everyday life.

In this research, the everyday life of second-generation Iraqi Kurds that had returned home was core to the development of the research itself. The second issue relates to the under experiences, imaginings and understandings of research participants. The third benefit relates to the uncovering of issues related to the way social processes, relationships, institutions or discourses work. Finally, there is the issue of uncovering the importance of the meanings generated by the social processes, relationships, institutions or discourses (Mason 2002). All these benefits were applicable in this research due to the detail and depth required of such research, as indicated by Edwards and Holland (2013).

On the other hand, qualitative interviews have several challenges. First, qualitative interviews are impossible to replicate naturally because of their social interaction nature. The social dimensions include the social and physical space, power relations between the personal and social levels, the context and location, and the complexity of interviewee and interviewer emotions (Crow and Pope 2008). This challenge also implicates the criticism towards qualitative interviews concerning their subjective nature. However, the issue of subjectivity is irrelevant because ‘subjectivity is often the focus and the vehicle for research using qualitative interviewing’ (Edwards and Holland 2013, p.97). Other challenges are often cited in comparison to the quantitative data collection methods and include issues such as the time and other resources required to complete qualitative interviews (Bryman 2012).

Based on the understanding of the various interview types, the unstructured interview form was most suited for this qualitative research. This is because the topic of returning home for second generation Iraqi Kurds required sensitivity, as well as general concerns regarding scheduling, openness to share the stories freely and to allow for probing opportunities to gather deeper and more insights (Marsh 2013). Specifically, narrative interviews, which ‘are characterized as unstructured tools, in-depth with specific features, which emerge from the

life stories of both the respondent and cross-examined the situational context' (Muylaert et al 2014, p.185) were adopted for this research, as elaborated in the next section.

#### **4.5.2 Narrative interviews**

Silverman (2011) indicated that we have been dwelling in an interview society where interviews are gathered and used in making sense out of the accounts, emotions, thoughts, feelings and lives of people in general. Therefore, it appears that narrative research and interviews have numerous common elements. Nonetheless, a closer examination of interviews would reveal that interview data are often gathered with an inclination towards obtaining 'truths' and facts (Hyvärinen and Löyttyniemi 2005). This is different from narrative interviews, which pursue intimate and personal experiences (Eerola 2015). Gathering of facts is not the aim of narrative interviews whereby researchers make deliberate efforts to offer space and room for narratives and narration. This happens through encouraging or prompting interviewees to generate narratives or posing questions that are capable of inducing narrative speech (Brannen 2013).

In narrative methods in general, there exists no 'pure' approach for conducting narrative interviews (Eerola 2015). Therefore, the narrativity magnitude present in the narratives generated through the interviews, for instance, could differ from thin to thick. Alternatively, there may be less or more narrativity (Fludernik 200). In the context of this research, the terms narrative interviewing and narrative interviews relate to two significant issues. The first one entails the provision of adequate space for second generation Iraqi Kurds returning home to narrate their lives and experiences in confidential settings, as narrowly or as widely as their comfort allows. The second one relates to the position of the researcher as the keen listener.

Consequently, the data for this research were gathered through undertaking qualitative research interviews that are orientated narratively with 20, second generation Iraqi Kurds that have returned home.

The expectation was to generate conversations with the interviewees in manners that would privilege their processes and perspectives of making meaning with respect to their experiences. In the narrative interviewing approach, the interviewer served as a good listener and the interviewee as the storyteller. In the implementation of this narrative approach, the agenda of the interview was subject to alteration depending on the experiences of the narrator and the stories shared.

The suitability of the narrative interviewing approach for this study is because of the focus on the stories constructed by second generation Iraqi Kurds concerning their returning home experiences. Subsequently, an interview guide with a loose structure was deemed suitable in allowing for what Emerson and Frosh (2009) described as 'flexible and rich talk' (p.32). This was useful in enabling the participants to make choices concerning the desired narratives that they presented to the researcher (Billington 2009).

I rejected the conventional question and answer interview structure because such an approach restricts the answers the interviewee can give and subsequently suppresses the stories they may choose to share (Mishler 1986). Assuming a conventional approach to the interviews and posing predetermined questions would most likely constrain the responses of the participants through imposing my agenda into the research conversations. Moreover, such a conventional interviewing approach could have caused me to make unfounded presumptions concerning the topics of the stories that the interviewees offered. The topics emergent in the interviews originated from my research focus and this might have reduced the credibility of the research. This is because it was difficult for me to foretell the story that was specific to any given interviewee (Chase 2007).

Furthermore, adoption of a conventional interviewing approach would undeniably have formed part of the joint story construction that shaped the conversations between the researcher and the interviewees, due to the questions and responses given by the researcher. However, the open, narrative interview approach assisted in enabling the participants to participate actively in the process. It also developed conversations that steer clear of a conventional, rigid question and answer approach and transcend into a mutual exchange that produces discourses that are constructed jointly (Mishler 1986).

To aid the participants in recollecting previous experiences, I incorporated life history frameworks (Riessman 2008) to generate an understanding of returning home networks within the initial interviews with participants. According to Elliot (2005), people are likely to encounter considerable difficulty in producing accounts of broad experiences in lives that span numerous years. The structuring of experiences into frameworks can lead to the development of a guide that will in turn assist the participants in recalling their stories and talking about specific situations and times in their lives. Furthermore, Riessman (2008) reiterated that some participants might not want to create lengthy life accounts with strangers and that production of life history grids might relieve some pressure that participants might experience from the researcher during production of an extensive story. The introduction of history networks was achieved by asking all participants to consider their times at the host/foreign country and to divide their returning home history into sections. The sections were then assigned titles and recorded as returning home grids.

Following the construction of the 'returning home' grids, I asked the respective participants to share more about all the chapters they voluntarily identified within their respective grids. The structure was significantly loose and involved simple requests like prompting the interviewees to share any significant episode or memory from the time of the grid chapter.

It also involved prompting participants to take lead in narrative constructions in the most meaningful manner to them. The undertaking of this exercise borrowed heavily from the guidelines provided by Hollaway and Jefferson (2000). These authors argued that the best narrative interview questions invite participants to speak concerning specific situations and times as opposed to prompting them about their entire life over a lengthy period. Reference to the chapters created in the 'returning home' grids ensured that this was accomplished.

The advice offered by Emerson and Frosh (2009) concerning the significance of inviting participants to speak as much or as little as they wished was ensured through consistent reminders and non-coercive probing where necessary.

I was aware that the introduction of history grids and chapter structures might have influenced the way participants told the stories. Additionally, the history grids and chapters might have included chapters that the participants might rather leave out. An attempt was made at maintaining an informal style of conversation and use of common languages. Specific attention was also given to engagement within the conversations, as opposed to being preoccupied with the collection of obvious stories. Various authors (Elliott 2005; Chase 2007; Riessman 2008; Squire 2009) recommend this approach, which was found to be helpful in the creation of a relaxed environment and in building positive relations within which natural conversations emerged.

#### **4.5.3 Narrative interview process**

Specifically, the 20 interviews were conducted in Kurdish, Arabic, German and English for a period of six months. I also followed the participants' lead and listened out for the emotions that they expressed at different stages of sharing their stories. Each interview took between 30 and 120 minutes and this was dependent on the amount of information the participants were willing to share, as well as their availability.

In all cases, meetings and conversations preceded the interviews where the ethical considerations presented later on in this chapter were then shared. I aimed at giving the interviewees the freedom of choosing the interview venues. The rationale behind this approach was to ensure the creation of a comfortable situation for the interviewees. In general, I found that cafes, workplaces and homes were the most preferred interview venues. Altogether, I remained flexible in welcoming other venues.

Following prior authorisation by the participants, interviews were recorded for eventual transcription, which included symbols to represent silences, pauses, elation, overlapping speech and intonations as recommended by Esterberg (2002).

Participants declining to be recorded were excluded from this research considering the potential difficulty in analysing unrecorded proceedings. In all interviews, I consistently encouraged the informants to respond to prompts that focused on life in Iraq, conditions and memories of their experiences, the desire to return home and life experiences in host countries.

The skills required for proper narrative interviewing were approached as a continuous learning processes. Thus, it is likely that my interviewing skills advanced with regular practice and continued interviewing. I considered the narrative interviews as conversation forms and the interviewer role within the metaphorical descriptions of a traveller and a miner (Kvale 1996). These metaphors denote the implications of various theoretical understandings associated with interview research in general.

The miner refers to the modernist notion of buried metal needing excavation and the researcher as either seeking objective facts or essential nuggets of meaning. The traveller reflects the concept of an interview being a conversation, as the researcher/traveller poses queries and leads the subjects into telling their own stories in relation to their lived world, thereby wandering with them.

This investigative process results in new knowledge and an alteration within the self-knowledge of the interviewer through the process of self-reflection. Time, space and the individuals involved all bind the meanings.

Esterberg (2002) equated the interview process to an empathic dialogue between at least two people living similar experiences, as opposed to a mechanical process of asking questions. Interviewers are expected to display active listening and ensure the conversation goes on. In order to guarantee this, I made sure that there were no sudden interruptions or transitions. For example, the interview topic was not changed suddenly in the event that an interviewee shared a difficult or emotionally taxing experience. Instead, I kept listening carefully and tried to comprehend the rationale behind the telling of that particular story. In some instances, this necessitated halting the recording to allow the interviewee enough time to gain composure upon breaking down due to sad memories.

#### **4.5.4 Data collection limitations**

The data gathering technique adopted in this research is not without limitations. In spite of concerted efforts to create an informal and relaxed atmosphere and promote participant-led storytelling, the research situation itself, the researcher's questions and the need to record the interviews may have in some way affected these efforts and discounted their results. In any form of social interaction, it is unavoidable that people will introduce their expectations and histories concerning their encounter. Temporal and cultural contexts might mediate such interaction in terms of expectations and histories. Having stayed in Sulaimani, I appreciate the unavoidable introduction of self, expectations, thoughts and previous experiences into the research on my part and that of the participants.

Phoenix (2009) highlighted the processes through which participants in research might bring their histories concerning past positioning and their expectations of the interviewer and the interview itself into the context of the research.



This author argued that interviewees might have presumptions concerning the interviewer's cultural identity, for example. In turn, this might cause them to modify what they share and how they say what they share based on these presumptions. Such an encounter in the context of research might cause difficulty in digressing from more formal interview sessions.

Equally, some experiences and interviews were somewhat uncomfortable for me. For example, one interviewee failed to meet my personal expectations in terms of the form a narrative interview might take. However, it was in my best interest to ensure that I welcomed little information as much as he did immense information. This is the true nature of narrative interviews because their strengths do not rest in the quantity of information shared by interviewees, so much as the relevance of the information shared.

The diversity of the experiences the interviewees shared was treated as reflecting both the contextual and social variations of conversing with different individuals on different days. They were also interpreted as the individual processes of the co-construction roles played by the interviewer and interviewee in the narrative context.

During the interviews, I was at times nervous about whether or not I was eliciting adequate stories from the participants. Additional questioning was deemed necessary to varying extents within the various interviews in order to elicit narratives inasmuch as this differed among interviewees. Reflecting on Squire's (2009) assertion, co-construction might resemble engagement in an ordinary conversation and this was reassuring for me in those narrative interviews that felt as such. Squire (2009) suggested that narrative interviews are whole interviews. Thus, researchers should not worry about gathering stories that skew the research towards some form of direction.

Sometimes, there is difficulty in putting jumbled or ambiguous thoughts into words, especially in cases where an individual suffered considerable loss (Riessman 2008).

In the case of second-generation Iraqi Kurds, this could be the case owing to the displacement of the first generations due to war in Iraq. This could have made the interviews sound somewhat confused while listening to the recordings. For difficult conversations such as those, I did not probe the interviewees to continue sharing their experiences unless they felt comfortable to continue talking about such events.

#### **4.6 Coding and data analysis procedures**

Coding constitutes one of the most crucial procedures in the process of analysing qualitative data. There are many coding practices exemplified by qualitative researchers. The inspiration behind most of these methods is traceable to constructivist or interpretive approaches that might yield different results and implications in the manner of comparing and conceptualising categories (see Charmaz 2006; Strauss and Corbin 1998). Often, coding refers to the sorting and labelling of data. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) suggested that coding involves compression of bulk data into units that are analysable through creation of categories from and with the data. Essentially, coding is the process by which researchers reach advanced specificity levels and potentially generate a theory through synthesis of the original categories. Therefore, the central category comes up spontaneously because it features predominantly in the citations during the process of constant data comparison. Thus, sub-categories and core categories need to be interconnected. However, they also reflect the significance of findings in relation to the research problem and questions (Bryman 2012).

Coding for this research commenced with a social mapping task that emerged during the preliminary interactions with informants and potential participants. The collection of interview data and the participation in events constituted the initial, simultaneous data analysis and comparison. This allowed for advanced outlining and organisation of an increasingly structured plan for the systematisation of the projected interview guide.

Furthermore, early coding and the eventual field notes enabled the research to isolate relevant and crucial information in relation to key words used by Iraqi Kurds or the variation between second-generation Kurds and other Iraqis.

Upon completion of the pre-coding stage, I started collecting and analysing narrative interviews and gathering secondary data. In fact, coding in this research was a considerable process that commenced with the first interview transcription. The coding of line after line as recommended by Charmaz (2006) formed the first approach to the virtual dissection of the interviews into data pieces. This allowed for the clarification of relevant and common themes or categories exemplifying the patterns of meanings. Simultaneously, redefinition of categories by drawing comparisons to get to a coherent pattern took place. Through interview comparison, I reduced the notes gradually until the realisation of a central theme.

In the coding process, I compared raw data and transformed it into categories that were later interpreted. For instance, some central emergent themes were seemingly influenced by other sub-categories and sub-themes.

The overarching consideration was that interviews were narratives that represented the social products that people produced in a given context. Likewise, Lawler (2002) argued that narratives comprise social products that people produce in the specific cultural, historical and social locations. In line with Eastmond (2007), the narratives migrants offer are not necessarily transparent versions of 'truth'. Thus, narratives in this research were treated as dynamic interplays between story, life and experience. By focusing on interviews as narratives, I attempted to interpret the past beyond providing a mere description. Specifically, Riessman (2004) stated that the truths represented in narrative accounts might not be faithful denotations of the previous world. Instead, they might be the shifting links that the migrants forge between the past, present and future.

A thematic analysis form offers data interpretation through shifts from complexities to the stories migrants share (Creswell 2013). Researchers must detect and select common themes among the stories. Specifically, a theme connects with categories or sub-themes that manifest following discussions as a hub. However, interactions between informants and researchers might also result in the construction of themes. Sub-themes in this research offered valid arguments and consistency within the general discussion. This was with respect to the connected categories or themes and in relation to the research questions in this study.

#### **4.7 Validation and representation**

The interpretation and analysis of the data collected and the presentation of findings posed some level of challenge. The complexity of these tasks seemingly increases when one deals with huge amounts of qualitative and rich data.

In line with the recommendation by Gurd (2008), an iterative approach was employed in the case of this research. This approach entails switching back and forth between theory and data. Nonetheless, I believed that it was important to contextualise the life and the lived experiences of other people. This was possible through their temporal, historical, political and sociocultural contingencies in Kurdistan, Iraq, where the research took place. As advised by Skeggs (1995), I served as a ‘filter’ to select information critically in accordance with the specific Kurdish context and time. This is because all research situates the researcher in the representation process that is historically located in the theoretical frameworks and debates. Additionally, data analysis deals with interpretative tasks whereby contextualisation and translation of formal discussions into sociological concepts occurs.

In qualitative research studies, it is important for researchers to present their findings with creativity and descriptiveness. Whereas creativity connects with critical data interpretation, descriptiveness is about explaining the findings (Patton 1990).

Discussions concerning validity and reliability largely apply in quantitative research. However, these concepts also apply in qualitative research during data analysis. Social scientists like Bryman (2012) and Creswell (2014) prefer to overlook these concepts, as they find them considerably oppressive and largely connected with a positivist philosophy. Generally, reliability speaks to the ‘consistency from one measurement to the next’ (Gilbert 1993, p.27). Winter (2000) defined external reliability as the extent to which the study can be replicated. Winter described two shared ideas concerning validity. These include the accuracy of the means of measurement, as well as whether such measures actually measure that which they are intended to measure (Winter 2000).

I concur with Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) view that authenticity and trustworthiness are better criteria for validating a qualitative research than reliability and validity. Both criteria presume a relationship between informants and the researcher based on genuineness and trust. Lincoln and Guba (1985) expressed that dependability, confirmability, credibility and transferability are the criteria that address trustworthiness. Dependability demonstrates similarities with the reliability concept in quantitative research. It refers to data stability over a period and under particular conditions. In qualitative inquiries in particular, results are difficult to replicate. Nonetheless, a researcher might learn and get inspiration from past qualitative studies by considering them as prototype models according to Shenton (2004). For instance, applying overlapping methods like in-depth descriptions might assist in ensuring dependability through provision of clear and logical explanations.

Confirmability concerns the researcher’s good faith in data provision. Through this criterion, the researcher demonstrates the integrity and neutrality of the interpretations they draw from the data (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Confirmability requires that the research process progresses towards reducing the researcher’s overarching influence. Consequently, this leads to increasingly objective findings as opposed to subjective ones.

This relates to the broadly held perspective that personal thoughts and concerns are difficult to confirm. However, the desire to ensure that the narrative process was participant-led in this research infiltrated the data analysis procedures, where regardless of the mode used to analyse the data, the participants' feelings and emotions were captured in the data, hence the eventual findings.

Credibility implies that research conduct is in line with the good practice rules in settings where the research engages with people in informal and formal conversations (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Specifically, studies are considered credible due to the researcher's efforts in presenting the research to the audience in a clear and transparent manner. For the current study, the researcher assessed and optimised credibility through prolonged interaction with informants, their environment and the datasets obtained. The research also commenced with the interactions with Kurdish natives within the University and its environs to serve as a filter for the selection and understanding of the study sample. I kept memos as data backups and a journal that assisted in maintaining the course of the project in line with the targeted objectives. Upon completion of interviews and collection of field data, I tested the research credibility through cross-checking of both interview and fieldwork data. This enhanced the confidence in the interpretations and the conclusions that arose from the data.

Transferability implies that the qualitative research should offer the possibility of transferring the findings to different, appropriate contexts by other researchers (Marshall and Rossman 2006). Transferability underscores the extent to which the research findings apply in the broader domain beyond the studied research population. Although qualitative research studies are not as generalizable as positivist studies, they might offer helpful findings and inferences that might guide future research. The use of narratives in this research demonstrated using quotations and later interpretations might offer a better understanding of the research processes to researchers investigating other issues related to second-generation

groups returning home. The explicit, detailed nature of the research methodology and the techniques employed in the development of this research make it easy for future researchers to employ the findings of this research in other contexts. Furthermore, the sampling of 20 second generation Iraqi Kurds that have returned home is considered an adequate representation of the collective experiences of this group of people in Kurdistan.

#### **4.8 Ethics and ethical considerations**

Overall, qualitative researchers conduct research about, by and for people. Based on this rationale, a discussion concerning ethical principles is necessary. Issues related to ethics might have support from professional bodies and organisation like the British Sociological Association (BSA), the Social Research Association (SRA), or the International Sociological Association (ISA) that outline various research ethical codes.

These ethical codes outline the expected conduct of the researcher in relation to the research subjects (Bryman 2012; Esterberg 2002).

According to Esterberg (2002), informed consent and confidentiality are amongst the most pertinent issues especially for inexperienced researchers. Since qualitative research and especially narrative research is conversational, it is critical that data collectors sustain clear boundaries between what the participants tell them and what they tell participants (Mack et al 2005). It is important to understand that conversation entails giving and taking. Researchers garner diverse information from numerous participants and simultaneously assure participants about protection of their privacy and protection against harm. Thus, in ensuring the participants' confidentiality, I did not disclose private data, which identifies participants directly or is traceable to them (Bryman 2012).

Informed consent demonstrates that individuals taking part in the process of research have received adequate and clear information concerning the specific research and the

process involved in the research, which helps them agree to participate based on such understanding. In relation to this, people can consciously consider whether they would like to participate in the research or otherwise. This requires furnishing participants with adequate information concerning the purposes, benefits and risks attributable to the participation in the study (Bryman 2012; Mack et al 2005). Through the informed consent, the participants were informed that participation in the research was voluntary and did not attract any incentives. Additionally, participants were reassured that they could vacate the research at any stage without penalty or other repercussions on their side.

Upon familiarisation with the people of Kurdistan and the potential participants, I began seeking general information that was deemed helpful in assisting me to outline the research context better. At the commencement of the interviews, all informants were asked to respond to simple questions like city of origin, arrival in Kurdistan, age, names, education and work experience. The idea behind this information was to ensure that I and the informant developed a high level of rapport prior to commencing the narrative interview. Some participants offered nicknames or single names and avoided surnames. Others offered their full names without hesitation, whereas others provided fictional names without explanation. The understanding was that those who chose to hide their true identities had substantive reasons for that and there was no need to probe further, as this would not affect the outcome of this research.

Nonetheless, I explained the motivation behind this research. In order to safeguard the confidentiality of the participants, I accepted the use of nicknames and single names. The reassurance concerning the protection of their anonymity also seemed to encourage the participants to share in-depth stories. For example, the incidences of sentiments such as ‘this is off the record’ emerged regularly, which implied that this was an inside story that the informants would not share under different circumstances that did not prioritise anonymity.



In order to respect these requests and further cultivate more confidence in the process and myself as researcher, the tape recorder was paused. However, I made notes about such incidences in the event that it was relevant to the research.

#### **4.9 Positionality and reflexivity**

Obviously, my thesis did not provide a fieldwork setting according to the ‘classical’ understanding, which used to be associated with the study of ‘non-western’ or ‘non-industrial’ societies (Teerling:2010). However, one can state that the concept of the ‘field’ is quite abstract, specifically in the case of my research topic. There was no defined ‘field’ in the form of a town, village or neighbourhood. My participants were from various areas of European countries and neighbouring countries and had returned to various areas of KRG region. During my fieldwork and my thesis, I keep on referring to ‘field’ to describe the location where I conducted my Interview.

Returning to KRG region to conduct my fieldwork posed several problems for me. What constitutes the ‘field’ versus ‘home’ is a problematic distinction, as returning to KRG to do fieldwork was by no means returning ‘home’. The field sites were divided between different cities. Yet strong family ties to Sulaymanya city (where many relatives still live) also made me feel very familiar with such settings. While similar historical and political processes might locate me with my research participants, the ‘native’ can be the ‘other’ through a class privilege (Lal 1996). I was acutely aware of my class and educational privilege (through material and symbolic differences). As such, I was simultaneously an insider, outsider, both and neither (Gilbert 1994; Mullings 1999). The borders that I crossed, I feel, are always here within me, negotiating the various locations and subjectivities I simultaneously feel a part of and apart from. The ambivalences, discomfort, tensions and instabilities of subjective positions became important to be reflexive about and work through, where the contradictions

in my positionality and in-between status had to be constantly reworked as I undertook fieldwork. The researcher's and the research participant's location, along with the value accorded them, are seen as influencing the research process and interaction situations; therefore, they need to be reflected upon (Toivanen 2014:54). Lykke's (2010: 50) broad definition of intersectionality expresses the view that intersectionality, besides being theoretical approach, can also be employed as:

[...] a methodological tool to analyze how different kinds of power differentials and/or constraining normativities, based on discursively, institutionally and/or structurally constructed socio-cultural categorizations such as gender, ethnicity, race, class, sexuality, age/generation, dis/ability, nationality, mother tongue and so on, interact, and in doing so produce different kinds of societal inequalities and unjust social relations.

#### **4.10 Summary**

In this chapter, the disclosure and explanation of the narrative methodology has been presented. The choice of the narrative methodology and the rationale for this choice have also been included in line with the aim of uncovering the experiences of second-generation Iraqi Kurds returning home. The relationship between cultural and personal narratives, the role of narrativity in the analysis and the intimate character of the research topic explained the choice of narrative methodology. The procedures for employing purposive sampling technique as the primary sampling technique were explained.

Additionally, the use of snowballing as the sampling technique when an inadequate sample was unreachable was also justified. The participant interaction processes used to develop the 'returning home' grids ahead of the open interviews and the development have been detailed. The limitations associated with data collections were also outlined before the disclosure of the coding and data analysis procedures.

The measures taken by me to ensure validation and representation of the data collected has been accounted for in detail. These were covered through the aspects of credibility, transferability, confirmability and dependability of this research. Finally, the ethical considerations adhered to in the implementation of the research methodology constituted the last section.

## **5. Research findings and analysis**

### **5.1 Narratives of Return**

This section assesses the previously analysed phase of the second generation's life in the light of their return experience. The narratives of return show that the second generation had mixed feelings about the return. Concealment in the veils of history and ongoing struggle and resistance against oppression are central characteristics of the way of life for Kurdish descendants, regardless of generation (Zalme 2013). In the decades towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Kurds suffered from the peaking of racial discrimination and violence against them especially during the Ba'ath regime. The atrocities the Kurds suffered under Saddam Hussein also left scars on their identity and Kurdish refugees in foreign countries still encounter difficulties in figuring out their identity, belongingness and home.

Two major atrocities under the Saddam regime account for the brutality extended to the Kurds. The first one is the Anfal (systematic genocide campaign) of huge rural areas in Kurdistan resulting in the killing of over 180,000 civilians. In addition, Anfal resulted in the destruction of 4,500 villages in the late 1980s. The second incident was the chemical bombing of the Halabja town of Iraqi Kurdistan killing over 5,000 unarmed individuals and injuring thousands in March 1988. To date, thousands still suffer from the exposure to mustard gas. The events subsequent to the 1991 Gulf war included an uprising by the Kurds. The Iraqi regime responded ruthlessly to the uprising in a bid to crush the revolt. Following the unsuccessful Kurdish revolt, nearly two million Kurds fled to the Iraqi mountain borders and neighbouring countries to evade the military attack. The intervention of the international community came after this and led the UN Security Council to adopt Resolution 688. This resolution was the first international legal protection of the Kurds (Cook 1995).

People in the diaspora have undergone the emotional experience of being outside their motherland in different ways. Diaspora research has for a longtime investigated questions concerning the formation of identity. These questions are about adaptation and assimilation, homeland and nationalism, and the integration processes. There seems to be a pattern in discussions about diaspora especially in accordance with the minority/majority axis with respect to postcolonial exile communities in the West, particularly Britain and Europe. Therefore, cultural and social commentators take significant interest in the communities in the diaspora that live between two worlds. The two principal streams of such interest entail the notion of ‘home’ and adaptation in the societies that receive them (Zalme 2013).

It is possible to apply nearly every category and feature identified by scholars with respect to what constitutes a diaspora community (Cohen 1997) to the Kurds (Wahlbeck 1999). In spite of the considerable numbers of exiled and displaced Kurdish communities outside Kurdistan, the studies conducted about the return of such communities are few. Moreover, available studies in this respect mainly focused on the returning home of first-generation Kurds. The generations of Kurdish people returning from their foreign refuges comprise students, asylum seekers, exiled intellectuals, labour migrants, refugees and individuals that returned to join their families (Zalme 2013). Numerous commentators on the return and diaspora topics pertaining to Kurds (Wahlbeck 1999; van Bruinessen 1999) concur that the political situation in Iraqi Kurdistan is the principal reason for the growing Kurdish diaspora.

Van Bruinessen (1999) takes the research further by noting that the second-generation that are growing up or were born in Europe show more interest in the political activity and national identity of Kurdistan than their parents. The main reason behind this trend is retaliation for marginalization and exclusion in host societies, which reinforces their sense of belonging to Kurdistan.

Additionally, there are indications that the efforts of mobilising Kurdish elites motivated numerous Kurds to accept their ethnic identity. According to Wahlbeck (1999), Kurdish refugees continued suffering alienation from their host societies even after many years in exile. They also continued relating to Kurdistan both psychologically and emotionally in numerous various ways. Nonetheless, the connection to Kurdistan also provided quite tangible information, capital, people and idea flows between Kurdistan and the settlement countries (Wahlbeck 1999).

Motivations for return for second-generation Iraqi-Kurdish migrants also include the desire for inclusion. However, some second-generation returnees face exclusion even in Kurdistan upon their return. From a different perspective, Keles (2016) states that networks have limited capacity to motivate return migration to the homeland, when the economic and political stability improve considerably in the homeland and when economic, political and social structures enable and promote returnees' participation. A variety of research on transnationalized economic and social networks within the diaspora is available. Such works centre on a shared ethnic identity, claims of sovereignty and territorial attachment for either an imagined or a real homeland. Altogether, this research finds that the factors motivating Kurdish returnee migration to Kurdistan is sophisticated and the aftermath too complex to be captured in single theories. Without refuting the role of social networks in motivating returnee migration to Kurdistan, the findings of this research complement the arguments by Keles, which indicate that 'social networks are social fields and each social field accepts only members with similar taste, social and political interests, culture, and class background' (2016: 11). Social networks, therefore, are not entirely inclusive, but also associative and exclusive, thereby rendering such networks discriminatory and selective.

The networks that existed before the return migration of second-generation migrants to Kurdistan, including political, social, friendship and family networks, must exert a

significant amount of influence over return migration if they are to deliver emotion and economic benefits. It is often stressed in the migration literature that the key motive behind return migration consists of a mixture of positive and negative quality-of-life factors (Boyle et al. 1998; Gmelch 1980; Michalos 1997). The narratives of return indicate that second generation Iraqi Kurds had mixed feelings about return. Although, most of them felt that the Kurdistan region was their 'home', they were often disillusioned once they returned to KRG.

This research shows that family and social relations, political factors, hostility and discrimination in the countries of settlement, nationalism, patriotism and the interaction between these factors motivate the decision to return. Below present the results of the narratives in relation to the thematic factors that caused second-generation Kurds to return to Kurdistan.

For more than half of my interviewees, return took place because of social elements. Second-generation Iraqi-Kurds returning both from neighbouring countries and European countries made their way back because of social factors. These were mainly related to themselves directly or their family. Social bonding and connection with their roots and their relatives were the main basis or ground for returning.

For the other half of my contributors, non-social factors such as the political situation and the living conditions in the host country were the main reason for making the decision to return.

For those returning from neighbouring countries, hostility and discrimination (exclusion) were more common reasons for return compared to those Kurds living in European countries. This experience of exclusion cultivated a desire to be accepted and a return to Kurdistan seemed the best choice.

The last theme revealed in the narratives refers to patriotism and nationalism. Mainly, this factor of return comprised the urge to return and contribute to developing Kurdistan

The following sections explore each theme with narratives and analyse them through previous research exploring second-generation return.

## **5.2 Motivations for Return**

### **5.2.1 Family and social relations**

As it has been indicated in other research, most first-generation immigrants have harbored a plan to return to their home country since the beginning of their immigration. The narratives of my participants show that the most of the return to the KRG region took place after the fall of Saddam's regime, when the families took the decision to return back to their homeland.

The factors influencing return in the case of second-generation Iraqi Kurds returnees is much more characterised by whole-family return. This route to return was the most common feature amongst my participants. The results from the narratives indicate that the motivations for return related to family and social relations have different dimensions. Certainly, the analysis of my data indicates that for the second generation who have taken the decision to return to the KRG region, this migration is facilitated through social relationships and resources which are generated and sustained through family networks. It is these family networks which make the difference between the dream or intention to return and the actual reality of doing so.

The need to establish a relationship with her grandmother and restore a more genuine social life in Kurdistan informed the return of the 27-year-old Zhwan who could not recall her migration to Iran seventeen years ago when she was five months old, as captured in the narrative below:

*I can say the factor influencing returning was my grandmother's sickness. At the beginning of our migration, she was with us in Iran. As I said due to my uncle, she was my paternal grandmother. She stayed for a while and then returned to Sulaimani,*



*and she returned to Iran again. After a while my uncle was released. He returned to Kurdistan, and there was nothing which made us stay in Iran, so my mother thought that it is better to be with our family and relatives. Besides, it was hard to study there at the university for we were considered as foreigners. We had a green card, and somehow our life was difficult, so they decided to return and establish a new life here. When we returned, it was 1998. The situation was better than 1995 when there was another battle in Sulaimani and people evacuated the city for the second time. I suppose they went to Sairanban. And there was another economic crisis, but when we returned the situation gradually improved. As I remembered the situation was somehow better than before.*

Concerning the social aspect of return for Zhwan, expectations of establishing relations with her parents' family contributed to the decision to return to Kurdistan.

Sazan moved with her family to Germany, through Iran and Austria, at five years old. Family was also the motivation for their return because her 'father lived in Kurdistan alone, so my mother couldn't live without him'. The experience was similar for Dila who returned with her family to Kurdistan at the age of 16, after moving to Germany in 1995:

*We moved to Iran then later to Germany where we stayed for about 15 years. Then my father got work with the Kurdish government after the ousting of Saddam Hussein and the installation of the Ba'ath regime.*

*Although life was really good in Germany because I did not know any better, my mother and uncles whom we had moved with said that they had to return to Kurdistan to be with my father and other members of the family. I remember my uncle crying when he remembered the good times they used to have with friends in Kurdistan and how all that disappeared in a flash that did not look real to him. My aunt comforted*

*him by saying that we have to go back home to relive that great Kurdish life we (more like they) had left behind and dearly missed.*

Some of the family and social factors that motivated the return of the families to Kurdistan were rather tragic. The loss of family and friends known to the migrants caused them to return to Kurdistan. This is a rather interesting factor considering that the existing studies have been keener on portraying social and family ties with the living. Instead, the narratives of 21-year-old and 26-year-old Pale and Rona indicate that their families moved back to Kurdistan to ‘reconnect’ with dead friends and relatives. According to Pale:

*Although it made little sense to me because I lived in Sweden nearly all my life, having moved there at 2 years of age, my mother and father kept talking about how their continued stay in Sweden erased their history following the numerous deaths of their friends and relatives. In particular, the death of my uncle (brother to my father) really influenced the return to Kurdistan. My father was in depression for days and he kept saying that his family was being punished, while he was having a good life in another people’s country. We returned when my parents received reports that my mother’s best friend in Kurdistan was gravely ill. My mother even went back to Kurdistan before we could pack properly. We followed her about a month later.*

Rona’s narrative was not considerably different from Pale’s:

*My elder brother and aunt, who moved to England before I was born in 1988, kept telling me about how great their social lives were in Kurdistan with their families. Then after some time, the narratives changed and they started talking about how so and so had died due to this or that and how they regretted not being able to pay their last respects.*

*My elder brother once said, 'how can we be so far away and those so close to us are dying without us being there to pay them last respects'. They began saying how important it was for them to start saying their goodbyes to their departed friends and family. Although this did not make sense to me at that time, when we returned and they started making visits to the graves and paying tributes to their friends and family, I realised how important Kurdish family and sense of community was to my family, which is my heritage. We still pay homage to those departed friends and families.*

In my study more than half of my participants stated social elements as their reason for returning home. The finding of my data shows that for the second generation who have taken the decision to return to the KRG region, this movement is facilitated through the family networks and capitals which are created and sustained through family relationships. Social bonding and connection with their roots and relatives were the main basis or ground for returning.

### **5.2.2 Political factors**

The political factors that relate to the situation in Iraqi Kurdistan, especially the perceived or imminent stability, was another cause of the return of migrant Kurds from their countries of settlement. Mainly, the political factors referred to the role of the government of Iraq or the existing regime and how stable it made Kurdistan look or feel to the migrants while in their countries of settlement. Rawa, who left Kurdistan at six years old in 1999, could not recall everything about his migration. However, his movement to Europe was influenced by a political problem in Kurdistan. Rawa could recall the factors that led to the idea of returning to Kurdistan, including the stability that friends in Kurdistan assured him of following the establishment of the Gorran Movement for Change, as revealed below:

*I always thought of Kurdistan. There were some factors which led me to think of returning. I thought when I get a job, I should live far away from home. Moreover, there were so many Arabs with me in college, I had a lot of foreign friends, there was always something to make me think what is the reality of our lives, and whether the things I learnt from my parents, home, and my friends, are absolutely the same in my own country, or they taught me something which did not exist in real life. I wanted to touch those things which I learnt from my childhood. Once we returned to Kurdistan for a trip, after 11 years. We visited Kurdistan because my grandmother was dead. We returned to conduct her funeral and we stayed for about 30 days. After I graduated from college in 2013, I decided to return to Kurdistan completely, because the situation in Kurdistan was stable and the Gorran Movement for Change was established. They wanted to make some changes and reform Kurdistan.*

The fall of Saddam Hussein and the establishment of the Ba'ath regime motivated Sarnj to move back to Kurdistan in 2007. The role of networks and advanced communication technologies was implicated in the reasons for return expressed by Sarnj, who had a steady job with a municipality in Sweden. The decision was also related to the collapse of the Saddam Hussein regime, as expressed in the following narrative:

*We kept in touch with our families and relatives. We called them and we always sent money and helped them. We were aware of everything which happened in Kurdistan including surgery, illness and funerals. We began to think about our return after the uprising of Kurdistan. The events of 2003 and the collapse of Saddam's regime especially reinforced the idea of returning. It reinforced our desire to return, and we considered that there is an opportunity for jobs with companies, which employ you as an international employee.*

*I was far from the subject, but my husband longed to come back, as I remember he did active searches for jobs. Although, I was so sceptical, I was excited to come back. I always remember my last words with my boss; 'I think I am in an ocean, and I do not know what has been hidden below it'. My boss responded, 'But at the end you will reach the coast and survive, and I imagine that you will achieve more in your life'. The achievements were not only financial but scientific achievements as well.*

As for Tofan, her family returned to Kurdistan because the government took the initiative to register refugees and assured them that Kurdistan would be safe upon their return:

*We returned to Kurdistan, because the government registered our names and asked the refugees to return to their homeland. There were a lot of refugees who asked them to register their names and returned to Kurdistan on their own. It was not obligatory or forcing people to return. We were free to return or not, and to choose the way we preferred to come back to Kurdistan. Some of them returned from Haji Omaran international border, some others from Bashmakh international border. We had good feedback from people who had earlier returned to Kurdistan. We were told that the region is growing rapidly, with a lot of opportunities for work in both the public and the private sector. Furthermore, we were watching the improvements in people's lives, mainly financially.*

Ali's story from Iran related to a difficult childhood in Iran and a lack of freedom:

*In Iran, I have bad memories related to an enormously laborious childhood. In Iran there was no freedom. You might be asked to show your identification card at any time whilst walking on the street. Iran is an army or warrior country. Even if I passed by the house of Hamay Faraji in Saqqez, they asked for ID, which I did not*

*have. So it put in me fear of being arrested or anything like that. I was working in a bakery. Once they realized I did not have ID, they arrested me. They said, 'he is from Iraq'. They know that I am an Iraqi Kurd, so no one asked where I am from. It makes me so depressed. In most of the companies where I worked, I said 'I am Iranian' in order not to be arrested. Almost all the companies had an insurance card, which I did not have as I was an Iraqi Kurd. Moreover, I could not work in governmental companies. They sometimes did searches in the companies to find Kurdish workers. Once I worked in the Imam Khomeini relief foundation. It had been 15 days since I commenced my work. They searched for Iraqi people who worked in the company and I escaped the company via roofs of the other buildings. I set myself free from being arrested. I could not return to the company afterwards, because I was disguised as Iranian. If they arrest me, they will ask for identification card. I sometimes made excuses by saying that I left it somewhere or at home.*

### **5.2.3 Hostility and discrimination in a foreign land**

Many scholars have highlighted the racism, exclusion and discrimination faced by refugees and immigrants in the West. This situation became even worse after the attack of September 11th, especially for Muslims and for people from the so-called Muslim world (Alinia 2004). Everyday racism, in the form of labour market discrimination, is demonstrated by some studies. Moreover, (Alinia 2004) has highlighted her research, showing that people born outside Europe are subjected to systematic and structural discrimination in society and especially in the labour market. Furthermore, she stated that the possibility of getting a job, your income and your job sector can all be determined by your origin, not by your qualifications (Alinia 2004). On the other hand, according to my participants, the rights of second-generation Iraqi-Kurds have been denied more deliberately in neighbouring countries

than in European countries. They believe that the Kurds are suffering from discrimination and exclusion in political, economic, social and cultural areas of life. Kurds have no share in the distribution of power or regarding economic development.

Karwan was born in 1970 and moved with his family to Iran in 1974, and later to Germany. He reported that the experiences of exclusion were more obvious in Iran than in Germany. In fact, Karwan described the treatment of Kurds in Iran, using terms like racism and oppression:

*The reason behind our return was the discrimination of East and West, including Iran, Europe and America. They did not care for Iraqi people. Although my wife is Persian, I myself went to Iran to be employed. We had no rights to have a job and work. I sometimes asked them to employ me. I went to Tehran, I went to the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and they made fun of me, and said: 'our Iranian citizens are jobless, how do we offer you job opportunities?' Those things were the main reasons behind our return. Besides, we realized that we will not have any future in Iran. Even if we spent the rest of our lives in Iran, we did not have a bright future. In Iran there were a lot of pressures, forces and oppression. When some of the Iranians came here and viewed the freedom, they were astonished. They were impressed with the level of evolution and the expansion of cities and towns. Moreover, they were impressed with the progression in education, human rights, people's financial circumstances and job opportunities, and finally democracy and the autonomy of people to freely express themselves. In contrast, we learnt racism in Iran, because most of those who were in Iran, they have more belonging to Iran and consider themselves Persian.*

An expression of bitterness and anger against Iran, compared to the perceived experiences in Europe (Germany), was evident in Karwan's narration of his experience in Iran. It is noteworthy that Karwan preferred Germany because of the communication with relatives and better living standards and higher levels of inclusion in Germany for Kurds than in Iran:

*Kurds have more rights in Europe, more than Iran. Thousands of Iranians migrate to Europe in order to set themselves free from that situation, to have freedom of speaking, clothing, befriending and everything. I assume those who went to Europe from their childhood are different from those who went from their thirties or forties. The latter acquire things very slowly compared to the children. Besides it depends on their educations. However, it depends on the personality of the person. There are people if they live in Europe for a hundred years, their mentality will not change.*

Karwan stated that being a Kurd in Europe is not problematic in the same way that it is in neighbouring countries. You can be a Kurd and work actively for your Kurdish identity in a quiet, peaceful environment. However, to the majority of society you are just an immigrant and are excluded from the national community through cultural, ethnic and racial boundaries. Although, Karwan has not denied the feeling of discrimination he has been exposed to in his everyday life in both countries.

Ali was separated from his parents during the Kurdish exodus and survived on his own from the age of eight or nine years. He lived alone for 14 years and returned to Kurdistan when his parents came looking for him in Iran and found him. Ali recollected the suffering caused by exclusion and hostility in Iran from different perspectives, including work and social life, as captured in the narrative below:

*I worked in a house. People called the owner Mrs. Baharwand. She said her nephew was killed in the Iraq war and she is ready to arrange a marriage between me and her*



*nephew's widow who was a Turkish girl, since there were many Turkish in Karaj. I did not reveal that I am Iraqi Kurd, I showed myself as Iranian everywhere to avoid being arrested and mistreated. She was in Karaj. They decided to get me married to their daughter officially. The Hamay Faraji family said, 'we are not your real parents, an identification card is required in this cases', so I told them the truth. I said, 'I am a refugee from Iraq'. So when they realized that I am an Iraqi Kurd and do not have an identification card, they called off the wedding, for they really hate Saddam Hussein and Iraqi people. Although I told them that Kurds are afflicted by the tyranny of Saddam Hussein and I am a Kurd, but they insisted on their decision. Life in Iran was very difficult and opportunities for work were almost none. Iraqis had no chance to live a normal life. Even for Iranians themselves, Iran was a hell. I met many who expressed their wish to leave the Islamic Republic of Iran and live in Europe or the United State of America. Many had their relatives living in different parts of Europe or USA and dreamed to see them there. Life in Iran is hard and I would never think of going back there!*

For Sindis who left Kurdistan at the age of six and moved with her family to England, the exclusion was not as clear as it had been for Ali in Iran. According to her, English people were welcoming and the refugee protection system ensured that they had access to selected opportunities. However, the exclusion they suffered was more in the social and employment realms:

*While in England, we were not discriminated against in a directly evident way. Instead, there were some silent and unspoken exclusions from many social activities. For example, we were not welcome and did not feel welcome in English parties and other social gatherings that required English-only people.*

*However, I did not mind this so much because even in Iraq, some events would only require a certain pool of people and not everyone. England was accommodating and they tried to include or assimilate us into their system as much as they could.*

*However, we would encounter hostility from some natives who felt that we were taking advantage of their country and it really hurt to hear them saying that we ruined our country so that we could take advantage of their kindness.*

*Once while in a supermarket, I recall a man (probably in his mid-forties) walked up to me and asked me where I was from. When I told him I was from Newcastle, he asked me with a firmer tone, 'I mean what is your home country?' I told him that I was from Iraq and he said to me, 'Why won't you just go back to your country and leave ours to us?' It was very humiliating, although a woman standing next to him intervened and said, 'It is not her choice to be away from home... you (to the man) should be happy you don't have to seek asylum because England was burning...' This was very encouraging and it shows the situation in England. Some people will make you feel like you do not belong there and others will vouch for you and be truly compassionate with you. In England, there were a lot of opportunities to mix or integrate with the host community. You almost feel equality in the chance of getting jobs. The system is protective and tries to prevent or stop any kind of discrimination including, sex, race, ethnicity or others. The British society is an open one which had mixed a long time ago with other nations. There is a lot of cultural blending. In conclusion, although a minority will have some un-friendly feeling toward foreigners, the majority of local people are empathetic and sympathetic to us.*

The social disadvantage and economic circumstances faced by second-generation Iraqi Kurdish returnees could be understood as demonstrating their failure to advance towards a

full and successful life in their parents' home country. Many of the second-generation Iraqi Kurds in this research identified the limited social and economic opportunities they faced as part of their everyday lives in diaspora countries.

Their racialized and pathologized status impacted on their understanding of home and belonging. In this instance, many second-generation Iraqi Kurds returning home to their ancestral homeland represented as return as a 'survival strategy' and as an alternative and important path towards achieving economic success and opportunities they felt were denied to them while living in diaspora countries. The second generation were motivated to return back home to their ancestral homeland to achieve these ambitions for themselves and their children.

#### **5.2.4 Patriotism and nationalism**

For some of the returnees, the factors driving their return to Kurdistan were associated with the fact that they were patriots and nationalists who wanted to develop Kurdistan and be part of the change they wanted for a stable nation. In some instances, returnees expressed their desire to apply the skills they had gained in foreign countries to develop Kurdistan. For example, second-generation returnee Darya, who was born in 1988, came back to contribute towards developing Kurdistan even though he was born in England and not Kurdistan:

*I was born in London and I finished my study there. I returned to Kurdistan in March 2013. I was 25 years old when I came back. Every year we visited Kurdistan once or twice since 1997. We visited our relatives. But in 2013, I came to a decision to return to Kurdistan. I graduated from college, I left England and went to Lebanon to work. My degree was in Media and I worked in that field too. Eventually I came to ask why should I use my experiences and what I have learnt in England in Lebanon? So I returned to Kurdistan. I have so many friends here and relatives.*

*Actually I think that Kurdistan is a place where I can be successful in my field, and I longed to benefit those who work with me and teach them what I learnt’.*

Darya’s narrative further explains his reason for returning to the KRG region:

*For me, returning to Kurdistan, is a matter of transferring my experience in the best way I can to help in the prosperity of my homeland. Returning was a national duty and a participation in re-building a country which was demolished as a result of years of internal and external war. Returning for me was a duty, that I have always thought that I have for my mother country. Once I decided to come here, I thought there should not be a way back although the idea visits my mind on bad days. I would love to see a prosperous, thriving and strong Kurdistan in all aspects of life.*

Darya’s story is similar to that of Dashti who was born in 1984 and migrated to Holland at 14 years of age. His family migrated following the deterioration of the situation in Erbil in 1996, which brings Dashti memories of suffering and affliction. Through transnationalism (Wahlbeck 2002; Keles 2016) facilitated by advanced communication technologies, Dashti would get constant updates about the situation in Kurdistan. This further motivated him to return to Kurdistan to help in rebuilding the KRG region and Iraq at large. However, Dashti criticised transnational communications for under-representing the situation in Kurdistan. Dashti’s return narrative also matches the position expressed by Van Bruinessen (1999) that second-generation Kurds take more interest in the political developments in Kurdistan than their parents:

*The reason behind my return was that I always want to be a factor of making changes in a place, not being in a place where my existence does not bring much to the table. I thought that if I stayed in Holland, I would not have influence and be*

*outstanding, since there were thousands of professional academic pharmacists likes me in Holland. However, I noticed the health sector in Kurdistan and pharmacology in particular were at a basic level. I viewed an opportunity in that field both academically and professionally. I made an effort which was both enjoyable and met people's needs. Simultaneously, it removes me from the routines of Holland where every day and week are the same. I was at an age to think and rejuvenate my life; I was really bored with the life in Holland.*

Young Kurds' involvement in transnational activities and practices is quite diverse. It may include short- or long-term visits to the Kurdistan region (especially often the de facto Kurdish state in northern Iraq (KRG) region), long-distance communication with friends and relatives, transnational political activities and staying informed of what happens in the Kurdistan area by following news in Kurdish and/or about Kurdistan (Toivanen 2014). Moreover, second-generation Iraqi Kurds had the opportunity to use the variety of digital and social media tools to stay connected with close family members, other relatives and friends in Kurdistan, but also with people, especially family, who belong to Kurdish diaspora communities in Europe and neighbouring countries.

Dashti's narrative about his connection through digital median and social networking was :

*When I was in Holland I was always aware of the situation in Kurdistan from the media, newspapers and TV, and I was in touch with relatives and friends. I had good relationships. I was aware of Kurdistan's situation. However, it is very hard to know every detail of people's lives, to which degree they elucidate everything for you, and how much you experience that life.*

In the case of 28-year-old Navdar, the patriotic and nationalist angle of return was different. This is because Navdar was consistently challenged by his older family members and pestered about how long he was going to build foreign nations while his own was dying and needed him. In this way, patriotism grows and compels return as it becomes genuine patriotism:

*Although I stayed in Germany for more than 20 years, I would occasionally visit Kurdistan because my father and my other relatives were staying in KRG. My father and grandfather have remained nationalists and they said that their first-born sons had to be patriotic to Kurdistan regardless. Whenever I came visiting, they would always talk about how I should not continue building other people's nations and pretending that it is my homeland. They insisted that true men in our family lineage lived and died fighting for Kurdistan and its stability. For about five years, my father and grandfather would pester me about when I was planning to return to Kurdistan and help in its restoration like a real nationalist and patriot. Eventually, I agreed to come back and offer my contribution to Kurdistan. Now, after I came back, I feel that there is no place I would rather be in except Kurdistan. I love this place and keep thanking my father and grandfather for showing me the right path for a patriotic Kurd. Although I will at times go to Germany to visit my friends, I always return to Kurdistan and hope to never migrate again in future. There was a feel of belonging that I missed in Germany. A feeling that I never experienced until I was back home. A feeling greater than anything, a feeling of being myself and no one else. A feeling of exploring my origin, my culture, and my reality. Over here I don't need to introduce myself as my family are quite well known over here. Whenever, I mention my family's name, people appreciate the role of my father and grandfather in the history of freedom fighting for Kurdistan. Over here, I feel everyone is my relative and friend.*

*I very much respect and highly value my father's and grandfather's counselling and advice to return back. I am glad that their suggestions were true and helped me in making the right conclusion.*

#### **5.2.5 Social and economic capital of return**

Returning back to the ancestral homeland was anticipated by many of the second-generation Iraqi Kurdish participants. The motivation and decision to return among the second-generation relied upon specific circumstances such as these young people's continued family ties to the region (and the cross-generational networks and resources that emerge from this); particular stages in the life-course for the second generation (single professionals or parents of young children); levels of educational qualifications and past work experiences (Reynolds 2008). Most of the participants who had skills or degree-level qualifications decided to return to their homeland. The second-generation returnees were among has access to social and economic resources generated through their family networks and socio-economic factors. Social capital is a particularly useful concept in exploring this issue of relationship between intent, opportunity and resources. Social capital creates bonding networks within family and community.

The analysis of my data reveals that for second-generation Iraqi Kurdish returnees, who have taken the decision to return to the KRG region, this return is accelerated through the social connection and capitals which are created and obtained through family network.

It is these family networks which make the difference between the dream or intention to return and the actual reality of doing so. Other researches have also emphasized that strong family binds and strong networks to the family birthplace provide the main reason for return over and above other economic, social and political considerations (Reynolds 2008).

Furthermore, there was a perception among second generation Iraqi Kurds returnees that they would have a better quality of life in their parents' homeland compared to their lives in the diaspora countries.

In accordance with social and economic theories about the return of migrants, Lanya's return was inspired by her father's intention to work in Kurdistan and the unfavorable socially- or family-motivated perception of her mother about women who stayed abroad when their husbands were working in Kurdistan. A Sulaimani native born in 1985, Lanya moved to Iran at the age of three years with her family and stayed in Iran in 1992 before moving to Syria in 1993. The narrative below gives evidence about the interaction of both economic and social/family factors in motivating return:

*The factors in our return were: my father returned to his post in Sulaimani, and my mother was against those women whose husbands returned to Kurdistan and they stayed in Europe. She said that: 'My husband should return to Kurdistan. I do not do what I was against from the very beginning'. That is why she made a quick decision to return all of our family to Kurdistan. During 2000 to 2003, when we were in Holland, my father was in Iran".*

These second-generation returnees made use of their parents and family bonds to develop their social networks. Most importantly, this provided them with support in the practical details of return such as renting or purchasing of homes, finding work and developing their skills, and opening their own business. The contacts that occurred through family relationships were especially important to second-generation returnees finding work, because getting appropriate work profoundly depends on existing relationships. Many of the second-generation returnees used their family and social contacts to find employment or develop business opportunities.



Another factor influencing return among second-generation Iraqi Kurds was the economic benefits. The second generation felt that they were in a better position to use the skills and qualifications obtained in diaspora countries, to set up their own businesses and develop their entrepreneurial skills in the KRG region. Karwan, who returned from Iran, talked about the advantages the second generation gained in term of economic and academic achievement, when they returned from European countries compared to neighbouring countries. He said that:

*Those who returned from Europe, they acquired languages, the English language which is an international language. However, I learnt Persian. I have nothing to do with Persian language. Every job opportunity here requires English language and Arabic. Persian language is derived from Arabic, Kurdish and Indian. It is not an official language. If I were in Germany, for instance, there are job opportunities for German language. There is a German Embassy in Kurdistan and you are welcomed to work with them, or translate for them. This is a disadvantage of being in a country like Iran. Persian is a good language, but it does not help you in studying or finding a good job. It is not an international language.*

*On the other hand, those who returned from Europe, they were free and were allowed to learn another occupation. One of my brothers is there, and my relatives as well. They cared for humanity insofar as if they know for example you are from Africa, Kurdistan, or Turkey, they gave your children similar courses to study in their own languages to avoid forgetting their languages. It is a grain of salt. If they did not get employment or have a good degree at least they have a lot of money to start a business. They are supported by the social services to learn the language, integrate in the host community and get financial aids. When they return to Kurdistan most of them have a better and brighter future, either involved with German governmental*

*projects in Kurdistan or private companies. Finally, even those who don't get through in this aspect, they would have gained some money in exile and learned some work experience that they use locally.*

### **5.3 Construction of 'Home' and 'Belonging'.**

The regular visits of second-generation Iraqi Kurds to their parental homeland is a good example of transnationalism. The narratives of my participants point out that the second generation travelled often, on their own or with their parents, to the KRG region. To trace the process through which the notions of 'belonging' and 'home' are constructed, this research section reflects three main memory types that feature in the theoretical overview outlined by Erll (2011), Assman and Czaplicka (1995). The first memory type is the communicative memory. It entails the assessment of the daily communication between second-generation returnees and their parents. It also features the evaluation of the practices in family spaces concerning Kurdish traditions and culture. By paying attention to the communicative memory, the aim of this analysis in this respect is to determine the ways through which the second generation Kurds construct their 'belonging' at the individual level situated within the collective memory spheres. The cultural memory is the third one. It looks at the second generation's diaspora spaces within which they construct/develop a sense of belonging to Kurdistan (their original homeland) through media, education and visits to Kurdistan. In this regard, I illustrate the reflections of the second generation on Kurdistan's 'grand collective narratives' in relation to ethnicity. Through the contrast and comparison of the experiences that second-generation Kurds have within the constructions of cultural, communicative and collective memory, this section reveals the standpoints of the second-generation Kurds towards their parental homeland.

Eventually, this part connects to the motivations or factors of return for the second-generation Kurds returning to Kurdistan, as covered in the previous section. This section also links to the experiences of the second-generation returnees in their parental homeland and looks at the potential renegotiations and shifts in their diasporic identities.

The results reported in this section also underscore the significant role of transnational contacts in the construction of the notions of ‘home’ and ‘belonging’ for diaspora Kurds. The transnational contacts between Kurds in the diaspora and residents in Kurdistan are extensive. These networks transcend the boundaries of the nation-state to help in the development of communicative and collective memories that develop their notions of ‘belonging’ and ‘home’. Van Bruinessen (2000) noted that “organised diaspora communities continually enable the construction of non-territory-based contacts and networks, political institutions and organisations and the development of publications”. Exemplary cases related to organised diaspora communities include the Kurdish National Congress and the Kurdish Parliament in Exile. Moreover, the Kurdish diaspora communities’ transnational space reveals particular dynamics with respect to exile, historical Kurdish nationalism background, and the notion of ‘otherness’, which the ongoing situation that Kurdish minorities encounter in KRG continue to inform (Toivanen 2014).

The findings of this research about the notion of home compliment the depiction of home by Blunt and Dowling (2006) who found that home is not necessarily a single place, but has a multi-scalar characterisation from the current theorisations. Considering Brah’s poignant question: ‘where is home?’ (1996: 192), I find that the concept of diaspora involves a notion about ‘home’ and that a dislocation and displacement from ‘home’ remains core. However, Brah expounds on the notion of ‘home’ by describing it as ‘a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In the sense that it is a place of no return even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of “origin”’ (1996: 192).

Yet, home could also be a locality's lived experience under the mediation of daily social relations captured explicitly in history.

From Brah's viewpoint, home has these two conceptualisations of far-off imagined, mythic places and the feeling of connection with a place through lived experiences. In the case of lived experiences, it implies the potential construction of the notion of 'home' through lived experiences including social relations. On the other hand, collective narratives that draw from memories, or the transmission of such memories through generations, instil the notion of 'home' in Kurds living abroad. While researching about Kurdish Diasporans living in Sweden, Alinia concluded that the social activities, social relations and their transnational communities and networks concerning 'the politics of location have in this process become their "home"' (2004: 330). Since Kurdistan is not a state, this could cause ambivalent feelings towards departure, for those geographically situated in the states of Turkey, Iran and Iraq. As revealed in the study by Alinia, this could cause various distinctions in the notion of homeland and home by returnee Kurds.

The narratives of the interviewees in this research about their perceptions of 'what home means to them' or 'where home is for them' revealed three overarching themes. The conceptualisations of the notion of home for some of the second-generation returnees were about Kurdistan being home and belonging to Kurdistan. However, some interviewees expressed that they had multiple homes. This was especially prominent in the case of returnees that had been born in a foreign country, lived there longer or did not have any experiences of Kurdistan. Some of the interviewees also felt that they did not belong in Kurdistan, in particular as a result of their experiences upon returning or their more favourable experiences in the countries of settlement. The exploration of these three themes follows in the three subsections below.

### **5.3.1 Kurdistan is home, belonging to Kurdistan**

Second-generation participation in transnational activities, national and cultural events is quite different to that of the first generation. It might include a family visit to the Kurdistan region (often the de facto Kurdish state in northern Iraq), relationships and communication with friends and relatives in the parental homeland, transnational political activities, and being in touch and staying informed about the situation in the Kurdistan area by following news in Kurdish or other host country languages about Kurdistan. Moreover, second-generation Iraqi Kurds take advantage of the diversity of digital media and social-networking tools (including Windows Messenger, Facebook, and Skype) to keep in contact with family members, relatives and friends in Kurdistan, but also with people, especially family, who belong to Kurdish diaspora communities. On the other hand, many participants were also 'in touch with' Kurdistan through Middle Eastern satellite channels, online news sites, and Internet chat rooms. Certainly, the diversity of these transnational activities were different among the participants. For example, some had not visited Kurdistan since they were born or since the migration with their family, while others had visited there on some occasions. The second generation's feeling of belonging to their homeland is not just a bond with their territorial place but is often based on a sense of attachment to relatives and friends, personal and collective memories, language, and cultural products and practices.

For Zhwan, the notion of home is where one feels safe, a kind of haven where one could escape to and Kurdistan is that place. It is noteworthy that Zhwan grew up in Iran and had no memories of Kurdistan before migration. Instead, the memories of Kurdistan are constructed through communicative memory handed down by parents and the transnational interaction with Kurdistan while living in Iran. The expression of hope in Kurdistan being a safer place (home) dominated the construction of the notion of home for Zhwan. Zhwan also expressed a sense of belonging with Kurdistan:

*I think home is where you feel safe, whenever you want to escape a depression or problem or anything. In home you should feel safe and you are sure in that place there is always someone that will be there for you. Furthermore, you should have a special hope and try hard to achieve it. For me, Kurdistan is home. Although I faced some unforeseen difficulties at the beginning, but now Kurdistan is my only home. I do not think I can call any place home except for Kurdistan. I am not able to describe what Iran means for me where I spent most of my years in. I can say it is just a second home.*

*Being in Iran had a great impact on my personality, it influenced me socially and psychologically. It made a social and optimistic person out of me. I befriend people without fear and shame. It made me know how to be flexible in any place and situation. Although, we were afflicted either financially or by feeling loneliness, but it made me trust my parents in every situations and to have trust in their decisions. They taught me to be flexible in any situation, and to never lose hope, and to be optimistic and social.*

*Although the situation here is unstable and complicated, I think it is temporary and this economic crisis will be solved. As to my study, according to the field which I study in, I will probably go to Europe to study since currently studying is complicated. Depending on the branch which I long to study, it might be hard to study oncology or anything else here. I might try to study outside Kurdistan, but it is temporary. After finishing my study, I will return. I do not think after my study has been finished, I can live there and get a job. I want to come back here, serve my own folks. Although, it was very hard at the beginning, I do not regret returning. Now I realize if I was not here, I had no future”.*

Like Zhwan, Sazan has no memories of a childhood in Kurdistan. However, returns to Kurdistan in 2001 and 2004 helped in the construction of a sense of belonging and the identification with Kurdistan as home. The narrative by Sazan coincides with the two conceptualisations of home especially the notion of home not being an actual place, but an imagined, mythical place. However, there are struggles to give up the experiences of the country of settlement as home. In the end, Kurdistan remains home for Sazan:

*Home plays a significant role in my life, I always demonstrate that the anthem of 'Ay Raqib' is very significant. Kurdistan is my belief and religion. I am sceptical in religion, but I view nationality as religion, and it must be protected. Home is where the heart is. Home is an assembled society which makes cultures and traditions, and made the individuals to abide by them. I view Germany as second home. I like being there, but not as much as Kurdistan. Here everyone is a Kurd. This is my country, the country of my ancestors. When I am here I feel home. However, Germany is a place whenever you are afflicted in your own country due to something, it is like a shelter. When you suffer, you turn to it. You already knew it and when you came back, you embrace it".*

Tofan was born in Iran and had no lived experience of Kurdistan. Yet, Tofan claimed, he 'longed to return to our homeland'. Again, the role of communicative memory, handed down from one generation to another, is evident because the parents taught Tofan about Kurdistan and instilled the notion of loving and being patriotic to Kurdistan. The notion of home to Tofan is connected to family and origin. There seems to be an inseparable intertwining of the notion of home and belonging for Tofan, as is the case with the other second-generation returnees who have been handed down the communicative and collective 'memories' of Kurdistan:

*Home is mother and family for me and I belong to Kurdistan. My parents taught me to love Kurdistan and to be patriot. Kurdistan is my homeland. I was born in Iran and lived there, though I do not belong to it. We moved to Iran due to patriotism, because my father was Peshmerga. We suffered those years because of Kurdistan, so if anyone asks me where I belong, I will say, 'I belong to Kurdistan'. Although I was not born here, but I belong to Kurdistan and consider it home. Besides, my rights have been protected here more than Iran. I do not know how to describe Iran, I do not belong to it and I felt a stranger there. Our situation was better than the other refugees in Iran. The refugees were jobless, for they viewed us as foreigners. If you did not have an official document, your life will be hard. All of our relatives were in Kurdistan. Although, we had official papers and I spoke a native Persian language being born there, I was still not feeling at home. Those feelings stopped me from further integration and even terminated my active search for work, job, and a career in Iran. Compared to other refugees it was easier for me to stay and start an occupation or professional life. In my mind and for years I made my decision to return to Kurdistan. I felt that I can do far better and offer more to my homeland on returning. I thought of a better life, better profession and better future".*

For Karwan, the construction of the notions of home and belonging became more profound through visits to Kurdistan. Karwan stayed with family in Iran for 16 years, but recollects a two-year stay that shaped the experience of Sulaimani as home. The sense of belonging and the notion of home to Karwan came from ancestral links to Kurdistan. The suffering endured in Kurdistan further underscored the relationship between Karwan and Kurdistan as home, despite the implication of Iran as the second home:



*For me Kurdistan is one hundred per cent home. My ancestors lived in Kurdistan. We martyred thousands of martyrs here. We suffered from the chemical attack on Halabja, the Al-Anfal campaign, and as refugees. I love Kurdistan insofar as I adore it. Unfortunately, we love Kurdistan, but some corrupted political made the situation worse in Kurdistan. People complained about them, and I think this happens everywhere. But they did not fulfil their duties toward Kurdistan the way Kurdish people expected. They did not meet their needs.*

*I strongly believe that with the returning of younger, well educated, hardworking people from exile, there will be less chance for corruption. Despite having obstacles, I have hardly seen anyone returning home having financial, social, or professional difficulties. Most of those whom I know, are working in trading, export and import, working in construction business and also some health professions like doctors, dentists, or nurses. All of them have made their way through and most of them were innovative and introduced some of their professional experience which helped in the progression of that speciality. Some of those returnees have entered politics and contributed in fighting against corruption. They have given a good picture of justice and leading by example. Therefore, I assume if those who have an intention to work in politics or have experience in that field in Europe or the USA return back to participate on the political and administrative sector, they would be able to improve people's life generally and collectively. They can run or lead a stronger battle against corruption and establish a transparent government. My wife is Iranian, but she returned to Kurdistan with us, so I respect her nation. They helped us so much. My children's maternal uncles are there, their grandparents and aunts were there as well. I have a special respect for it and I consider it my second home".*

Exclusion and hostility encountered in Iran contributed to Ali feeling like a stranger in Iran and associating more with the notion of Kurdistan representing home and belonging more than Iran. This is despite staying longer in Iran than in Kurdistan only to return as an adult. The struggles for Kurdistan and Iraq at large also played significant roles in helping Ali develop a stronger sense of belonging in Kurdistan than in Iran. His narrative reflects a struggle between the known foreign home and the construction of the notion of home based on the encounters:

*Although I spent most of my life in Iran and returned to Kurdistan as an adult, for me, Kurdistan is home. Kurdistan was always in my thoughts. I have often fought for even Saddam Hussein who oppressed Kurds, and I felt offended when someone spoke about even Iraq, not to mention Kurds and Kurdistan. The reason was the love of nationality. I was such a patriot. I loved Kurdistan insofar as I could not stand someone who criticized even my enemy. I was offended when in 1997, when the civil war occurred, I was quarrelling about one of the Kurdish political parties, and a man broke a glass on my head. They said one of the Kurdish political parties came to Baneh, they threw tomatoes at them.*

*Kurdistan is my home. I felt like a stranger in Iran. I do not belong to Iran. When I got into trouble with someone, I told them, 'I am a stranger twice'. First, we migrated from Kurdistan to Saqqez and then from Saqqez to Tehran. I said I do not have the ability to fight, or have a quarrel with you. When I went to Saqqez, I was in love with the city and its people, but I was homesick. People invited me to celebrate Eid with them. They knew that I was Iraqi, and welcomed me warmly. Then I went to Tehran. At first I did not know Persian, but I gradually acquired the language. Even If you learn the language, because you do not have ID it strikes fear into your heart.*

The visits of my participants to the Kurdistan Regional Government region gave them the opportunity to renew relationships with their relatives after a long time and meet some of their relatives for the first time. As in Emanuelsson's 2008 research of diaspora Kurds returning from Sweden to Northern Iraq, young Kurds in my study harboured positive feelings for developing relations with their family members in the region of Kurdistan and travelling there for holidays or for temporary jobs. Most of my participants indicated that Kurdistan is home to them and that they had a sense of belonging in Kurdistan

### **5.3.2 Multiple homes**

The question 'where do I belong?' usually presupposes a reply containing geographically identifiable indicators, whether these would be countries, regions, cities, or neighbourhoods (Toivanen 2014). This means the question of a sense of belonging and of emotional attachments is often connected to the understanding of home and its possible attachment. The spatial parameters aside, individuals who are embedded in a transnational space may have attachments to multiple localities, which take shape through lived experiences, through memories, or simply via continuous and frequent references to home or homeland (see Levitt 2009: 1231). The transnational reality means being attached to multiple transnational sets of social networks, several layers of polities, institutions. Sense of belonging and emotional attachment to a home in relation to a physical place are narrated vary among the participants in relation to how individuals are attached within such social networks, polities, institutions.

Corresponding to the perspective of belonging being a dynamic process (Skrbiš et al 2007), this research finds that belonging could also relate to the second-generation returnees having multiple homes. Some of the returnees are unable to determine what their home is exactly. This also applied to the case of belonging whereby the narratives indicated that belonging was about whether the returnee belonged or could belong to either Kurdistan or the

country of settlement. The inter-subjective associations of the surroundings of the returnees and the reactions to the perceptions of the individual returnee about the positioning produced by such surroundings also contributed toward the notions of multiple homes and multiple belonging (Anthias 2009). However, the main conflict emerged in home being Kurdistan and a sense of belonging elsewhere.

Sarnj suggested multiple belonging, yet identification of Kurdistan as home. The distinction between home and belonging can be explained in the conceptualisation of the meaning of home to Sarnj. The notion of home seems synonymous with associations of historical childhood memory for Sarnj, despite living in Sweden longer and with a better life than in Kurdistan:

*I thought about the term home a long time ago, since most years of my life had been spent out of my country. I am inspired by a quote which says 'home is where the childhood is', but I wanted to apply it to my life. When I came back, I found myself, the memories of my childhood are restored. I thought integration had happened inside my personality. I felt those plants which I viewed in my childhood, those herbs and flowers that I smelt. I heard the sound of birds, the sun which I viewed. I left all the people and things alone. I searched for the old streets of our house, the old school. I found myself here. Despite the fact that the issue of language and the freedom of speaking is very significant for me, in the Swedish language I can read, write and speak. I can speak fluently in corporations and manage my work in governmental departments, but I cannot use all colours. In Kurdish I can use all the colours that I want to use, but when you speak a foreign language the speaking is black and white. For instance, in the Kurdish language I can give you a poem example and describe literature, so I think I am very controlled here. Kurdistan is where my childhood was, so it is my home".*

Similar experiences of clashing belongingness, despite clarity of home being Kurdistan was also replayed in the case of Lanya. It appears that belonging for second-generation returnees has nothing to do with home. Instead, belonging is about association with a place and the kindness extended to the individual while at that place, including inclusion in the social and economic aspects of life in such places. For Lanya, lack of childhood memories in Kurdistan before moving to Europe and multiple returns to Kurdistan were responsible for the construction of the notion of home, but not belonging. Childhood memories are also significant in shaping the difference between homeland and home in accordance with Brah (1996). Homeland is a place of origin while home is the place where an individual feels welcome and belongs. Lanya's narrative coincide with the results of Mand's (2010) study concerning the conceptualisations of home by Bangladeshi children born in Britain:

*My home land is where my loves are – first my mother, then my brother, my husband and my children. There are a lot of good and bad memories here. I imagine the situation of our country will be better. It's not going to be like that forever, but it take two more years, a little less or little more. However, on the other hand, I feel Syria is home for me, because I spent my childhood and adolescent years in Syria. All of my childhood friends were in Syria. I was in Syria from a very young age until my adulthood, that is why Syria is like home for me, but undoubtedly not as long as Kurdistan. From childhood, they saw hatred of Arabic people in our heart, and it transmitted from our ancestors to us. But I lived eight years with Arabs in Syria, until the last year my friends did not suspect me of not being Syrian, nor that I am Arab or not.*

Darya's narrative is a depiction of a struggle that some of the second-generation Kurds encounter while attempting to identify with a place as home and advance belonging. Darya provides a rare account of the 'self-commotion' a returnee might encounter due to shifting perspectives about home and belonging. For instance, Darya feels at home and belongs in the place that he is not in at any given time. The physical dissociation from a place creates the desire for that place to be home and to belong there. The implication is that some second-generation returnees like Darya have no home in any real sense, although they know that their places of origin are their homelands:

*Home is very strange for me. When I am in Kurdistan, I thought of England and considered it home, and when I am in England, I thought of Kurdistan and considered it home as well. When I am in one of those two, I consider the other home. I never feel that I am home. I am officially British. There is an English saying which says, 'home is where the heart is', and when I am in England my heart is in Kurdistan and vice versa. It is hard to decide where your home is. My homeland is Kurdistan, I immediately respond with the answer. But if you ask, 'where do you consider home?' I have no idea. For me both of them are home. There is a distinction between home and homeland. Homeland is the city, the country, the culture, the food, the language and everything, but home is a place where you are comfortable in. Your relatives, family, and friends are there. I have so many relatives and friends in both of them, that is why I cannot decide where my home is. 'Till I stopped my home, I do not know where it is'.*

### **5.3.3 Non-Kurdistan belonging**

Although not as many respondents as those covered in the previous themes expressed that they belonged elsewhere than Kurdistan, the narratives of the interviewees indicating this

show the possibility of returnees feeling that they belonged to their countries of settlement. Likewise, some second-generation returnees do not identify or associate themselves with any of the places as home. Accordingly, they do not belong to any place despite inclination toward Kurdistan as homeland and the other country as the place of belonging. For Dyar, home is the place of comfort and Kurdistan does not qualify. Dyar connects more with Europe in terms of belonging, but appreciates Kurdistan is home to a limited, unwanted extent:

*In my opinion, home is where you are comfortable. It is right that this is my home, but I am not satisfied with it. I travel to Europe, because when I graduate there is nothing to do. I will not have a steady job. There is a political disorder and an economic crisis in spite of the fact that humans are not respected and glorified in this country. Kurdistan is my country, but I am obliged to live in it. If it was under my control, I wish I was not here, I wish I was not born here. I wish I was not a Kurd, but this is my country and it is doomed to be my destiny. The first thing that I hate in this culture, that infuriates me, are social relationships, which are very horrible insofar as they interfere in the smallest details of your life. You have no privacy, everyone misjudges you. I want to live my own life. I want to live the way I want. I am free in how to think, how to live, but you should act like they want and pretend that you live for yourself. You should live for people. Either you escape or adapt, otherwise there is no place for you in this society. I am second generation, I have belonging to Iran, and I was born there and grew up there. Second generation means those who were like me, and I am the victim of the bad politics of this country. For example, my family and I got an incurable psychological trauma. The chemical attack of halabja was a shock. None of us have recovered from that psychological trauma.*

Another interesting revelation of home and belonging is evident in the narration of Keser who recalls her childhood in Kurdistan, but prefers to have no home. In other words, there are second-generation returnees who prefer to associate with Kurdistan only as a homeland and not as a home. The notion of belonging does not even surface in the case of these returnees like Keser who prefer to be ‘free of home and belonging’ to place:

*I have no need to have a home. Kurdistan is my homeland because my ancestors come from there and I was born in Sulaimani. I left too young to go to another country to even consider Kurdistan my home. Now that I have even returned here, I still don't feel like Kurdistan is my home. For me, home should give me an unquestionable feeling of belonging; I do not feel that with Kurdistan or with Lebanon where I stayed for over 16 years. I do not have a home and I do not belong to any place or country. It is a funny life, but that is my life and I love it that way.*

A sense of belonging and emotional attachment to home was a complex issue for most of my participants. However, very often, they have attached it to geographical locations, somewhat overlapping and multiple, and constructed it in relation to both the past and the present. They have had a feeling of belonging to multiple location. The sense of belonging and emotional attachment to a home among my participant stems partially from lived experiences and from the existing social relations and networks within that place. Many of them were extremely aware of the importance of living in one's own home country because of having lived in other countries as refugees who did not belong to the mainstream population. Home – one's own territory, one's ancestors' place of origin, where one can feel a sense of psychological freedom, and where one's legal rights should be assured as honourable citizens of the nation – was of crucial importance to many of the second generation (Saito 2007).



## 5.4 The Concept of identity

For the second generation, the concept of home is a more difficult one to define for they feel as though they belong neither here nor there (i.e. to their parents' land) Taylor points out that 'what you identify as your home, and your identity, is a figment of your imagination. Bits and pieces of your parents' and family's history have influenced you, but it is not your history' (2007: 130). Taylor recounts how, despite being born on Canadian soil, engaging in a typical Canadian lifestyle, he is constantly asked 'but where are you really from?' Therefore, the concept of identity then becomes fluid, never really belonging to a fixed location or specific culture. The identity holder is in constant pursuit of some sort of middle ground where they can feel at ease and proudly stand for all aspects of who they are. The development of this section supports Hall's (2000) assertion that identity is a temporary attachment to the positions of subject constructed for us by discursive practices (Uwase 2014).

Identity is what makes us who we are. "There is a very deep ontological longing in people to feel complete, which manifests itself in a desire to belong to something that is greater than oneself and to participate actively in the life of this supra-individual entity" (Létourneau 2001: 5). I concur with the criticism of conventional classifications of identity by Anthias (2002), as if identity was a possessive property. The narrations of the interviewees show a constant renegotiation of identity upon integration with national and ethnic representations of various events and stages constrained in space and time. The results reveal an interplay of various factors informing the identity of the second-generation Kurdish returnees. Alinia and Eliassi (2014) have reported the diversity of identity quests by Kurdish returnees, except that the quest remains common to all generations and not just second-generation returnees.

The narrations by different interviewees in the current research reaffirm the reports of various scholars about nationalism being central to the ideological framework for the

construction of the collective identity (Wahlbeck 1999; Alinia 2004; Khayati 2008; Eliassi 2012). However, the narratives in the current research also feature multiple identity experiences especially due to exclusion from the country of settlement and self-exclusion from Kurdistan upon their return due to unmet expectations. An interesting finding is the relation of identity to self and without affiliation to place. Why then would they not opt for mixed/double/multiple identities? I find the third and fifth elements of identity as identified by Brubaker and Cooper, which portray 'identities as deep and foundational forms of selfhood' and 'identities as fluctuating, unstable and fragmented modes of the self' (2000: 6) respectively to be adequate in explaining the 'personal identity' narratives. In general, the narratives reveal second-generation returnees that identify as Kurds, those with mixed/double identities (including non-Kurdish) and those with personal or unaffiliated identities.

#### **5.4.1 Kurdish identity**

The definition of national identity is multi-dimensional and varies in each society based on specific national identity markers. Many studies confirm birthplace as a marker of national identity, followed by ancestry, residence, language/accents and so on (Jones, 1996). Jones (1996) has defined in his research national identity as 'Australian Nativist', according to him, 'being an Australian national means being born in Australia, having lived most of one's life in Australia, and being Christian'. On the other hand, in his research Eliassi (2010) has studied 'identity formation among younger generation of Kurds in the Swedish context'. His research argues that his interviewees emphasized a sense of 'Kurdishness' and Kurdish identity, although being 'Kurdish' was accorded various meanings. Similarly, with my own participants, second-generation returnees identified themselves quite strongly as 'Kurdish'. This identification was often narrated during the interviews with my participants in relation to being part of the Kurdish society, knowing the Kurdish language and having roots traceable

to the Kurdistan region (in Iraq, Iran, or Turkey). The participants' parents were all of Kurdish background, and the families had migrated to diaspora countries when the interviewees were not born or they migrated with their families to diaspora countries when they were five years old or younger. Therefore, some of the second-generation returnees, who were born in parent's homeland also had memories from the societies of departure and from their visit to their parental homeland, which to some extent highlighted the (symbolic) construction of belonging to Kurdistan. However, some participants were born in diaspora countries and had never visited Kurdistan – hence the word 'symbolic' in brackets.

The role of nationalism in forming Kurdish identity was eminent in Zhwan's narrative. Zhwan also expressed awareness of double identity in some of the second-generation Kurds. The association with Kurdistan as home and as the place of belonging could also be responsible for the single identity as a Kurd:

*Unlike many people who declare that they have double-identities or multiple identities, I have one identity: I am Kurd.*

Many people identify themselves as a Kurd. For instance, Zhwan is very clear that she identifies herself as a Kurd in a very clear distinction from other people with multiple identities.

*We lived in a Persian area temporarily, then we lived in Pawa which was a Kurdish area. Although we could not speak Kurdish outside home, we lived in a Kurdish area and our cultures were almost similar. Besides, we must speak Persian with our friends, but we always watched Kurdish channels, and speak the Kurdish language. We always talked about Sulaimani, my parents were nationalist, and influenced us. We were taught that we are Kurds and have one identity. If someone asks me, 'what is your nationality?' I certainly say I am a Kurd, and I live in Sulaimani. Therefore, I*

*belong considerably to Kurdistan, in a way I cannot live in another place. Although I was a child when I lived there, but it made me feel how difficult that life was for my parents, and I do not think I could live that life. Once I visited my friends in Iran when I properly realized that we cannot live there again. Kurdistan is our home not Iran or anywhere.*

Similarly, the role of parental nationalism and patriotism passed on to second-generation Kurds and instilled in them as they grew up, regardless of the country of settlement, seems more prominent in Sazan's narrative. Notably, Sazan easily related with Kurdistan as home and felt a sense of belonging, as reported in the previous section:

*I had no conflict in showing my identity since my mother was a nationalist, her father had been martyred in Kurdistan. When we were there she took us to a Kurdish school once a week, they taught us Kurdish language, culture, reading and writing. She did not allow us to forget our nationality, so I did not have a conflict when I came back. Moreover, when someone asks me, 'what is your nationality?' I immediately say I am a Kurd, and if they do not know where Kurdistan is, I describe it for them.*

Although Dyar indicated that Kurdistan is home and associated Iran with the territorial place of belonging, his identity was as a Kurd. I find the narrative by Dyar resonates with Malešević's (2006) inference that identity is not obvious or physical, and Toivanen's (2014) expression that locality and cultural identity are perceivable as fixed within a given time and indexed within a reference frame defined territorially like the nation-state. Altogether, examining the migration experiences of individual second-generation Kurds including resettlement, displacement and settlement inclines towards "problematizing the essential perspective of static associations in the culture, locality and identity triad"

(Toivanen 2014). Besides this triad, the role of language as a qualifier for Kurdish identity is implicated in Dyar's narrative about identity:

*We are Kurds, so we speak the Kurdish language. My brother and I did not know the Kurdish language until 1999. We used to learn Kurdish. It was easy to express myself in Persian. We were obliged to learn Kurdish, because we did not understand each other, but from 1995 on, we used to learn Kurdish in school and my family speak Kurdish, so we learnt to speak Kurdish, too. I wish to know English and think in English. Although, Persian is somehow a good language, if it is compared to the languages of the area. But if compared to English and French it is not a dominant and standard language. For instance, in English you can convey a message by only two sentences, but in Persian you may comprehend it by five pages, it is similar to Kurdish. Some years ago my Persian was dominant, since I did not know Kurdish, but now my Kurdish is dominant and I think in Kurdish. When I go to Iran I speak Persian sporadically, people could recognize my accent when I was in the first grade of university, I was so bad in Kurdish. But in my sophomore year, I tried and utilized some Arabic words, since the Kurdish language has so many meanings. Besides, Kurdish people underestimate both Iranian people and those who lived in Iran as a refugee, but those who lived in Europe do not have that problem.*

Similarly, Tofan did not have a problem identifying with Kurdistan as home and talking of his belonging to Kurdistan, which might have had a significant role in instilling his Kurdish identity. However, the discrimination faced in Iran and the patriotism towards Kurdistan further reinforced Tofan's Kurdish identity. The conflict between locality and cultural identity is revealed in Tofan's description of identity and collides with the sense of belonging and home:

*Being in Iran does not affect my personality, I am always a Kurd. However, when we were in Iran they called us as Iraqi, and when we returned to Erbil, they called us Iranian. There is a quarter in Erbil which they named the Iranian quarter. If you do not say Iranian quarter, no one would know or find the place.*

For Afran, identity is a choice and a heritage that no one can take away from an individual without his or her permission. It is something one acquires and accepts to keep regardless of circumstances. This reiterates the core element of ‘deep and foundational forms of selfhood’ (Brubaker & Cooper 2000: 6):

*I was not born in Kurdistan, but I am a Kurd. No one can take that away from me; not even the 16 years spent in three different nations with different cultures and peoples of different ways of life and identities. I have never wanted to be anything else because being Kurdish is an identity given by Allah (SWT). They might have taught me English and Persian and their ways of life, but I insisted on learning Kurdish whenever I had an opportunity (at home, in social gatherings, during my short visits to Kurdistan). I acquired Kurdish identity and will retain it to death. I am a Kurd.*

My participants’ narratives seem to reveal that most of the second-generation returnees have constructed the ideal image of homeland with little memory or that their identity has been informed by location, language, knowledge of culture and their affection towards the ‘homeland’ and has not been influenced by the current situation in the KRG region.

#### **5.4.2 Mixed/double identity**

The concept of identity then becomes fluid, never really belonging to a fixed location or specific culture. The identity holder is in constant pursuit of some sort of middle ground where they can feel at ease and proudly stand for all aspects of who they are (Uwase 2014).

Double consciousness is a theory that (Du Bois 1996) first explored in his publication *The Souls of Black Folk*. His work was focused on the African-Americans who were denigrated and oppressed in a nation that the world saw as a proponent of principals of human dignity and equality. He has indicated in his book that the negative views, such as rejection from the outside world, shaped the experiences of African- Americans and, in turn, their self-image. (Du Bois 1996) describes the reality of having multiple identities; recognizing that individuals experience a kind of ‘two-ness’, with two identities trying to exist within one person. Furthermore, he has explained the two life-altering experience that the African-Americans are facing from the moment he/she realized he/she was Black, and the moment he/she realized that was a problem.

Mixed and double identity narratives manifested in three interviewees in my research. The most striking similarity in the narratives of these three interviewees is that they all had discordant views of home and belonging. This further reaffirms that mixed perceptions of home and belonging are likely to cause similar discord in identity. One way in which second-generation Iraqi Kurds describe their emotional connection to homeland and diaspora is by describing themselves as being a blend of different ethnic and national identities. When second-generation Iraqi Kurds define their emotional relationship to homeland or to diaspora it is by defining themselves as being a blend of different identities.

Rawa an Iraqi born girl, who grew up in Germany and then moved to UK as a teenager, could not decide whether Kurdistan was home or not and had issues with tracing belonging, which might have had a significant impact on her mixed identity:

*I had difficulties in recognizing my national identity, especially in my college years. I felt that I was Eastern, but when I returned to Kurdistan, I came to realize that I am not Eastern, I am completely different from them. I am a mixture of East and West. At the end of the day, it is me. However, it did not have a negative impact on me. Instead,*

*it had a positive impact on my personality, for I had so many experiences and am familiar with various cultures and norms which led me to realize more. I appreciate that this mixture of feelings produced a broader mind and way of thinking. Sometimes I feel loyal to Kurdistan because that's where I'm from, but at the same time I feel loyal to Germany or the UK because they have been good to me.*

Through this 'mix' of identities she is representing the flexibility of national and regional boundaries and her reluctance to select one identity marker. Second-generation Iraqi Kurds feel a sense of belonging and loyalty to both diaspora countries and the homeland, which they expressed through narrative statements. Furthermore, Rawa argues that:

*It has been helping a lot in having a wider network and establishing more friendships. It has also enhanced my confidence in applying for jobs and using this dual capacity to market myself. Transcultural feeling is great. Rather than being a conflict or a problem I found this helped in developing more powerful coping strategies. Overall this mixed feeling has a positive influence and effect on my personality.*

Sarnj had problems maintaining the same identity with a change in location. In Sweden, her identity was Kurdish and in Kurdistan it was Swedish. Her identity was subject to the treatment received from those around her, which implies that it was subject to the interpretation of others. This brings in an element of 'otherness' (Toivanen 2014) in 'forcing' an identity on some of the second-generation Iraqi Kurds returning to the KRG region:

*I feel my identity was stronger here. There is an identity theory – I suppose it is formulated by a French man – it gives me inspiration, which says 'when you are out of your country they saw you as immigrant, when you are home they look at you as foreigner, none of them give you your rights'. So I get bored with these things.*



*I want to tell both sides: 'please see me as who I am, do not generalize me into a theory'. They called us, 'those who returned from Europe'. There are so many people who came back from Europe. View me as me, I am not like others. Besides, they prejudge you. It means before they know you well, they misjudge you. But due to my strong identity here, I feel I am so controlled. I cannot face it when they called us immigrants. They say immigrants have polluted our country, and they take our jobs. Although I am one of them, I was always a second-rate citizen there. However, people glorify and appreciate you in Kurdistan, but they do not give you your basic rights. I do not know why. I do not know whether it is only the corporation I work in, or if all the corporations are normally like that.*

The experiences in the diaspora are also influential in instilling a sense of mixed identity for some of the second-generation Iraqi Kurds like Lanya. Certainly, the inclination towards a Kurdish identity is stronger and this could be traceable to an equally strong association with Kurdistan as home. Language acquisition and childhood memories, which implicate communicative and cultural memories, are crucial for identity formation. Lanya claimed:

*We can say I have multiple identities in my personality, because I learned some things in Iran, some others in Syria, and something else in Holland. These countries have different religions, they have different cultures. I received those which were compatible with my family rules, customs, and tradition, which adapt within that limit of freedom. For instance, my mother gave me ultimate freedom, but she drew a red line which I could not pass. In every culture we collect those good things which adapt to the fence our parents put up for us. We may collect the bad things, because no one is an angel, but mostly we get good habits. I acquired useful experience from different cultures in different countries. All these helped in building a stronger personality.*

*It made me more adaptable, approachable and more tolerant in my life. Experience in those different societies stimulated better decision making. I feel that I can live anywhere and work anywhere. I can take more on board now compared to before. I have seen good and bad days and I made notes of all of them. I learn from my mistakes. Furthermore, I learned how to survive difficult times and how to enjoy good times. I evolved my strategies of absorbing pressure and de-stressing plans and procedures.*

The difficulty in finding a self-identify and then later justifying chosen identities is a way for the second generation to come to terms with transnational belonging. They are feeling that one identity by itself does not really fully satisfy the principle of who they are or what they believe. The process of defining the self in such a way that accurately reflects emotional connection and symbolic belonging is influenced by external social factors; the process of self-representation varies according to individuals and groups in two countries (Somerville 2008:27). The second-generation returnees sustain mixed or double identities in order to connect themselves simultaneously to more than one country.

Some of the Iraqi Kurd returnees feel emotional attachment and belonging to their family and friends in diaspora countries and at the same time they promote their ties to their parents' country of origin as a way to express these connections. These transnational connections indicate an effort to express a social identity that is forged between the diaspora and parents' home country, and which expresses inclusion in both simultaneously. The second-generation returnees combine multiple attachment and emotional affiliation to people, place and traditions in different countries in deciphering their individual and collective belonging.

### 5.4.3 Personal /unaffiliated identity

Although they were fewer in number than those whose stated identity was Kurdish, it is interesting to note that all the interviewees claiming unaffiliated identities were born in the Eighties. Coincidentally, their principal reason for return was the development of Kurdistan and they had discordant senses of home and belonging. However, the reasons for personal identities differed. For example, Darya expressed:

*The decision of returning to Kurdistan did not impact my identity. As a national identity, I view my identity as one thing. I am a Kurd who lived in England. I am a person who must establish my own identity, and I am at an age that it takes a little more time to make people know me. Identity is individual, it is not fair to give someone an identity depending on their surroundings, and the person should be able to choose their own identities. My identity is not pertaining to home. For me they are two different things.*

*Some of the second generation declared that they have a double-identity or triple-identity for they were in Iran for a long time due to political problems then they went to Europe, but my identity belongs to my personality, it belongs to my individual self. My identity belongs to me, no one can affect it. If I think of national identity, I am a Kurd and was born in England and grew up there, but I returned to Kurdistan. As a national and geographical identity, these have some effects on my individual identity, but it is not my full and genuine identity, it is a part of my identity.*

Similarly, Dashti refuses an identity bound by geography (location) and instead opts to define a self-identity. Further examination of Dashti's view of identity shows awareness of potential misinterpretation of double or multiple identities. Dashti refuses to be associated with double or multiple identities in any way. The feeling of identity as an incarcerator is evident in Dashti's narrative:

*I personally refuse to have a solid identity, this makes nervousness and violence in nationality, in religion, in philosophy, or in ideologies of political parties. I do not believe in that. People must be flexible and view every dimension of various identities. They should receive what they think is suitable and adapt it, and freely distance themselves from what they are not interested in. In my opinion my identity is my thoughts. My identity is neither this passport in my pocket, nor the past I was living here, nor the plans which I will pursue in the future. My identity is my thoughts, my current thoughts, which specify my personality.*

*I do not have double identities. I heard so many people who had double and multiple identities, but for me it is different. The focus is on the issues and situations of Kurdistan, but even in Holland there were some cultures and customs which I was against and wanted to be improved. I suggest it is better to establish your personal identity, every individual must establish their own personal identities. It is not in your power where you were born, grew up, or where you lived, it is your thoughts that fill your profile.*

Waja is also uncomfortable with the idea of a single territory-based identity and refutes the notion of double or multiple identities applying to her. The claim of an amorphous, personal identity is further cemented by her marriage to an Englishman. She argues:

*I do not have double or multiple identities. I was born in England and married an Englishman, but I am from Sulaimani. How can one condemn me to being English because I have British documents and children and a husband born in Britain? I disagree with being Kurdish because I am free to craft my own identity the best way it suits me and in the circumstances. I will never be purely English or purely Kurdish or*

*purely Iraqi or Iranian or Syrian, although I have experienced all of them. I am my own identity and I will remain that way.*

#### **5.4.4 Transnational Identity**

Evidence suggests that the lives of first-generation immigrants have been forged within and across national borders; however, the lives of their children are less directly tied to the parents' homeland (Chams: 2015). The way how these second-generation negotiate their identities, and the importance they attach to transnational ties is less clear. Researchers, who have conducted empirical work on the transnational trends of the second-generation, have produced contrasting conclusions on the matter (Chams: 2015). My research aims to clarify the factors that encourage transnational identities and involvement among second-generation Iraqi Kurd returnees in diaspora countries. My research reveals particular patterns of transnational connections that indicate the need to rethink the scope of the concept.

The second-generation Iraqi Kurds' visits to their parental homeland is an example of transnational spaces. My interviewees' stories point out that the second generation visited their parental homeland once a year with their parents during the summer holidays. "The second generation grew up hearing their parents talk about their ancestral land, they take part in activities which reflect their cultural heritage and some have even spent time in their parents' country of origin, while others have not" (Uwase 2014: 31). My research participants narrate in my study their experiences which transcend national boundaries; they have been exposed to different lifestyles and social backgrounds which redefine how they view themselves and others around them. The following statements are their responses to whether or not they have ever visited their parents' home countries.

Darya states:

*Every year we visited Kurdistan once or twice since 1997. We visited our relatives. I have so many friends here, and relatives. I spent a nice time being with my relatives. So, they were very sweet to us and all of them made us feel like we were at home.*

*At the beginning, my expectations were over fulfilled in every respect. When I returned to Kurdistan annually on a trip, all the times were spent in visiting our relatives and on invitations. I did not go to downtown to those giant projects that have been finished in Kurdistan, new restaurants, new entertainment parks, new hotels etc... Every week people went out to entertain themselves. I saw a kind of social life that I could not see in one hundred years if I stayed in England. However, when the recent economic crisis occurred, the situation was completely opposite.*

Dashti's story about his visit to parental homeland is the following:

*We returned to Kurdistan for a summer holiday in 2004. One time, there was one of our friend's weddings. It could be considered as a social visit. Once again, I returned in 2010. In time, I graduated from university, I came back to find out whether it is suitable to come back and live in Kurdistan or not. It was a year of orientation. I did not stay for the whole year, but I stayed for more than one month. I visited university; I spoke with my old friends and relatives.*

Second-generation Iraqi Kurds describe their visits to their parental homeland as a feeling of being at home and having an emotional connection with their family. Visiting family means that they are among different people, but a bond exists between them because they are relatives. Lanja describes her feeling of visiting as a good experience.

She states that:

*It was a great feeling when we returned to Kurdistan, because we viewed Kurdistan as a trip. We were never in the real life of Kurdistan. We always returned with a group of people who were similar to our background. We did not have any interaction with other people. When you live in the daily routines, it is different. Moreover, those people whom you saw in your trips, they are different when you live with them. Unlike when you stay for one or two weeks, we expected to have a few changes to our trips to Kurdistan. We expected a different way of life, especially as my father was in a high rank, and we assumed our lifestyle would be different. Besides, we were the first family who decided to return to Kurdistan and did not come back to Europe.*

All my participants described their relationships to the family and the emotional bonds of family membership as a part of their transnationality. Their expression of emotional connections determines their transnational being, because the actual relationships of emotional bonding are absent. The emotionally grounded family relationships that exist with their parents are instrumentally extended to their transnational relatives. There is also a practical side to the second generation's family membership. They must conform to family rules and expected behaviours. What the participants say about expected behaviours highlights the differences between their diaspora lives and their experiences in the parental homeland. As a result of being raised up in a diaspora society, some of my participants, as highlighted in a previous chapter, experienced disappointment upon arrival in their parents' home country. The idealized impression of the homeland came face to face with the existing reality of what life is really like back home. Some of my participants, especially those who returned from neighbouring countries, had never experienced visits to their parents' home country due to ongoing problems in the countries of diaspora. However, "transnational life

does not only cross boundaries created by nation states, it is an expression of a heterogeneous global identity connecting norms, values and ideologies without attaching them to a specific geographical location” (Uwase 2014:33). However, many second-generation Iraqi Kurds felt a very strong bond to their parental homeland through their parents.

#### **5.4.5 The passing of intergenerational identities**

This section aims to demonstrate some of the ways in which intergenerational identities are passed on and how these result at times in intergenerational struggles. Second-generation Iraqi Kurd returnees narrated that they first learned about their homeland from their family and especially from their parents, but also from other family members in the diaspora country. For many, these memories provided them with an idealized picture of their homeland as they were growing up in diaspora countries and helped them to form their Kurdish identity.

In the ideal conception, ‘home’ is a geographical and social area where one feels at home and upon which one’s identity is based, a place where one’s family and friends live and where security, social warmth and a strong connection to the soil are experienced. These ideal qualities call upon many characteristics that the contemporary Kurdistan Regional Government fails to offer to their second-generation returnees. Return, as experienced by my research participants, was a ‘mixed feeling’, surrounding feelings of anticipation, nostalgia and excitement but also disappointment and sadness. The second generation who experienced mixed feelings about their return are those who planned the return themselves as an autonomous decision or some who decided to return with their families. Some of my participants saw the return as an ‘adventure’. There are also the cases in which the second generation felt disillusioned at first, but in time they found out that they ‘belonged to’ their home country.



However, they still highlight the negative part of their lives in the KRG region. For example, they complain about discrimination and exclusion in their job, social life and setting up a business.

This section will present narratives to summarise the main elements of the second generation's identity crisis in the diasporic and transnational setting, imaginings of homeland and intergenerational identity after their return and self-reflection on their identities and belonging. Zhwan's expectations of the return in terms of their social life in Kurdistan were unfulfilled. The narration below explains this more explicitly:

*We have some expectations in returning to Kurdistan, to have a future here, to be with our family and relatives, and to have a good social life. Since my mother was the first child, and has only one brother, she related to her mother considerably. Her one wish was to return to her mother, both to improve our social life and to have a good future. She expected our studies would be much easier in Kurdistan, especially in college. In Iran it was very hard, you must wait for some years before you are employed, and as to my parents they were financially unsecured. Besides, the situation was very unstable, and they mistreated the Kurds. All these reasons led us to return and expect to have a good life, socially and economically, for they thought they might find a steady job in Kurdistan.*

Although Darya's expectations were high, the situation in Kurdistan proved more difficult than anticipated. Despite the difficulties encountered, the patriotic Darya would rather remain in the troubled Kurdistan and contribute towards its restoration than go back to England or Lebanon, where life was better and the jobs paid better wages than in Kurdistan. The paradoxical lamentation about the choice between re-emigrating to England or staying on in Kurdistan manifests in the narrative below:

*The situation in Kurdistan is terrible and it will be probably be worse compared to 2013 and a decade before. The economic crisis has an impact on every Kurdish individual. I cannot say that I did not think of returning to Europe.*

*I keep thinking of it, but as a person I cannot leave something incomplete, because I faced some challenges and difficulties. One should attempt in the face of hardship and find a solution instead of quitting. I decided to finish all the things, which I intended to do before returning to Kurdistan. I could not quit in the middle of things.*

*I often thought about quitting and returning to Europe. If I return to Europe with my current CV, my salary will be 20 times more than the amount I receive here. My life will be much more convenient there, I will have my own freedom. Here it is different. I do not have that freedom I wanted in the first place. I did not come back for money or anything else, I came back due to patriotism, because I want to fulfil my duties toward Kurdistan. When I was in Lebanon, I also had a better salary than here. Currently when the situation of Kurdistan deteriorates, I cannot leave Kurdistan and refuse my responsibilities.*

Rawa's expectations:

*I had some expectations on returning to Kurdistan. I always asked my friends and relatives to what degree Kurdistan has changed. They always declared that Kurdistan is better now, it has been changed considerably, the Kurdish people have changed, which made have some expectations. I stayed tuned in to the Kurdish channels, on TV and the internet. I wanted to know what made Kurdistan better. I felt that the people had changed educationally. In every respect, Kurdistan had developed and changed a lot. But when I returned, it did not fulfil my expectations. Everything was different when it came to reality. I was shocked to feel the difference between what I learned*

*and heard from my parents while in exile about the significant changes politically, financially and socially, among the native population living in my local city of Sulaimani. Furthermore, following social media, TV channels and journals, specially of the opposition parties, mainly of the Change-Goran movement, I hoped that these would have a great impact on people's way of thinking and their approach to life. My expectation was wrong and I faced a different reality.*

Second-generation Iraqi Kurds faced difficulties in term of finding a job due to the lack of social networks in their parental homelands. In their community back home, finding a job, setting up a business, all rely on social connections, without which it is extremely difficult to get things done. Dashti's narration about his experience was the following:

*When you came back for a week or two, in a week's time you can never find out the exact life until you live it. I had some general expectations about politics and the economy which were fulfilled, but in the details of life, thinking and behaviour, you don't find out any of these until you live in the situation. I did not have any expectations about those issues. It was like a blank paper which needs to be filled gradually. The idea of serving my nation and country was uppermost in me making my decision. I totally forgot that I had changed a lot since leaving Iraq. The country was also different and local people had altered too. My main goal controlled and influenced [my decision] more than looking into the details. Trying to be positive and looking at the constructive and good points only affected me making the right decision, which I still don't regret.*

*Back in Holland I felt that local people are pleased and grateful to someone like me who suffered a lot and worked very hard to become a pharmacist and help in looking after people living in Holland.*

*I felt people were happy and pleased for me to contribute positively in the community. Unfortunately, in contrast, I felt that my homeland citizens were not very welcoming and rather felt that I was competing with them in job opportunities. From another aspect, it was not easy to practice pharmacy or my profession alongside teaching at university with the same principles I acquired over here during my training. This was another hurdle which I never thought about as I was making my final resolution about returning. Finally, as time went on, I realised that I had started to wake up from a dream and started to be conscious about the reality and the challenges. As time goes by, you start to understand that you have to adapt rather than expecting others to do it. You have to alter rather than expecting others to change, hoping that you can add something new without making people feel bad. I started to apprehend the locals' sensitivity and accommodate their feelings. I am happy that I have attained some of my goals and succeeded in helping to relocate some of my experience to help my nation and country.*

For some of my participants who previously had high-status jobs in their settlement country, it was surprising and frustrating for them that they found it difficult to get equivalent employment on their return. Interestingly, many interviewees' stories about their life upon their return and how recruitment in the current region operates, indicates that discrimination is predominant. Second-generation Iraqi Kurds returning from neighbouring countries and European countries, especially those considering long-term return, experienced disappointment and dissatisfaction about their life in the KRG region. But despite their feelings of disappointment some of them decided to stay in the region and contribute to building and rebuilding their region and community.

Darya's narrative furthermore states that:

*In years to come, I would love to look back and remember my role in this progression. I believe that Kurdistan has great potential, especially knowing that it is an oil-rich area. I feel that we need a non-corrupt administration, which will implement more transparency and use the country's resources more wisely. I, therefore, strongly feel that our knowledge and professions are very much needed in this period of time. I think the region lacks expertise and skills in different specialities, hence I am very positive about myself and others returning to Kurdistan. Although I face barriers and obstacles in my daily work and daily life, I am optimistic about my input in the community from a professional and a social point of view. I am also happy to work with some friends in a similar situation, who have returned and re-integrated at different levels and have contributed to society. We meet on a regular basis and share our daily experience and ideas and help each other in finding solutions to overcome barriers. We also discuss methods and techniques for better involvement with local people and introduce each other to newly acquaintances and colleagues".*

Saza, who was brought up in Germany, went back to the KRG region because her father was living there and her mother decided to go back so that the whole family would be together. She claims that: 'My father, mother and close relatives always used to talk to us about their homeland and their nice memories about it.' History, memories and myths about life in the homeland and about the values that it represents are repeatedly told as a mantra and 'often become parts of family lore'. Nevertheless, parents also want their children to assimilate into mainstream society and cope with the situations in which they find themselves, because they want their children to succeed. Zhwan, who was raised in Iran, narrates that:

*My mother expected our study would be much easier in Kurdistan, especially in college. In Iran it was very hard. My grandmother helped me to befriend two girls in school, where she taught Kurdish language. Although they were not in my class and older than me, in the breaks she told them to take care of me. And we have contact to this day. Now I love them more than my new friends, they helped me so much. I was very energetic and social, but gradually with the help of my family, who assisted me in entering a new social life, I made some friends and learnt the language. Now I have abundant friends. I also have contact with my childhood friends in Iran via social media, especially Facebook. We speak in Persian and Kurdish, since we know Kurdish people as well. So I speak Kurdish with them too.*

Among second-generation returnees from neighbouring countries their parents perceived that they would have better educational opportunities in the host country compared to the diaspora countries. On the other hand, parents are also fear that their children forget about their culture and their roots and become too westernised. According to Kebede “this is one major factor that distinguishes the 1.5-generation from the second. Those who are born in the host countries may have a less stressful relationship with their parents because of fewer cultural expectations and their capacity to move effortlessly between the ‘home’ and ‘host’ cultures. For the 1.5-generation children, in contrast, there is a higher expectation that they will be able to juggle both cultures and this becomes central in their life, since it is often a question of a real necessity for the survival of their relationship with their parents” (Kebede 2010:17). Far from a countable process, intergenerational identity was found to be complex and fragmented. Its features appear to be changing over time, involving redefinitions of concepts, values and practices and of their importance, by both parents and children. Intergenerational transmission is largely conditioned by parents’ capital and discrimination in the host society.

## 6. Conclusion

This research seeks to address the multifaceted aspects in which notions of ‘return’, ‘home, belonging and identity’ can be examined and experienced in a migratory context, through the voices and life-narratives of second-generation Iraqi Kurdish returnees. The vast majority of Iraqi Kurds in Europe and neighbouring countries are second-generation refugees. They have grown up in a very different environment to that of their parents and they have had a greater range of opportunities in exile compared to those of their generation who remained in Iraq during the prolonged years of war.

The main sources of information were the life-story narratives, delivering direct and often well-articulated understandings from the lives of the second-generation Iraqi Kurdish returnees. As I think has been obvious, the life-narratives were significantly rich, with details often expanding beyond the focus of my research. I have attempted to take up those elements and themes that characterised the narratives as a whole, whilst staying true to the individual stories (and the words they consist of). One of my key aims was to avoid making assumptions about my participants in advance, both in light of their parents’ migration histories as well as the wider literature on second-generation ‘return’ migration.

Domestic political players and external powers – in particular, Iraq, Turkey, Iran and Syria – have variously battled for control of the territory, using different readings of history to justify their claims (Taylor 2009). None of the neighbouring countries recognize the region controlled by the Kurdistan Regional Government as an independent state. Furthermore, even though the international community respect the special circumstances of this region and have established a notable and exceptional economic, military, and political relationship, the world has insisted that the time has not come yet to declare the dreamed of independent state.

This was evident during the reaction of the world towards Kurdish attempts to declare an independent state in September 2017.

Instead of gaining more autonomy, the regional and global powers have re-confirmed that they support a strong, powerful and united Iraq. Almost a century of instability in this part of the world has left people with uncertainty and led to constant movement in and out of Kurdistan depending on political, economic and security factors. Many of those who were displaced or moved outside Kurdistan have created a new life in the diaspora and raised a new family in exile. This new generation who were born, grown up, educated and worked in a host country can be called second-generation refugees.

The termination of the political institutions of Baathist Iraq in spring 2003 filled most Kurds with new hope for democratic processes in the aftermath of human rights violations and war. The political and economic limbo, imposed on the Kurdistan Region in 1991, has also finally ended. After years of suppression, fighting and the struggle for self-rule, the time for Kurds, especially those who have lived for years in exile, has come to contribute to developing a democratic state. For many, this new situation was a chance to transfer years of experience, education and professional skills to re-build their stateless home. As far as the Kurdish diaspora is concerned, these changes have refreshed the dream of returning for many Iraqi Kurds. Following the establishment of Kurdish *de facto* self-rule in 1991, many Kurds returned to socialise with families and friends, get married or engage in the reconstruction process (Emanuelsson 2008: 5).

This forced migration brought to the foreground deliberations on the meaning of home, belonging and Identity for second generation returnees. The view of this generation regarding their roots or national belonging, as well as their connections, networks and links with the host community is significantly different from their parents.



Moreover, the way these young immigrants view their homeland and the factors motivating them to return are remarkably different from the first generation. Hence, in the last 20 years researchers have tried to explore and highlight the variation in the parameters between these two groups. However, the perspective of first-generation refugees are more common than those studies looking into the experiences of second generation refugees and their perspective regarding host and home countries.

In an attempt to capture the experiences of second-generation Iraqi Kurds returning to the KRG region, narratives from 20 (N = 20) interviewees of both genders were analysed and discussed. The following sections will illustrate the key points of my research's findings:

## **6.1 Motivations for second-generation Iraqi Kurds to return to the KRG region**

My first research question, which was focused on the factors motivating Kurdish returnee migration back to Kurdistan, is sophisticated and too complex to be captured by single theories. Factors which influenced or stimulated young Kurdish migrants to return 'home' were a mixture of personal, social, political and financial reasons. This combination of internal and external grounds interacted to formulate the basis upon which interviewees made their final decision to return. Without refuting the role of social networks in the factors motivating returnee migration back to Kurdistan, the findings of this research complement the arguments by Keles, which indicate that 'social networks are social fields and each social field accepts only members with similar taste, social and political interests, culture, and class background and so on' (2016: 11). Social networks, therefore, are not entirely inclusive, but also associative and exclusive, thereby rendering such networks discriminatory and selective.

This research has connected the constructions of 'home', 'belonging' and 'identity' to the second generation's return journey by investigating their motivations and desires to return, including their lack of agency in contributing to the return decision in many cases, and

their experiences post-return. One of the findings illustrated that the second generation often faced isolation in their first and second years in their parental homeland. One interesting finding of this research is that participants had more than one reason to return to Kurdistan. Although one factor might have dominated others, the combination of all of them contributed towards making an eventual decision.

Summarising the motivations for the returnees resulted in the development of four themes. First, some returnees returned to Kurdistan to reconnect with family members that were still in Kurdistan and to re-establish social relations with neighbours and friends in Kurdistan. The second factor of return was political and involved motivation by the Iraqi government. For example, the Iraqi government offered incentives for returnees including money to help them rebuild Iraq and Kurdistan upon return, or the offer of employment. Furthermore, the fall of the Saddam Hussein regime also inspired optimism in Kurds in foreign lands that Kurdistan had become safer and peaceful enough for them to return. This did not always turn out to be the case. The third set of reasons for return can be classified under hostility and discrimination (exclusion) in settlement countries. This exclusion cultivated a desire to be accepted and Kurdistan seemed to be the best choice at the time. Again, their expectations were not always met upon returning to Kurdistan only to realise they did not fit in properly. The fourth theme was patriotism and nationalism. Mainly, this factor of return comprised the urge to come back and contribute to developing Kurdistan. Most of those who come under this category were younger people who lived in Europe or nearby countries and had gained a wide range of experience in different aspect of life academically and professionally. These people were stimulated by a hope of sharing their experience to help to develop the devastated infra-structure of Kurdistan. For each participant, return was encouraged by individual circumstances.

My overall examination shows that most were drawn to the KRG region for pragmatic reasons. Additionally, it is hard to identify a single reason for everyone, and motivating factors have interacted with each other in each interview either consciously or subconsciously. However, I have highlighted the main elements for return from the second-generation point of view.

The first generation's desire to return back to their homeland and leave the host country is presumed to be essentially based on a desire to go back to their roots. Meanwhile, the second generation's return, especially in the case of my research, usually has other predominant and mostly personal reasons. However, as mentioned before, despite the social element being the main reason for returnees to go back home to Kurdistan, only a small number of my participants made a direct connection between parental return narratives and their own desire to return. The most dominant argument of second-generation Iraqi Kurdish returnees was a desire for a better (or different) quality of life in terms of safety and pace of life.

What made the KRG region the obvious choice for second-generation Iraqi Kurds was the combination of the desired qualities of life, *plus* a familiar environment, in terms of 'culture', language and geography. However, such pull factors are significantly different from the feelings of nostalgia or the essential longing to go back to one's 'roots' often mentioned in other studies on second-generation return migration (for instance, Phillips and Potter 2009; Wessendorf 2007). Finally, this research revealed that the return theories that were designed for the first-generation migrants, cannot be analysed for the second-generation Iraqi Kurds returnees and that is, mainly because the second generation's understanding of 'home', 'belonging' and 'identity' is more vague compared to the first-generation. On the other hand, the main narratives of return of second-generation Turkish returnees from Germany were three: return as a family decision, return through marriage, and return as self-

realization (Kilinc 2014). Furthermore, Teerling's research about the return of British-born Cypriots to Cyprus indicates that the factors of returning home are varied.

Some were pulled by the warm welcome they experienced during their childhood visits or remembered from family stories, whilst others returned for more practical reasons, like to join a partner. Many believe that Cyprus provides a better and safer environment to raise a family; hence children often played an important role in the migration decision. For most, however, the decision was based on a unique combination of factors, in order to reach a better quality of life for themselves and their loved ones. In this sense, again, many commonalities can be found with second-generation Greek-Cypriot returnees (Teerling 2010).

Similarly, in this study more than half of my participants stated social elements as their reason for returning home. However, this was mixed mainly with a feeling of national pride and a strong desire to serve their own nation and their own Kurdistan. The analysis of my data indicates that for the second generation who have taken the decision to return to the KRG region, this migration is facilitated through the family networks and capitals which are created and sustained through family relationships. It is these family networks which make the difference between the dream or intention to return and the actual reality of doing so. Another factor influencing return among second generation Iraqi Kurds returnees was the economic benefits.

Like German-born Turkish or British-born Cypriots, second-generation Kurdish returnees have made their way back because of social factors. These were mainly related to themselves directly and sometimes to their parents. Social bonding and connection with their roots and relatives were the main basis or ground for returning. It seems that these families never lost their connection with home. In the last few years with the help of technologies, communication has become significantly easier and refugees have had a better link to their families in Kurdistan.

This helped to increase attachment and provide a better understanding of the current developing situation in Iraq and Kurdistan. Furthermore, in the last few years social media, TV and radio stations have better reflected the conditions of daily living. All of these factors have significantly strengthened the association between Kurdish second-generation refugees and home and were, therefore, the main basis of returning.

The superiority and dominance of social factors in combination with patriotic feelings can be explained by the sociology of the Kurdish individual and their personality as well as the cultural and historical components. The social networks among Kurdish people in exile, at home, and between the two is remarkably powerful. Added to these strong emotional and social feelings, the sense of marginalization in the Middle East historical and politically has maintained a robust patriotic affection which contributed in producing a significant desire for return. On the other hand, the other outstanding finding of my research is reflected in the interviews of the the other half of my contributors in whom non-social factors like the political situation and the living conditions in host countries were the main component for making the decision to return.

Like Caribbean migrants in the UK (Reynolds 2008), some second-generation Kurdish refugee were unable to build a network in the host community. Although most of them graduated or qualified in host countries, they were unhappy and not satisfied with the progression in their professional life. Moreover, they felt excluded and unable to actively contribute to the community. On the other hand, the participants in this research whose families asked for asylum in Iran and who were born and brought up there, had suffered a lot and felt oppressed while living in exile in the Islamic Republic of Iran. This is mainly a result of political history in the region and freedom fighting between Kurds from one side, with Turks, Arabs, and Iranian on the other side. Similar feelings did not exist among Afghans who sometimes felt at home while staying in Iran (Saito 2007).

I consider this an exceptional finding in my research. Kurdish second-generation immigrants shared the same sense of dissatisfaction with their Caribbean peers in relation to professional development in host country. However, my interviewees – particularly those who stayed in the neighbouring countries, namely Iran – were marginalized, unable to integrate in the host society, and were unable to establish a bond in the new community. My participants felt unsafe, unhappy and were always looking for an opportunity to return home. This is clearly explained by the unique political history of this stateless nation.

Another interesting outcome of this study is that I found that second generation Kurdish refugees are unique in their decision to return for patriotic, political or national reasons. This patriotic feeling among my interviewees is very strong compared to any other group of second-generation refugees. Added to this is the change in the political situation in Iraq, particularly Kurdistan after 2003. This is the other important factor for return and an exceptional finding of my study. It is obvious that the apparent political dilemma in the Kurd's history and the lack of an independent state was the main cause for forming or growing national feeling among the second generation, started to think of returning after the political change in Iraq in 2003. Similarly, second generation Afghans had the same motivation for returning to Afghanistan after the toppling of the Taliban regime by the USA and its allies (Sianto 2007). However, unlike Kurds, second generation Afghans living in Europe, mainly the UK and Germany, were less keen to return. Pragmatic consideration was more likely to outweigh any other nostalgic yearning for homeland. The need for safety, better education for their children, electricity, running water, and medical care were more likely to be fulfilled in the host country. For Afghans, return is more like a nightmare than a dream. There was more interest in return and contribution to the process of re-building from those who are able to come back to Europe without endangering their residential status in the host country.

Even those who shown a desire to go back and live in the homeland, would prefer to do it with a European passport safely tucked in their pocket (Braakman & Shlemkhoff 2007). In contrast, Kurdish national feeling was sustained among Kurdish second-generation refugees, in both neighbouring and European countries.

In summary, maintaining social connections and the national sentiment and the desire to-rebuild the stateless diaspora of Kurdistan were among the main reasons and motivations for return. Furthermore, second-generation Kurdish refugees never lost their attachment to their roots. The development of different channels for communication through a variety of TV satellite channels, radio stations, and social media, has further facilitated constructing this network for the second generation in a way that was lacking many years ago for their parents. Moreover, the establishment of powerful patriotic consciousness is mainly rooted in political and historical events in the Middle East over the last hundred years, which have always left Kurdish people marginalized and alone, yet more determined to strengthen their belonging to a stateless Kurdistan. In addition, the significant change in the political, social and economic situation in Iraq in general and Kurdistan particularly after 2003, when the Saddam regime was rejected was also an important turning point for Kurdish second-generation refugees to reassess their viewpoint and seriously think of returning home.

## **6.2 Notions of ‘home’ and ‘belonging’**

My other research questions addressed notions of home and belonging. My participants define home through the lens of their parents, adding a generational dimension to their understanding of the meaning of ‘home’. There was a tension between the concept of ‘home’ and ‘homeland’. What does it then mean to call a place ‘home’? In terms of theory, this study contributes to conceptualizations of home and an understanding of a sense of belonging among second-generation Iraqi Kurd returnees.

The distinction between diaspora as ‘home’ and the Kurdistan Regional Government region as ‘homeland’ indicates that, for second-generation Kurds, belonging to one does not rule out belonging to the other. To some extent, this is reflective of the social realities in which these young people are surrounded. The second-generation social environment is within the boundaries of the diaspora countries. But it also includes a relationship with the home country that provides feelings of belonging, both concretely through visits, but also emotionally through family networks and memories.

Participants are returning to a home they have never lived in before and their experiences and expectations are different. They have strong obligations to the homeland, as a particular national place. Some of them returned because they feel a commitment towards the homeland, the obligation of participating in re-construction and establishing a connection to their roots. This feeling has motivated second generation Kurds to bypass some pragmatic obstacles to their return, like lower salaries, deficiency in some of basic necessities and luxury items.

Regarding home and belonging, the overarching sense was that most second-generation Iraqi Kurdish returnees indicated that Kurdistan is home to them and that they had a sense of belonging in Kurdistan. Similar findings of belonging were illustrated in a study among British-born Caribbeans returning to the Caribbean. These young people had a strong attachment culturally and spiritually to the Caribbean (Reynolds 2008). In the same way, Kurdish second-generation returnees had a very strong feeling of connection to their homeland while in exile and after returning. Particularly, almost all of those who lived in neighbouring countries, namely Iran, had stronger and intense feeling of attachment. This is in contrast to Afghans who sometimes felt more at home while in Iran (Saito 2007). In the same way, the majority of second-generation Kurdish refugees living in exile in European cities, felt a stronger belonging to their own community rather than the host one.



However, there were also those who were confused about where home was for them, to the extent that they considered themselves as having multiple homes. Some of the returnees felt that Kurdistan was home but they did not belong to Kurdistan, especially those that had spent many years away. Research by Crul and Schneider (2010) looked into diversity of participation and belonging of second-generation Moroccan refugees in different European cities. In their study they found variable feeling of belonging among second generation refugees, while Moroccan young people were more attached to their own community than the national community in the Netherlands. However, this picture was reversed in the neighbouring country of Spain as second-generation Moroccans were more connected to the host community. Crul and Schneider concluded that this diversity is related to the behaviour of host people towards refugees in these European societies. Therefore, in cities like Amsterdam, where locals were hostile towards Moroccans, root attachment was stronger. In contrast, in cities like Madrid where local people were welcoming towards Moroccans, young refugees had a stronger sense of belonging to Spain. The study concluded that education, housing, religion and legislation had an impact on the feeling of attachment for second generation refugees. Moreover, it showed that the second generation who had entered university education had a stronger connection with the host community (Crul and Schneider 2010).

Crul and Schneider's findings differed from my research to some extent as those living in a neighbouring country (Moroccans in Spain) had more attachment to the host communities compared to those living in Europe, whereas in my research participants had a stronger sense of belonging to Kurdistan whilst living in Iran and a more mixed feeling of attachment whilst they were living in European countries. Similar findings were revealed for Afghans living in Iran, who sometimes had a sense of home while in Iran (Saito 2007).

My finding is possibly explained by the historical relationship between Kurdistan and Kurdish people and the neighbouring countries. Despite fleeing to Iran, Iraqi Kurds did not on the whole feel safe there and were unlikely to feel attachment to the host community, because of a belief that this part of Kurdistan is being occupied by Iran. In contrast, the second generation felt safer and more connected in European cities. Moreover, the Iraqi Kurdish second generation seemed to lack any chance for progression professionally or in education in the neighbouring countries compared to wider opportunities in Europe. This also explains the difference in feeling of belonging of Kurds in Europe and nearby states.

Kurdish second-generation migrants behaved the same way their peers did when the host community welcomed them or showed hostility towards them. This is reflected by them connecting better to a host society when they were embraced by it and having negative feelings to the host society and being more attached to the homeland when local people showed hostility. However, a key finding of this research is the feelings of Kurdish migrants towards the host community, whilst in exile in nearby country, namely a sense of hostility towards Iran felt by the Kurdish second generation compared to the feelings expressed by Moroccans or Afghans towards their neighbouring host countries of Spain and Iran. This original finding adds to an understanding of second-generation Kurdish refugees due to the unusual circumstances of their home nation and its position among its rival neighbours.

However, another interesting study explored the sense of belonging among diasporic African communities in Northern England showed that the second generation had variable feeling of belonging towards their homeland. The article, which looked into the feeling of attachment in both first- and second-generation Sudanese, Somalians, Zimbabweans and Kenyans found that they experienced a feeling of ‘plurilocal homes, stretched attachment and multiple identities’ (Waite and Cook 2011: 13).

Some second-generation Africans felt more comfort and strategic usefulness in their original countries during occasional visits to their homeland. However, a significant number were confused and dislocated with more intense negotiations of insider and outsider belongings in multicultural United Kingdom. Such feelings left some more isolated and struggling to associate with the host country. However, they were more comfortable in their 'locally oriented belongings' which valued some elements of their identity i.e. religious identifications (Waite and Cook 2011: 13).

Similarly, second-generation Kurdish refugees who returned from different European cities had a contested sense of attachment. Although some would say they still belong to their root country Kurdistan, most had confused or disputed feelings. For the majority a feeling of dual belonging strongly existed. Moreover, some had no attachment to either host or original country and did not have a desire to make a choice between the two. Furthermore, for some it was very hard to declare where home is and this created an internal conflict which was impossible to solve. This mixed feeling of belonging to home and host nations was shared between second-generation refugees in this study and other research. This is especially the case for those immigrants born, raised and living in Europe, who sometimes expressed a confused attachment and a difficulty to identify an intense belonging to one location or another. For others, this caused them to reject the need for a distinctive attachment.

On the other hand, second generation Afghan refugees behaved like their Kurdish peers who lived in Europe in exile. According to an article published in 2007, second generation Afghans living in the United Kingdom and Germany were confused about their belonging. (Braakman & Shlemkhoff 2007). Younger refugees clashed with their parents when identifying their own culture and inheriting the culture of their parents. Younger Afghans built wider network with their local and national community, compared to older

members of their family, as they tried to come to terms with their identity and seek a sense of belonging. (Braakman & Shlemkhoff 2007).

Furthermore, similar to some of my participants living in Europe, Tamil second-generation refugees who lived in Switzerland have developed a dual sense of belonging (Hess & Korff 2014). Most of them have witnessed a brutal civil war in Northern Sri-Lanka which has lasted for decades. This has pushed young Tamils to acknowledge their roots and to build up a strong connection with both host and local societies, as they become political activists in exile (Hess & Korff 2014). The similarity between the participants of this compelling study and my study is possibly related to a similar historical and political background. Both Kurds and Tamils have been struggling for decades for self-rule, autonomy and self-determination. Years of fighting and blood shed between Tamils and Sri-Lankans on one side and Kurds with Iraq, Iran, and Turkey on the other side, has had a similar impact on the way of thinking and behaviour of second-generation refugees of these two nations and on their feeling towards both host and original land.

Finally, the construction of homeland for second-generation Iraqi Kurds returning to the KRG was through cultural memory (e.g. lived experiences in Kurdistan, childhood experiences in Kurdistan and visits to Kurdistan), transnationalism and communicative memory (stories from family and relations in Kurdistan). In relation to the notions of home and belonging, four themes were identified concerning the identity of second-generation Iraqi Kurds returning to the KRG region. First, some identified as Kurdish by choice. Second, others had mixed/double identities combining Kurdish identity and that of their country of settlement. Third, there were those that did not identify as Kurdish and equally did not point to any non-territory- or territory-based identity. The fourth theme associated with identity was perhaps the most interesting result of this research. Some returnees stated that their

identities were personal and they had no affiliation to place or language. Instead their identity was personal to them and they had the freedom to sustain or alter it at will.

Finally, the results of this study underscore the notion that home, belonging and identity have strong influences on each other, although identity was more contained to the self than to other factors such as place or heritage.

It should be pointed out that the background and history of Kurdish migrants present a specific dynamic to home-making processes. I have claimed that second-generation Iraqi Kurds returnees' life story experience vary dramatically from the first generations' experiences. Another significant finding is that, according to my participants, no country can be said to give everything Iraqi Kurdish returnees desire, in the sense of a home which meets all of their social, cultural and economic needs, even if some countries come closer to this ideal than others. However, it is possible to say that the diaspora consists of multiple 'homes': there is the original homeland of Kurdistan which for some people no longer represents home, but has instead become the place of origin; there is home in the sense of a place which fulfils a person's practical needs such as education or a place to work; there is also home in the sense of a preferred final destination whether it be the original homeland of Kurdistan or another country; and there is home in the sense of a place whose culture best expresses Kurdish culture. Having said this, it is also clear that there is no simple link between Kurdish culture and one particular homeland for Kurds in exile.

### **6.3 Boundaries of identity for second-generation Iraqi Kurd returnees**

"Identity is a concept that features especially in return migration, combining the individual or private world with the collective space of cultural forms and social relations in the homeland(s). Identity is a product of self-consciousness and self-reflection; of both emotional and rational processes; the articulation and comprehension of a vision of both personal and

social history that motivates the homeland return. Therefore, we are confronted with identities, the imaginings of self in 'home-host' worlds of action" (Christou 2002).

Identity has been figured prominently throughout the thesis and has been classified into typology (schema of identification) and to explain how the narratives (schema of narration) express the 'who I am' in the 'where I am' Moreover, narratives of the 'there' (diaspora), the 'here' (KRG) and the 'here and there' illustrate both the 'personal plan of action' and the third space of hominess where trans hybrid identities are formed.

Investigating identity construction among second-generation Iraqi Kurdish returnees reveals their construction of identity and belonging and its relationship to their parents' 'homeland' in diaspora. In this study almost half of my candidates still had connections to the KRG region and they expressed this connection through their identity options, their relationship to the parents' homeland and their loyalty to the Kurdish community. Hence, they identified themselves as purely being Kurds. Almost all of those who perceived their origins in this way lived and were brought up in neighbouring countries, mainly the Islamic Republic of Iran. Kurdish second-generation refugees have strongly maintained their identity despite Iran's refusal to recognize this identity on either Iran or Iraq's side.

In contrast to my research, Phinney and colleagues concluded that refugees maintained their ethnic identity when the hosting community accepted diversity and respected pluralism. While, they rejected their distinctiveness, adapted to the host nation identity showed more solidarity to the nation when the host society had a negative attitude or hostility against immigrants (Phinney et al. 2001). This means, that unlike Phinney's study, Iraqi Kurd second generation returnees insisted on their identity despite getting refused by the host nation in Iran, while other refugees according to Phinney surrendered their identity and accepted the host nation's identity when the host country refused them or had negative attitude.

This study Phinney study proposes that maintaining or surrendering ethnic identity to host nation identity is determined by many factors.

It suggests that identity is based on the interaction between the attitude and the characteristic of the immigrants and the behaviour of the receiving society. Furthermore, the article suggested that the choice of identity by refugees is influenced by the interaction between specific characteristics of certain immigrant groups and the local setting, including the legislation and immigration policies adopted by the host country. Furthermore, the study explained the impact of different policies of host nations on various immigrant groups in Europe and their choice of identity. For example, the housing dispersal approach of the Finnish government and the message conveyed by the government that immigrants should act like the local people had a negative impact and enhanced separation between refugees and local people in Finland. In contrast, the Dutch government's immigrant legislation which focused on more integration, allowed more cultural practice, offered better health and educational services and language lessons for refugees had a very positive effect on the Turkish refugee community especially in deciding their identity (Phinney et al. 2001). Similar findings were illustrated by Crul and Schneider (2010), who found a robust relationship between commitment to a particular identity and the behavior of the receiving community and government.

A key finding of my research is that, while the expression of identity among second-generation Kurdish refugees living in Europe matched the findings of Phinney and colleagues (2001) and Crul and Schneider (2010), in that they either felt more Kurdish or showed a combined identity, those exiled in Iran were more determined to say that they belonged to Kurdistan and have a single identity despite experiencing hostility and sometimes even a refusal to acknowledge their original identity in the host country.

When the host community was more welcoming and showed hospitality, Kurdish second-generation immigrants manifested their identity in the same way as other young immigrants.

In contrast, those younger immigrants born or raised in the Islamic Republic of Iran and felt a reluctance from local community to let them maintain their original identity and as a result they were more determined to keep the Kurdish identity.

This important outcome of this research might be explained by the personality of resistance Kurds have developed over years of fighting for freedom and independence from Iraq, Iran, Turkey and Syria. These findings will contribute towards a better understanding of the particularities of young Kurdish immigrants' lives in the diaspora, which might stimulate other researchers to conduct further investigation into this subject. Moreover, further studies might be required to explore the different feelings of belonging and identity between second-generation Kurdish returnees from different neighbouring countries, also comparing them with returnees from variable location in Europe. Second-generation Iraqi Kurds have been building their own communication to their parents' homeland through regular phone calls and contacts with friends and family member, the internet and visits to the KRG region. Without these contacts, their identity construction would be limited to the host society context with imagined links to the KRG region.

This means, that most second-generation Iraqi returnees are attached physically and emotionally to more than one country. These findings propose that researchers should be more aware of the meanings associated with cross-border ties not only among the first generation, but also the second generation. On the other hand, for those second-generation Kurdish refugees who lived in Europe and participated in this research, they would mostly recognize or identify themselves as being Kurdish, while some have opted to say that they possess or own personal or dual identity.



A mixture feeling or even a confusing picture which is not uncommon among refugees in the exile. Interestingly, almost all these second generation Iraqi Kurds expressed themselves this way lived in European cities.

Similarly, in Waite and Cook's study of young African refugees who lived in the United Kingdom, they indicated a mixed feeling of identity. Some of them expressed a complex argument to decide where are they from (Waite and Cook 2011). According to this study, younger refugees were calling themselves British Somali or British Zimbabwean or sometimes refusing to put themselves in a certain box. A Sudanese boy said that he is from Sudan because he originated from there, however he is British because he is born here and carries a multiple identity (Waite and Cook 2011). In this study, some disclosed that they are on a continuous search for the right identity and yet they cannot find it. In the same way, second-generation Turks in Germany had equivalent emotions towards both original and host country. Personal or dual identity was more evident in those with higher education and those with more powerful networks and connections within the host community (Kilinc 2014).

Similarly, in my study interviewees expressed difficulty in identifying themselves. Some had stronger feeling towards the host country on difficult days back in Kurdistan, sometimes even re-thinking whether or not they have made the right decision in returning. Equally, they had a stronger commitment to their original identity when they were back in Europe for a visit. This study also showed a similar understanding about identity between second-generation Kurdish refugees and their peers from different minorities in European Countries.

Moreover, second generation Maghrebi (Moroccan) refugees who lived in France had difficulty in differentiating between their ethnic or original identity and their national one. Young Maghrebis had identical attachment to both the Maghreb and French communities.

Similarly, they had dual or multiple identities and powerful connections to French society. The contributors of this study were not obliged to choose between the two identities and were happier to see themselves as French as well as Maghrebi (Duchkovska 2015).

Furthermore, according to the study the second-generation immigrants (or as they called in France *enfants d'immigres* – children of immigrants, or *jeunes immigrés* – young immigrants) expressed their love of France. Also, they wanted to separate themselves from the immigration of their parents and adapt to the culture of the host society or practise a dual culture. Finally, this group of interviewees mentioned that religion had lately been a factor of exclusion in the French community, even for those who declared themselves a spiritual person who is not practicing Islam or for those who practiced the religion. However, despite this they still had a strong connection to France and a powerful attachment to French identity.

Meanwhile, Toivanen's study about Negotiating Home and Belonging Young Kurds in Finland investigating the belonging and identity of Kurdish refugees aged between 19 and 28 living in Finland, concluded that patriotic feeling among Kurds was very dominant. Furthermore, the research revealed that these young refugees had an extreme belonging to Kurdistan, described it as homeland and identified themselves as Kurd rather than Finnish (Toivanen 2014).

Similarly, Eliassi (2010) who interviewed Kurdish second-generation refugees in Sweden revealed that, like young Tamils (Hess & Korff 2014), the interviewees had strong national-Kurdish feeling, kept powerful connections with their roots and were active in politics (Toivanen 2014). Toivanen believes that this belonging to the diaspora community became prominent as a result of specific historical and political developments in the Middle East. She explains that this strong national feeling among Kurds emerged from the division of Kurdistan between four nation-states and the continuous struggle for more self-determination and independence (2014).

A similar reason was echoed in the strong attachment second-generation Kurdish refugees feel with their stateless diaspora. In contrast to my study, the second-generation refugees from South Sudan, in the Ajith study about Identity & Belonging among the First & Second Generation of South Sudanese in London, which has a similar history to Kurdistan having fought for independence from Sudan since 1955, identified themselves as more British than Sudanese (Ajith2012).

In summary, this research has shown that the Kurdish second generation have retained or kept their own identity. They are proud of being Kurdish. However, most of those who were in exile in European cities had a feeling of dual identity or more interestingly had a difficulty in deciding to choose one identity. A significant outcome of this research is that most of the interviewees who stayed in Europe retained what they explained as a personal identity and refused to choose between the identity of residence or origin. Furthermore, unexpectedly those who lived in nearby countries, were very determined to recognize themselves as being Kurdish. All of this is possibly explained by the historical and political history of the nation.

#### **6.4 Social capital and cultural capital theory**

There are aspects of the idea of social capital which are helpful when we consider the circumstances of people like those who returned to Iraq. The directionality and continuity of migration flows benefit the original sending society because the human, economic and social capital accumulated by migrants in their host country is then fed back into the original sending area following return migration (Reynolds 2008). My research shows that some people who return to Kurdistan have been brought up in Europe and possess skills, money and social connections that their parents never had, which can help them to advance their lives in Kurdistan.

If they go back to Kurdistan with a degree in engineering, for example, but at the same time their social capital and networks connects them to Berlin or Stockholm or London, this may prompt contradictory feelings. This is similar to Reynolds 2008 research about Caribbean second-generation returnees from UK, for whom family and kinship relationships acted as a key vehicle sustaining their emotional, cultural and spiritual ties to the region. These family and kinship relationship also later acted as an important social capital resource in facilitating their return 'home' (Reynolds 2008:26).

Second-generation Iraqi Kurds returning to their homeland from diaspora countries can be seen as essential for rebuilding community from the grassroots level after the long-lasting conflict during the Ba'ath regime in Iraq. Despite levels of education, participants in this research outlined that they had obtained different skills, knowledge and new ideas while living in diaspora countries. Many second-generation Iraqi-Kurdish returnees, with all their experience, knowledge and ideas gained from diaspora countries, can play an important role in the reconstruction of their homeland at individual, family and community levels, as well as at the broader national level.

For many second-generation Iraqi Kurds who have been interviewed for my research, 'home is one's ancestors' place of origin, where all are Kurds, where one can feel a sense of psychological freedom, and where one's legal rights should be assured as honourable citizens of the nation – was of crucial importance to many of them (Saito 2007). Nevertheless, returning home for second generation Iraqi Kurds to the KRG region does not necessarily mean 'return', as the majority were born or have grown up without ever actually having experiencing life in the KRG. Many also have a profound attachment to the host country in which they grew up – the place that they are most familiar with. In this way, some of the respondents in this study were highly assimilated into their host societies.

The decision by second generation Iraqi Kurds to return 'home' is made amid a complex set of push and pull factors, which entail significant psychological stresses and emotional struggles.

Social capital can give people opportunities, but it can also reinvent their relationships with people somewhere else. For many countries which experience major out-migration movements at some point in their history, returning migrants or refugees may have a role to play in processes of (economic) development, peace building and reconstruction.

A significant proportion of the Iraqi Kurdish refugee population, who spent most of their life in diaspora communities, produce large and notable flows of financial and human capital, networks of social capital, knowledge and technology, and political support when they decide to return back to their homeland.

The investment and reproduction of cultural capital serve to include or marginalize individuals in society, which in turn leads to unequal social and economic rewards. The Iraqi Kurdish second generation who have gained academic qualifications have a different experience when they return back compared to those who have not. The cultural capital of the parents will also have a significant influence on the second generation in their daily life and in their performance at school. When the Iraqi Kurdish second generation decide to return they bring social and cultural capital that may change their living standards and life orientations and may significantly alter the economic prospects of a community and eventually lead to social transformations at large.

Less-educated migrants and those who work in low skilled jobs in host countries are unable to bring skills that can be utilized for business startups in their home countries, as has been shown by McCormic and Wahba (2001) for illiterate Egyptian returnees, and Mahmood (1995) for less-educated Bangladeshi returnees. On the other hand, high-educated migrants accumulate savings and economic capital in the host countries, which they usually invest in

small business start ups upon their return. Iraqi Kurdish refugees' family and social-networks are key sources of social capital, which is often maximized when a family group is welcomed by the host community and their own co-ethnic community.

## **6.5 What can be learned from this research on Iraqi Kurdish second-generation returnees?**

Although my research adds significant empirical data to the growing literature on second-generation and ancestral return, being the first study of its kind focusing on second-generation Iraqi Kurdish returnees, it also offers challenges to some of the main findings on second-generation return so far. Return migration is mainly seen as a first-generation phenomenon. Until recently, research on the second generation has focussed on integration or assimilation into the 'host' society, whilst relatively little was written about the connection (and potential 'return') to the 'homeland'.

This is now increasingly being rectified by a rapid increase in studies on the transnational lives and the 'return' of the second generation, many of which have been cited throughout this thesis. Yet, the migrants' experiences are mainly examined within, or weighted against, the cultural and national integrity (traditionally) held by the societies they inhabit, and hence often remain placed along the marginality vs. assimilation continuum. The potential *new* social spaces and relations that second-generation returnees form *beyond* such fixed cultural and ethnic boundaries, however, and the role of such spaces in creating a sense of 'home' and 'belonging' in the parental homeland, have received little attention. Apart from some work on Caribbean return migrants, these studies appear to mainly talk about the problems and difficulties involved with the process of return.

Usually, any group of migrants comes with its unique particularities and historical characteristics, and it is important to acknowledge the *regional* context, and the larger social and cultural context of the nation state within which experiences are formed.

Certain limitations of this study also need to be acknowledged; due to time constraints, there are a number of issues that have been left without adequate analysis. This includes insufficient consideration of the gender dimension of the issue that takes into account. Although the qualitative part of this research is only a small element of the whole study, it is still important to recognise that my sample is not representative and that the conclusions cannot be generalized due to these limitations.

My main concern when embarking on this study has been the scarcity of research that concentrates primarily on the second-generation without lumping this group together with the 1.5-generation.

By indicating the gaps in current research on Diasporas, and by presenting findings from my specific study on the second-generation Iraqi Kurd returnees, I can only be hopeful, that my study has offered some insight into second-generation Iraqi Kurdish returnees and that this project will stimulate further research.

## 7. References

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23 June 2016

Dear Juana,

<b>Project Title:</b>	<b>Home' and 'Return': The experience of second-generation Iraqi Kurds returning to KRG region</b>
<b>Principal Investigator:</b>	<b>Professor Giorgia Dona</b>
<b>Researcher:</b>	<b>Juana Ameen</b>
<b>Reference Number:</b>	<b>UREC 1516 32</b>

I am writing to confirm the outcome of your application to the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC), which was considered by UREC **on Wednesday 18 November 2015**.

The decision made by members of the Committee is **Approved**. The Committee's response is based on the protocol described in the application form and supporting documentation. Your study has received ethical approval from the date of this letter.

Please note the UREC Application Form for ethical approval has been revised. For future applications please use the revised application form which can be found on:  
<https://uelac.sharepoint.com/ResearchInnovationandEnterprise/Pages/Ethics.aspx>

The Committee would like to commend you on the presentation of this application for ethical approval.

Should you wish to make any changes in connection with your research project, this must be reported immediately to UREC. A Notification of Amendment form should be submitted for approval, accompanied by any additional or amended documents:  
<http://www.uel.ac.uk/wwwmedia/schools/graduate/documents/Notification-of-Amendment-to-Approved-Ethics-App-150115.doc>

Any adverse events that occur in connection with this research project must be reported immediately to UREC.

## Approved Research Site

I am pleased to confirm that the approval of the proposed research applies to the following research site.

Research Site	Principal Investigator / Local Collaborator
Kurdistan	Professor Giorgia Dona

## Approved Documents

The final list of documents reviewed and approved by the Committee is as follows:

Document	Version	Date
UREC application form	2.0	14 June 2016
Participant Information Sheet and interview questions combined	2.0	14 June 2016
Consent Form	2.0	14 June 2016

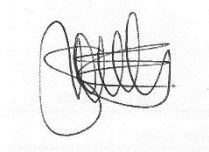
Approval is given on the understanding that the [UEL Code of Practice in Research](#) is adhered to.

The University will periodically audit a random sample of applications for ethical approval, to ensure that the research study is conducted in compliance with the consent given by the ethics Committee and to the highest standards of rigour and integrity.

**Please note, it is your responsibility to retain this letter for your records.**

With the Committee's best wishes for the success of this project.

Yours sincerely,



Catherine Fieulleateau  
Research Integrity and Ethics Manager  
University Research Ethics Committee (UREC)  
Email: [researchethics@uel.ac.uk](mailto:researchethics@uel.ac.uk)