Reimagining the homeland: diasporic belonging among Turkish and Kurdish second generations in Italy

Abstract

This paper analyzes the experiences of children of immigrants coming to Italy from Turkey. It does so by using in-depth interviews and looking at how they conceptualize their sense of belonging to their home country and the transnational ties that they maintain in relation to their parents' experience. The participants in this research grew up in families whose intention was not to remain in Italy but to continue their journey to Germany. Like their parents, the second generation also want to build their lives in Germany, but for them going to Germany is not simply an experience of onward migration driven mainly by economic goals, nor is Germany another *gurbet*[1] destination that would enable them to accumulate enough money to make a glorious return to their country of origin, as it was for their parents. For these young people, Germany and its diasporas offer a source of identity. They recognize a particular identity built within the German context by the children and grandchildren of both Gästarbeiter (guest workers) and refugees. Put otherwise, while their parents wanted to go to Germany because of what Germany could offer in terms of opportunities and services, the children are also attracted by what diasporas can provide: being Turks and Kurds in Germany. We therefore argue that, in the experience of the second generation, Germany becomes a diasporic homeland in which to plan a future, a place where, to quote one of them, *one feels at home in the heart of Europe*. The idea of a homeland is not only transformed – it is duplicated. For these young people, in terms of diasporas, Germany is a place to put down roots because it offers the opportunity to reconnect with cultural memories of their homeland while they also enjoy the opportunities and rights offered by a developed country.

Keywords: Turkish and Kurdish second generation; transnational ties; diaspora; homeland; Italy; Germany.

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[1] *Gurbet* derives from the Arabic word *garaba*, and means to emigrate, to be absent, to go away, to be away from one's homeland, to be foreigner.

Introduction

The position of second generations of immigrants in society has largely been discussed with a focus on assimilation into the United States and integration into Europe (Thomson & Crul, 2007). There is also a rapidly growing body of literature on the ties that second generations use to engage with their parents' homeland (Soehl & Waldinger, 2012). However, along with a change brought about by the particularities of migration flows into the United States and Europe, the ways in which various areas of study have dealt with the links between second generations and their parents' country of origin have also adapted. Diaspora and transnationalism scholars differ in regard to the transmission of attachment to the country of origin between generations. While cultural identity and its reproduction through attachment to an ancestral homeland are essential components of the diaspora identity (Cohen, 2008; Tölölyan, 2012), transnationalism scholars ask whether or not maintaining links with the country of origin is a persistent form of behavior (Kivisto, 2001), and attribute this attachment particularly to the first generation, arguing that bonds with a home country weaken from one generation to another (Itzigsohn, 2009; Morawska, 2003; Rumbaut, 2002). Moreover, connections with the parental homeland may be experienced with varying levels of intensity at different life-stages (Espiritu & Tran, 2002).

In this paper, we focus on the second generation[2] in Italy whose parents came from Turkey, and their relationship with their parents' country of origin and diasporas in Europe when attributing meaning to the term "homeland". As we do so, we also try to understand generational differences in how the relationship with the homeland is defined.

The literature on the children of immigrants in Italy has looked mostly at education issues (Dusi & González-Falcón, 2018; Queirolo Palmas, 2006; Tieghi & Ognisanti, 2009);

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[2] We use a narrow definition of the term 'second generation': for our purposes, they are children born in the host country to two immigrant parents (King and Christou, 2010), or children who arrived in Italy before the age of 6 (Andall, 2002 as cited in King and Christou, 2010).

citizenship, belonging, and identity (Andall, 2002; Arnone, 2011; Meda, 2013; Valtolina & Marazzi, 2006); political participation (Mezzetti & Ricucci, 2019; Riniolo & Ortensi, 2021); future aspirations (Ricucci, 2014); and social coexistence and integration (Ambrosini & Caneva, 2009). Current research primarily analyzes second generations with parents from major sending areas such as Morocco, Albania, and Latin America; and the intergenerational dimension of the migration experience is rarely addressed in the literature.[3] Furthermore, whilst the more recent migration literature has emphasized the main characteristics of migration flows from Turkey to Italy (Armelloni, 2008; Çakırer Özservet, 2010; Schuster, 2005; Ince Beqo, 2019; Ince Beqo, 2020; Purkis & Güngör, 2015; Purkis, 2019), to date there has been little research (Costa & Alinejad, 2020) on these young people's transnational ties and relations and their understanding of 'homeland'.

This paper aims to fill this gap by seeking to conceptualize what 'homeland[4]' means for the second generations of Turks and Kurds – from Turkey – living in Northern Italy, focusing on the local and transnational networks through which they build a sense of belonging to their parental home country.

The beginning of migration flows from Turkey to Italy, a country where migration had almost always been considered to be pathological and responding to a situation of emergency (Ambrosini, 2013), corresponds to a historical context in which Italy was beginning to officially address migratory phenomena because it had become a destination country. However, these flows have their own distinctive features: immigration from Turkey to Western European countries was originally induced by labor recruitment agreements[5], starting in the 1960s, at a time when Italy was itself also characterized by

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[3] See Leonini and Rebughini (2010, 2012) for migration, family relationships and consumption practices.

[4] In Turkish there are several words that correspond to homeland: *vatan, memleket, anayurt*, etc. The term *memleket* was used more in this research.

[5] Bilateral agreements were signed with Germany in 1961, with Austria in 1964, and with France in 1966. Workers from Turkey were also admitted to Denmark, Switzerland, and the UK without any official labor recruitment agreement, whereas migration to Sweden was self-organized, as the agreement that was signed in 1967 never came into effect (Güveli et al., 2016).

emigration. In the case of flows from Turkey, Italy only became a destination towards the end of the 1980s, and it remained no more than a transitory destination for many years. Consequently, while the descendants of immigrants make up a huge part of the diaspora, especially in Germany[6], the first generation of Turkish and Kurdish immigrants is still middle-aged, and their children in Italy are still relatively young.

Several researchers (Çakırer Özservet, 2010; Ince Beqo, 2019; Ince Beqo, 2020; Purkis & Güngör, 2015; Purkis, 2019; Schuster, 2005; Sirkeci, 2006) have shown that Italy was rarely seen as a country of settlement; rather, it was considered to be a place of transition where Turkish migrants could settle temporarily, with a view to moving to Northern European countries at a later stage. Armelloni (2008) also argues that besides being a relatively recent phenomenon compared to what had occurred in various European countries, migration from Turkey to Italy was also mainly conceived as being crisis-induced. There are two main considerations that explain this interpretation. The first is the request for political asylum made by Abdullah Ocalan (the PKK[7] leader) in Rome in 1998, which put Italy at the center of the political debate on the Turkish and Kurdish question. The second is the Dublin Regulation of 1997, the purpose of which was to block unauthorized passage and to ensure that asylum seekers would be received in the first country in which they arrived. The Dublin Regulation unquestionably undermined not only Italian asylum policies, which were based on the "let them pass" principle (Triandafyllidou & Ambrosini, 2011), but also the plans of asylum seekers who had no intention of settling in Italy. Germany, together with other European countries, supported the Dublin

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[6] Out of a population of 81 million Germans, 2.85 million have a Turkish-Kurdish family background. 1.5 million of these people have German citizenship and 1.35 million have a residence permit. They form the largest minority group in Germany, closely followed by 'Germans' from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Republics and Russia. A child born into a Turkish-Kurdish family has a right to dual citizenship, but must decide on one of them between the ages of 18 and 21. Application for citizenship requires participating in courses and passing an integration test (we would like to thank Professor Helma Lutz for this information).

[7] PKK (the Kurdistan Workers' Party) is an armed organization based in Turkey and Iraq. Initially, its primary political demand was to achieve an independent Kurdish state (Stanton, 2016), but it subsequently changed it to a demand for equal rights and Kurdish autonomy in Turkey (White, 2015).

Regulation, particularly because there was an assumption that asylum seekers, especially Kurds from Turkey, had travelled to Germany through Italy, and so they should be sent back to apply for asylum in Italy (Schuster, 2005).

We should add that like the other Southern European countries (Spain and Greece), Italy attracted important migratory flows between the end of the 1980s and 2008-2010, but offered mainly blue-collar jobs with few opportunities for social mobility (Fullin 2016; Fellini and Guetto 2019). The situation became even worse in the following decade as a consequence of the 2008 economic crisis (Ambrosini 2018), and more recently the pandemic.

In this article, our main argument is that the way in which second generations define and construct their relationship with their parental homeland is characterized by the particular nature of the country in which they arrive – in this case Italy – as a stage along a journey, a place only to be considered as a transit point; but then their movement is often blocked by EU regulations, forcing new arrivals to remain in their first country of arrival. These legal hindrances do not, however, affect their desire to move on to countries in Northern Europe, where they can enjoy better employment opportunities and a more generous welfare system. Indeed, not only is this desire not removed, but it is also transmitted from parents to their children. However, the significance that the second generations attribute to Germany is different from that of their parents, and the meaning of the term 'homeland' changes from generation to generation because the social relations and networks in which the younger generations engage cause them to deal with new identities that their parents never experienced.

For the second generation, going to Germany is not a mere experience of onward migration driven mainly by economic needs; nor is Germany another *gurbet* destination that will enable them to accumulate enough money to make a glorious return to their country of

origin, as it was for their parents. For these young people, Germany and its diasporas offer a source of identity: they recognize a particular identity built into the German context by the children and grandchildren of both Gästarbeiter and refugees. Put otherwise, while their parents wanted to go to Germany because of what Germany could offer in terms of opportunities and services, the children are also attracted by what diasporas can provide in cultural terms: being Turks and Kurds in Germany. We therefore argue that, in the experience of the second generations, Germany becomes a diasporic homeland in which to plan a future, where, to quote one of them, *one feels at home in the heart of Europe*. The idea of a homeland is not only transformed – it is duplicated. For these young people, in terms of diasporas, Germany is a place to put down roots, as it offers the opportunity to reconnect with cultural memories of their homeland while they also enjoy the opportunities and rights offered by a developed country.

The qualitative material was collected between 2017 and 2018 by means of in-depth interviews with second-generation immigrants, and in some cases their parents, living in various cities in Northern Italy.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows: first, it provides a theoretical background on generational differences in home-country attachment; and second, our attention will turn to the research methodology and data analysis in three main sections. The final section presents our conclusions.

Theoretical framework: Generational differences in homeland attachment

Scholars argue that when defining a diaspora, the transmission of cultural identity and attachment to the homeland among generations are necessary conditions (Cohen, 2008; Tölölyan, 2012). The transnational migration literature is less certain in this regard; however, studies have argued that maintaining cross-border ties is not a characteristic that

is intrinsic to the first generation alone; it can also be inherited by subsequent generations, in some cases transforming into selective and sporadic attachment (Levitt, 2002; Levitt & Waters, 2002). Lee (2011) shows how this transformation takes place, arguing that for the second generations, transnational belonging takes three specific forms: (1) *intradiasporic transnationalism* involves translocal ties and connections among different population groups within a single nation, extending beyond the relations that are usually identified with host-home transnationalism, and in some cases becoming an important tool for maintaining a sense of belonging to a global nation that has dispersed from the original homeland; (2) the term *indirect transnationalism*, on the other hand, captures the subjective element of both transnational ties and active and tangible forms of connection, such as helping organize fundraising events or participating in ways that facilitate the local community's support of the homeland; (3) and finally, *forced transnationalism*, which calls more for obedience to family values than for a desire to maintain transnational ties.

Positive and negative experiences in both the parental country and the migration context may help or hinder this intergenerational transmission. Various scholars (Huang, et al., 2016; Smith, 2006) have shown not only how visits to the parents' home country affect a person's understanding of homeland, but also how, if they are made at an early age, they also help develop lasting attachments later. Other research studies (Espiritu, 2003; Groenewold, de Valk, & Van Ginneken, 2014), on the other hand, have demonstrated how negative local experiences in daily life can induce young people to develop an intensified emotional attachment to their parents' homeland and its cultural values and norms.

However, while the intensity of parents' transnational ties affects their children's belonging and identity strategies, transnationalism and the assimilation-acculturation process can easily go hand in hand for the second generation without being mutually exclusive (Levitt & Schiller, 2004; Levitt & Waters, 2002; Snel, et al., 2006).

Transnationalism may also manifest itself at an emotional (Ambrosini, 2017; Wolf, 2011) but not at a physical level, especially where the ethnic authenticity reproduced at home and in immigrant networks makes it unnecessary to visit the country of origin in order to maintain ties to it and its culture (Vickerman, 2002). Scholars (Das Gupta, 1997; Fouron & Glick-Schiller, 2001) also underline how migrant women endeavor to preserve and transmit ethnic identity so as to ensure continuity in belonging to the values of the country of origin.

Migrants' transnational ties and relations are determined not only by the intentions of the migrants themselves, however, but also by the possibilities afforded to them, because their movements are dependent on external borders, which are subject to political control by states, so that movements between the home and host countries cannot be made with equal ease by everyone (Waldinger, 2008). In line with this assumption, we also argue that host countries' border management and migration policies determine not only the intensity of migrants' transnational relations, but also how memories of the place they have left behind extend across generations. Nonetheless, whether it is the migration policies of the destination countries or the ties that are maintained with the country of origin at various levels that determine the relationship with the homeland, the concept involves strong negotiations of meaning and belonging for the second generations.

Participants and research method

Our analysis is based on in-depth interviews[8] conducted by the first author[9] between 2017 and 2018 with 22 second-generation members – and in some cases their parents – living in

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[8] In line with the research question, the interview themes were based around perceptions and representations of the homeland. The means by which this perception was constructed is not the main focus of this study. For this reason, any social or other interpersonal networks through which the participants in the research developed the projective dimension of their homeland were not analyzed.
[9] The first author is Turkish and all the interviews except one were conducted in Turkish.

in Milan, Novara, and Como, which are the cities with the highest number of immigrants from Turkey. All the interviews were face to face, and they usually lasted for approximately 30-50 minutes. At the request of some of the participants, not all the interviews were recorded, and in these cases, notes were taken. These data are reinforced by qualitative material collected between 2015 and 2017 for the first author's doctoral research on migrant families from Turkey in Italy. Wherever possible, parents were also interviewed. In addition to the formal interviews, the first author made observations during various events, and met both first- and second-generation members, who very informally shared their migration experiences and the common problems which they encountered in their daily lives.

The challenges of field research

'Homeland' was a highly politicized concept for the participants in this research, and sharing personal experiences with someone else could often be uncomfortable: identity and belonging often invoke the relationship between the state/regime and the person, and in a context in which any kind of political tension in Turkey shapes the participants' willingness to be part of a research study, the interactions between a Turkish interviewer and a Kurdish interviewee in particular had their own dynamics and challenges. However, the interviewer, who is the first author, had the benefit of being part of the interviewees' lives on a daily basis, in some cases as a customer of their kebab shops and in others as a translator of documents relating to their citizenship application, or, more rarely, as a lecturer who was able to follow their university careers closely. This ongoing daily interaction undoubtedly helped to build a relationship based on trust and reduced any distance that might be caused by the different ethnic backgrounds. Nevertheless, this "insider" position (Merton, 1972) is not always stable, and is subject to continuous negotiations between those involved in the research (Andrade, 2000).

Qualitative studies may be ethically challenging for both participants and researchers, because they may refer to sensitive issues in people's lives. Maintaining anonymity and confidentiality, especially in a research study on a small, well-connected group that potentially deals with sensitive issues, is therefore essential. Participants may be presented as anonymous, or the researcher may withhold some crucial information, and yet the participant can still be recognized, which may create problems in family relations (Rosenblatt & Fisher, 1993). We therefore tried to avoid the possibility that any indication might reveal the identity of the participants and decided to only identify the participants by using the initials of a hypothetical name that we ourselves had chosen.

The main characteristics of the participants

The experiences of the participants in our research confirmed what previous research has illustrated: the first generation only began to migrate to Italy in the late 1980s, with the intention of reaching Germany, France, or Switzerland, and most of the interviewees, as well as the other immigrants with whom I talked informally, had first tried to migrate to other urban centers in Turkey before attempting to arrive in Europe. The first flow was characterized by people who had first tried to enter other European countries and only moved to Italy when they were not able to obtain asylum in their chosen countries, because they believed that they would not be sent back from Italy to their country of origin if they were discovered to be illegal. The second flow, on the other hand, was made up of people who had traveled directly to Italy but wanted to move on to other countries, having already created a family network they could rely on during the first phase of their journey. The migration flow began mainly with men and continued with family reunifications. The second generations that we interviewed were the children of Turkish immigrants or Kurdish refugees who had left their country because they had experienced the impossibility of

creating a future for themselves due to socioeconomic hardship and political oppression.[10]

The main sending regions were cities and rural areas on the border of Central and Eastern Turkey such as Çorum, Tokat, Sivas, and Maraş. The second generations were either born in Italy or had arrived there at a very young age. Not all of them were Italian citizens at the time of the interview. The ages of the interview participants ranged from 18 to 36. They rarely attended college: most went to vocational schools, if they had not dropped out earlier.

Italy as a back-up option: Involuntary settlement and permanent temporariness

One of the first members of the second generation that I met was 5 years old. I was contacted by the kindergarten that the child attended as a cultural and linguistic mediator to facilitate his initial period. It was in the early days of October, and the class teachers had organized an activity based around the grape harvest: all the children had to remove their socks and crush grapes in a basin with their feet. I was unable to convince T. to do this with his friends. He cried all morning, and said "you should not step on food, food is sacred. You cannot touch it with your feet." A few months later, while interviewing one of the participants in this research, I reported what had happened, and P. (male, 22) said:

> *If we were in Germany, it would have been different. (…) These things never happen in Germany. There, they already know your culture and they respect you.*

His remark also summarizes the experience of other participants in this research, from both the first and second generation. Some thought that immigrants in Germany were already accepted because of their diasporic efforts and their commitment to making policies fit their needs.

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[10]While none of the participants were actively involved in politics, their migration aspirations were driven by both a lack of access to economic resources and the political-social environment in their country of origin.

There are Turks who have lived in Germany for many years. There are those who are in politics, those who are lawyers or doctors. Certainly, these people can contribute to the welfare of their people. (Y., male, 20)

Other participants reported with an equal amount of conviction that *if they had been in Germany everything would have been different.* In order to better understand this statement, it is helpful to consider how these immigrants had arrived in Italy (in the case of the first generations), and how they had grown up (the second generations) in Italy.

Even though they were not from the areas that are most involved in the armed conflict[11] between the Turkish army and the PKK, the first-generation Kurdish participants often used the word "forced" to define their migration experience, recalling Sirkeci's (2006) and Cohen and Sirkeci's (2016) conflict and insecurity theory regarding the decision to migrate. According to this theory, perceptions of insecurity can be fueled by the conflict itself as well as by its outcomes, such as socioeconomic and political deprivation and/or discrimination (Sirkeci, Cohen & Yazgan, 2012). The Italian context has a distinctive feature, however: the migrants were forced not only to leave their country, but also to settle in Italy because of changes in how the external border of the country of arrival was managed. This is also true of Turkish migrants. This involuntary settlement, and the permanent desire to go to Germany, which was what their initial plan involved, had a powerful effect on their relationship with their countries of origin and arrival, particularly in terms of the physical attachment of the second generations in both ethnic groups.

In most cases, first generation members did not spend their savings on visits to or long-term investments in their country of origin, preferring to spend them on their attempts

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[11] See Van Bruinessen (1995) on the forced evacuations and destruction of villages, which resulted in large numbers of displaced people and Kurdish asylum seekers heading to European countries.

to find a new migratory experience in Germany. More family visits were made to Germany than to Turkey, not only because the journey is less expensive, but also because they considered each visit to be a mini-survey of the labor market and an investigation of the opportunities that their desired destination might offer. As S. (male, 47) reported:

> *Instead of going home, we often went to Germany. We have a lot of relatives there. Particularly when the children were small, you know, it was nice, relatives, friends, cousins, all together. When you are there, you always think, maybe we could come too, we could find a job, because there they tell you that the state helps you if you are out of work, etc.*

These visits meant different things to the participants' children, however: on each occasion in these diasporic spaces, they observed, both from the inside and the outside, how the children and grandchildren of immigrants who had succeeded in doing what their own parents had failed to do defined themselves. The process of identification among second generations was built during these visits, in encounters with relatives and acquaintances in the German context.

In this identification process, experiences in the parental homeland are crucial, and nearly all the second-generation respondents reported either being treated as foreign or feeling alienated on at least one occasion in the place that their parents called 'homeland'. In fact, instead of strengthening their identification with that place, visits to the home country often weakened it. M. (male, 19) stressed that this feeling of being a foreigner in the homeland was frustrating:

> *Every time you think that you have a place to go back to, you remember that you are going to be a foreigner there too.*

This was the context in which the process of identifying with Germany and its diasporas as a place where one feels at home took place.

Those people (relatives living in the country of origin) cannot understand us. They do not know what it means to be born, to grow up abroad. That is why we will always be foreigners there (in T.) while… for example in Germany, we feel more comfortable. They (parents in Germany) are from T., too, but they are different. We are immigrants and our home is where there is a history of immigration. Our immigration, you know, people like me… Not European, I am Turkish, I know my origins, but I am also an immigrant (L., male, 21).

As can be seen, the focus is on self-identification with those who have a migration experience, a crucial point in identifying with a place and the people who live there. In this context, family visits made regularly in Germany are essential because they give the opportunity to make a comparison between not only the country of origin and the migration context, as is often the case, but between three different and very well-connected places: homeland, the immigration context, and the diasporic space. This is particularly the case for young people because the first generations are often limited in the dichotomous relationship between the country of origin and the places of immigration.

The perception of a second homeland: *When we miss Turkey, we go to Germany*

Through personal and collective experience built around the image of Germany as a desired destination, the participants in the research reported here developed a bond with the country at both concrete and symbolic levels. This bond was maintained through regular visits, and generated an alternative construction of the homeland.

When we missed Turkey, you know, something to eat, something to see, we went to Germany. (W., female, 18)

We went to our village a few times when we were children, partly because we have more relatives in Germany than there. What were we going to do there? Just see the village? Yes, of course, for goodness' sake, you must do that too, but we have

Germany here, relatives, our holidays, the food of our village (....). Everything that tastes like home... (K., male, 19)

This experience highly contrasts with the "acı vatan[12]" (bitter homeland) concept that represented the overwhelming hardship that early guest workers faced in Germany. In our case, representation of home and homeland relating to Germany do not have negative connotations for young people. For their parents, for whom Germany is nothing more than a dutiful destination to build a better future in their homeland, instead, the situation changes and Germany returns to being a bitter home.

Homeland, as both an administrative entity and an idealized territory, is a broad concept with boundaries that are defined according to the relationship (or potential relationship) with it. Its borders may narrow or widen according to the time one spends there and the territorial identification one has with the place called 'homeland'. Because members of the first generation do not make regular visits to the various regions of Turkey, particularly to tourist areas due to economic difficulties – *as those from Germany do*, to quote one of the respondents – the homeland shrinks for the first generation, and often only means the small towns in which they were born and grew up.

I would like to see the beautiful tourist cities of my country as well…Also to be able to say "this is my homeland too". You see how many Italians and Germans go to Turkey for their vacations while I cannot afford it. The times I manage to save money, I use it to go to my village. Can I tell my mother I am going to Bodrum, Antalya because I am going on vacation? It would not be fair. (E., m, 41)

This had several repercussions for the second-generation respondents' identification with their country of origin, and their frequent sense of alienation in small

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[12] Almanya, Acı Vatan (Germany, Bitter Home) is a 1979 film directed by Şerif Gören, mostly shot in Berlin that portrays the dramatic lives of guest workers through a story of a marriage of convenience.

villages during their visits and the impossibility of expanding the boundaries of their parental homeland made them identify more willingly with Germany than with their parents' homeland in Turkey. Here, too, we see the emergence of a difference between the two generations of interviewees: while the parents thought that Germany and its economic possibilities would be a necessary step toward being able to expand the borders of their homeland, their children, even sometimes clashing with their parents, wanted to rediscover themselves as Turks and Kurds in Germany (*and not in Turkey*) by joining the diaspora that produces a particular identity with which they could identify. In other words, the parents saw Germany as a 'means', while for their children it was an 'end'.

Dynamics of ethnicity, class, and gender in the reproduction of homeland

Italy's particular role in Turkey's Kurdish question was mentioned because of Abdullah Ocalan's request for political asylum in Italy in 1998, at a time when arrivals from Turkey were at their peak. Nevertheless, only a few interviewees of the first generation placed this event in the Italian context and within their migration experience in Italy. They reported that because of this episode, which occupied so much space in public opinion, *Italians knew about the drama of the Kurds and had sympathy for their cause*. Some also saw it as *good in the bad*, in the sense that if they had to continue living in Italy, at least they had the sympathy of Italians towards their ethnic identity.

This event was never mentioned in the narratives of the second-generation interviewees, in which ethnicity and references to the parental homeland are especially evoked in the memories of some tragic events that led to ethnic identification as a member of the homeland. One of these memories concerned the story of Salman, a young second-generation Kurdish migrant, who died in 2015 in Iraq, where he had gone to fight ISIS. In

his memory, the homeland was often idealized as becoming Kurdistan, but very few of the respondents, however, were involved in cultural-political activities that would reinforce their ethnic identification as members of that territory, which includes parts of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria. One of the oldest second-generation respondents (female, 36) that I interviewed, who has accompanied many arrivals from the largest sending regions, told me:

> *Do you know where do our young people feel at home? At weddings and funerals, and then no more than four or five times a year. They are attracted to Germany because our community is everywhere there. They do not have to wait for someone to die or get married to feel at home.*

This lack of homeland-related political and cultural involvement makes Italy a peripheral diasporic destination for these young people compared to Germany and other European countries.

Some of the existing literature (for example, Adamson, 2019; Østergaard-Nielsen, 2001, 2003, 2016; Sirkeci, 2006; Toivanen, 2019; Yener-Roderburg, 2020) acknowledges that immigrants from Turkey differ significantly from each other in their European migration context; however, the focus here is primarily on ethnic differences (again especially between Turks and Kurds). Yet the Italian case also reveals class-based differences between Turkish and Kurdish immigrant groups.

Milan is a popular destination[13] for upper middle-class students from Turkey's large cities such as Istanbul, Izmir, and Ankara, and the encounters between these students and members of the second generation are almost never pleasant. L. is a young Kurdish woman

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[13] In 2020, the top 3 countries of origin were China, with 2,178 students (13.9% of the total number of international students), India, with 1,360 (8.7%), and Turkey, with 1,215 (7.7%). Young people from these three nations alone represent 30% of all international students in the Lombardy Region and its capital, Milan (Assolombarda Report, 2021).

who grew up in Milan. She is one of only a few who attended university. She often meets students from private schools who are studying in Milanese universities:

> (…) *You grow up here in Milan, but that a Kurd can speak Italian so well is incomprehensible to them. On every occasion they make you understand that Italy in general and Milan in particular is not for us. It is for them, it is for the ones who come from Istanbul to study architecture or art history. (...) Italian is not a language for us, and what do I do? When I see them I start to speak with a strong Milanese accent, because I am from Milan, even if they do not want or accept it.*

Despite this local belonging, Germany continues to be a desirable place for her, too:

> *(...) For them we are only entitled to Germany (...). You know, a blue-collar country – that is all we deserve. (...) But they do not know that we are everywhere there (in Germany) ... In the Parliament, associations, political movements ... so Germany is much more than that for us, it is the first place in Europe where our resistance to despotism was born. Here in Italy, it is difficult to organize in this way.*

This is a very good example of how different classes attribute different meanings and values to the same places. The upper class's perception of Germany as a typical blue-collar country for Turkish immigrants differs greatly from that constructed by the lower middle class. The same is also valid for Italy. For Turkish upper-class migrants, the perception of Italy is built around the concept of *la dolce vita* (the sweet life) and various cultural opportunities, while for the second generation with less economic possibilities Italy is a place where social mobility is very limited, and developing a diasporic consciousness is rather difficult.

These dynamics, together with other difficulties encounter in the Italian context in their daily lives, led these young interviewees to perceive a lack of flexibility in the social

stratification and limited access to resources, not only in the dichotomic relationship between natives and foreigners, but also between foreigners from different classes and ethnicities. These encounters take place not only in the university context, but also in the kebab stores where members of the second-generation work. On several occasions during the interview, M. (male, 21) stressed the importance of Germany to Turks because of the efforts made by his peers to obtain rights and important positions in public life. In his view, achieving this in Italy was not easy – if not impossible – for Turks because *their presence counts for little in Italy compared to other migrants and wealthy Turks.*

In this imaginary context, the discrimination and racism suffered by Turkish diasporas in Germany was not mentioned very frequently. This may be because Germany is an idealized place, and in the respondents' minds, the diasporic consciousness developed through specific discourses and organizations would help them to deal with any racism and discrimination that they might encounter.

> *(Racism) Do you think there is none here (in Italy)? Maybe not towards Turks, but towards Arabs. In fact, they (Italians) think you are Arabic. (…) There (in Germany,) you do not get humiliated like that because there are associations, unions formed by our people (…). Fighting is easier over there.* (S., male, 25).

Gender is also an important determinant for identifying with the homeland. Both Turkish and Kurdish families come from areas where patriarchal roles determine family and social relationships. Family visits, particularly those made at an age when social pressures due to gender expectations can be experienced, significantly affect attachment to the parental homeland.

The experience of G. (female, 19) is worthy of note. Her parents first tried to go to Germany. Having failed to raise the money necessary for the journey[14], they opted to travel to Italy. They had many relatives in Germany and often went there for family visits. Her statement shows how the social position of her parents – that is, their location and constitution within their country of origin in terms of gender (Anthias, 1998) – can become an essential component in identifying with her homeland and its replication in Germany:

> *If they (the relatives living in Germany) had stayed there in Antep they would not have changed, they would have thought just like those who stayed there. But in Germany they have changed, you (as a girl) can make your own life, you do not have to get married at 18. (...) You know, when I go there (to Germany) it's like I'm going to Antep because they are all my relatives but... I would say I go to a better Antep.*

Gender dynamics in family relationships allocate different roles and expectations to sons and daughters, and both transnational and country of origin ties are built around this traditional difference. While young girls are encouraged to enter into social and/or parental relationships in order to become viable candidates for marriage, boys are directed to enter the labor market and become the primary breadwinner of their future families.

> *(...) When you're little, you know, it's just family visits, but when you get to a certain age you become a potential spouse, and the visits also change their meaning* (S., female, 19).

Perceptions of the traditional division of gender roles change depending on the direction of the movement between diasporic spaces, however: for young girls living in Italy, their peers in Germany have fewer restrictions and more choice when it comes to

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[14] During the interviews, several participants underlined the fact that in their homeland, the people who organize unauthorized migration to Europe charge different prices for different European countries, and Italy, among others, was one of the cheapest destinations. This situation also increases demand for Italy.

building their future, while for those who move from Italy to Germany the possibilities are limited:

> *They can plan to come and study in Italy, and sometimes they ask us to understand how to move to study. We? No, no, who among us has gone to Germany to study? No one. Either you go for marriage, or nothing* (C., female, 21).

As these experiences show, homeland definition and its replication occur at different levels, and involve both individual and collective experiences. In addition, ethnicity, class-based relationships, and gender shape belonging in and identification with both the location of the migratory context and the parental homeland, and here the distinctive situation of Italy emerges again. Taking the above-mentioned aspects into consideration, in the Italian case, the temporariness transmitted by the parents and the idealization of other European countries as a desired destination make the concept of the homeland for second generations a hybrid one. This identification with Germany does not help young people put down roots in Italy and become part of the social and economic life of the country in which they were born or grew up. On the contrary, instead of roots, it creates a permanent temporariness because of the desire that they share with their parents to live in Germany. For the second generation, however, Germany's role as a substitute homeland is essential: in their experience, their real homeland, as their parents defined it, becomes a place that is not Turkey, but one where they can live as Turks and Kurds with all the advantages of a developed Western country.

Conclusions: Longing for a replicated homeland

In diasporas, the memory of the homeland coexists with settlement in different places, maintaining a distinctive cultural identity (Cohen 2008). The experience of a diaspora is defined by an acknowledgment of the fact that heterogeneity and diversity are a necessary

condition (Hall, 1990). In this sense, the diaspora is an extension of the place that has been left behind – the "home" (Soysal, 2000: 3).

This paper has suggested that in certain migration experiences, especially in the absence of homeland-related political and cultural involvement in the migration context, the homeland as a place where one feels at home not only expands but also replicates itself. In this sense, our results not only support Lee's (2011) concept of intradiasporic ties but go beyond it. We argue that diaspora is not only the space within which relationships are built, crossing the borders of various nations, to bring the memory of a homeland alive but, in some specific cases, diaspora itself can become a reproduction of homeland. Participants' experiences show us that both socio-economic and cultural factors (gender, ethnicity and class) and structural ones (migration policy of receiving countries) shape this reproduction process.

In her research on Kurdish refugees in Rome, Puggioni (2005) argued that the symbolic value of Italy for Kurds because it welcomed Abdullah Ocalan was more important than receiving economic support from local institutions. In our research, however, the view of Italy as an undesirable destination still prevails, especially for first-generation migrants from both ethnic groups: it is an alternative place for those who were not able to settle elsewhere, a transit country to be left in the near future. This is likely to be because Puggioni (2005) analyzed a more politicized migration flow that can be easily identified with the Ocalan case, while the participants in this research are less involved in politics. It should be also because the interviews for this study were conducted in the regions where the migrant families were most settled, pending continuation of their migratory path towards other European countries, and not in the places where they had firstly settled and intense politicization of Kurdish refugees occurs, such as Rome. In fact, as happens in other European countries, refugees and economic migrants continue to arrive

in Italy with family reunifications, and the need for institutional support and economic opportunities is therefore increasing. In addition, the children of immigrants do not just need economic support distributed from above. Building a life of dignity requires more: access to education and forms of social mobility without having to give up one's own culture, and active participation in the labor market and public life.

In this study, we have argued that the characteristics of the country of arrival significantly influence the second generation's relationship with their homeland and make Italy a peripheral diasporic destination because of its perceived temporariness and isolation. Against this backdrop, the desire to reach Germany and settle there becomes the main aspiration of new generations of Turkish and Kurdish origin living in Italy.

In a context of continued economic insecurity, as was emphasized in the interviews, mobilization for homeland-related politics and the development of a diasporic consciousness seems a distant probability. What is more, for the second generation, regardless of the economic opportunities Germany can offer, participation in the Turkish and Kurdish diasporas seems to take part within a diasporic culture that sometimes takes the place of direct contact with the parental country of origin. In fact, the limited number of visits to the country of origin due to economic difficulties on the one hand, and having to consider Germany as an alternative to the homeland in terms of family kinship and homeland culture on the other are what determine the second generations' identification with this replicated homeland. This identification has both ethnic and non-ethnic aspects. In the case of young Kurds, particularly in large cities like Milan, where meetings between different classes are frequent, ethnic consciousness is strengthened by a form of class consciousness based on their – limited – economic power, which often also draws their attention to the asymmetrical dynamics in their country of origin. In Germany, they hope to find both better economic opportunities and a way of life that combines references to

their ancestral culture and language with the freedom, rights, and welfare of a developed Western society. They want to be Turks or Kurds, but in Germany. Their diasporic identity does not refer primarily to their original homeland, but to this replicated one.

Finally, in terms of a direction for future studies, further research could look more deeply into how second generations organize themselves to actively engage in homeland-related political and religious mobilization, both in local and diasporic settlements. This homeland-related activism through both transnational and diasporic networks would undoubtedly yield additional insights into the understanding of the homeland and the ways in which it can be expanded.

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