Review of International Studies (2008), 34, 173–192 Copyright © British International Studies Association
doi:10.1017/S0260210508007857

Transversal communication, diaspora, and the Euro-Kurds

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Abstract. The International Relations discipline (IR) has been uniquely resistant to practices and knowledges aimed at broadening the horizons of IR's subjects. The discipline has worked to incarcerate its subjects in a location of analysis – spatially Cartesian and politically state-oriented – conditioned to ignore the transnational and transversal formations that have become central to politics. However, this disciplining has also engendered counter-movements pressuring the well-rehearsed disciplinary horizons. This article explores such movements through the Kurdish diaspora in Europe. It regards Kurdish diasporic formations as transversal practices that communicate against the disciplinary boundaries imposed upon the political imagination through traditional IR.

'One way ashore, a thousand channels'[1]

I carry two worlds within me
but neither one whole
they are constantly bleeding
the border runs
right through my tongue.[2]

Introduction

When one takes seriously the struggles of diasporic people in the heterotopic spaces they inhabit, such as the Kurds in Europe, one is but compelled to invoke Foucault on 'Other Spaces'. 'A thing's place is nothing but a point in its movement', writes Foucault.[3] We can interpret this to mean that things and peoples are ultimately always in movement. Identities and meanings are necessarily cultivated in movement as people and thing-stories are related and relayed in relations. It is in relations that

* I thank Richard K. Ashley for commenting on the first version. Special thanks go to Costas Constantinou, Oliver Richmond, and Alison Watson for inviting me to the workshop on 'The Politics of Global Communication', and for their subsequent comments on the resulting paper. Of course, I am indebted to the anonymous reviewers. Also, I thank Clare Hanusz for sharing with me her 'practitioner sensibilities'. I would like to acknowledge and thank Ashley Lukens for reading the article so carefully. Most importantly, I am indebted to the remarkable diasporic people – Kurds and Turks, Turkish-Kurds and Kurdish-Turks, Alevis, Sunnis, and Yezidis, women and men, and cooks and chefs – for their grace in sharing their life stories.

[1] Edouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation* (Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press, 1997), p. 3.

[2] Zafer Senocak's 'Dopplemann' was quoted in Heidrun Suhr, 'Ausländerliteratur: Minority Literature in the Federal Republic of Germany', *New German Critique*, 46, (1989), pp. 71–103, and 102.

[3] Michel Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', *Diacritics*, 16:1 (Spring 1986), p. 23.

people display their practical powers, assert their agency and communicate it to the world.

In this article, I argue that diasporic people experience relationality with greater urgency than most other people. In the absence of a sovereign place they can call their own, diasporic people are compelled to articulate their lives actively and intensely in relations, which they cultivate and communicate through incessant movements. They pressure and complicate modernity's dominant spatial story of states and nations as projected onto maps with sleek borderlines and the bright colours of nation-worlds. Against the dominant story claiming to represent proper and authentic locations of peoples on maps, diasporic people highlight transversal identities through the trails left across maps; trails that are 'so full of places of private knowing;'[4] trails that are laid through the quotidian networks of necessity and desire; trails that can never be fully mapped. Map-making then is different to trail-making, for while map-making closes and limits possible horizons, trail-making opens and widens life's horizons. Maps aspire to closures and stoppages; trails appeal to flows and passages through and through even when they are guided by destinations. Maps communicate modernity's intentions to tidy up the unruly edges into the universe of the centre, while trails enable the edges to communicate in the first place – they not only trouble the map-makers but also can cohere into spatio-temporal shifts politically.

In early 1998, map-makers faced trail-makers in Europe when France sent security reinforcements to its border with Italy, trying to prevent Kurdish asylum seekers from crossing into France in order to join the Kurdish diaspora there and beyond.[5] The Kurds had come ashore to Italy earlier, armed with stories of repression, and demanding asylum and recognition. Yet, many also seemed intent on moving on, through diasporic trails already established and those trails yet to be made, joining the European Kurdish diaspora now more than a million-strong. No one knows how many Kurds successfully made it into France and beyond. In September 1999, while in Germany, I met one of those Kurds who had come to Italy in 1998. He had made his way through Italy and France to Hamburg, Germany, using the networks and channels of Kurdish diaspora's private knowing. When I asked him how he had made his way through Italy, France, and Germany, he did not want to explain it in detail, saying only that, while in Italy, his Kurdish friends had arranged for his travels by phone. 'That simple!' he retorted.

Intrigued by the mystery of the response, I began to study the Kurdish diasporic networks involved. My interest has been scholarly, not political in support of or sympathy with the Kurdish diaspora's ethno-nationalist objectives. I studied, I observed, and I listened, and now I communicate what I gathered with a view to enhancing the knowledge about the Kurdish diaspora in Europe and beyond. In the end, objectively, the judgement of the Turkish news monthly *Aksiyon* that the Kurds might well have the 'best-organized diasporic community in Europe'[6] summarises the Kurdish diasporic story. Tensions, failures, violence, terror and repression from within and without the community are of course also part of the story. All of this remains understudied, yet all the same diasporic Kurds continue to militate, enacting

[4] Meredith Carson, *Infinite Morning* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press), p. 62.
[5] Bertrand Bollencbach, 'Kurdish Influx Tests Schengen Open Border Accords', *Agence France Presse*, 3 January 1998.
[6] Adem Yavuz Aslan, 'Avrupa Kurtleri Kimlik Arayisinda (Europe's Kurds are in Search of Identity)', *Aksiyon: Weekly News Magazine*, 20 December 2005.

and communicating a complex dynamics of identity and agency in politics across Europe and the geographies beyond.

Activated and guided by a political urgency unlike those governing the lives of citizens across Italy or France, the Kurdish diasporic communities employ all means of communication in support of a different political-cartographic vision. In diaspora's centrifugal dynamics, existing territorial borders and boundaries serve as diaspora's transitional grounds, not as the ontological limits to its expanse. As such, the Kurdish diaspora manoeuvres thousands of people through the crevices of European state geographies, effectively translating borders into transitions. Crucially, it attests to the central role of communication as an enabler of such a political agency.

Following Armand Mattelart,[7] this mode of communication operates through a 'paradigm of the fluid,' not 'of the mechanic.' It is a mode in which the means of communication are not merely employed as parts of networks of exchanges already conditioned and disciplined to reproduce the dominant order. Rather, they are 'deployed' as instruments of everyday struggles through networks of what Mattelart calls 'anti-discipline' – the loosely coordinated, counter-hegemonic practices engendering their own spatio-temporal worlds.[8]

It is thus not the means of communication but the mode of the political regulating the trajectories of links that ultimately renders telephones and the Internet into weapons and the Kurds into transversal revolutionaries. The Kurdish diaspora's territorially diffused ontopolitics necessitates its transversal communications while the 'silent inventions' of its diasporic communications cultivate and express its shifting outlines. In this way, the Kurds in Europe exceed the regulative statist story that aims to communicate the locations of peoples – citizens and non-citizens alike – within the spatio-temporal universe of states and their sovereign borders. In contrast, Kurds' stories, echoing 'silent' yet salient insurrections, counter what, in *Specters of Marx*, Jacques Derrida referred to as the dominant Cartesian and statist 'measure of the world'.[9]

Undoubtedly, the territorial myth of Kurdistan still energises diasporic agency, even as the diasporic community fashions Europe as its ontological grounds. However, where 'Kurdistan' is communicated across Europe, paradoxically, it jettisons its territorial claims, and acquires its sub-political, even 'subterranean transversality' in what Edouard Glissant calls the condition of flows and networks, of wandering roots and errant politics, of border-crossings and borderisations, and of shared deterritorialisations.[10] In transversality, the diasporic community demands international relations' domain to be more syncretic, horizontally and vertically, and richer in substance and form than those represented within its disciplinary stories.[11]

Historically, the International Relations (IR) discipline has been uniquely resistant to the kinds of knowledges and practices aimed at broadening the horizons of the study of the subjects and agents the discipline claims as its own. Even as the actual

[7] Armand Mattelart, 'Communications/Excommunications: An Interview with Armand Mattelart', conducted by Costas M. Constantinou, in this Special Issue of *Review of International Studies*, p. 21.
[8] Mattelart, 'Communications/Excommunications', p. 28.
[9] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx* (New York and London: Routledge, 1994), p. 77.
[10] Edouard Glissant, *The Caribbean Discourse* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 1996), p. 66. A discussion of transversality and relation can be also found in another of Glissant's works: Edouard Glissant, *Poetics of Relation.*
[11] Giorgio Agamben, 'We Refugees' (Section 2: Issuing Identity), *Symposium*, 49:2 (Summer 1995).

world changes, IR as a discipline retains most of its habitual stands and has thus become increasingly out of synch with the conditions in the 'transnational' milieu. In large measure, it seems intent on staying in a spatially Cartesian and politically state-oriented location of analysis, conditioned to ignore the transversal formations, from migrant and indigenous activisms to global militations of the proletariat, that have otherwise become central to contemporary politics. IR's locutions – from its methods to its idioms – inevitably express certain ontopolitical preferences.

It is not surprising then that, for all its insights, IR's dominant words wash over experiences and knowledges that are not consonant with its ontotheoretical preferences. This refrain is deeply political in its consequences even if it betrays only infinitesimal traces of the political intentionalities that make it possible. It becomes, or comes to be, taken as the 'nature of the beast' – that is, the mode of history and knowledge, and their communication, that underlies IR's positions in politics. Its history taken as given, IR's Cartesianism produces its own displacements, absences, silences, and forgettings implicating it within the vulnerabilities of people positioned differently across the world. Something is indeed communicated as well as excommunicated[12] within in this mode of the absent-presence (or the present-absence) of IR's dominant paradigm.

In the Kurdish case, an epistemic distance spans the abyss between the world the Kurds live in and have to show fidelity to, and the world IR is willing to register after squeezing it through its theoretical and conceptual filters. This 'distance-between' is communicated as a 'charge-against' the Kurds as they enter Italy, France, or Germany through fugitive trails: 'Kurds show no respect for borders'. For the Kurds, the locus of politics lies elsewhere, concerned not with the violation of territorial borders, but with resourceful transitions in support of their diaspora. Clearly, IR's modalities communicate through and about universals, demanding and imposing silence on all else. The Kurds, however, must attend to the particularities which such fixation on the universals inflicts on their lives – the particularities of being a 'voice that has no voice', of a 'part that plays no part'. They do so by imploding territoriality into transversality.

In the last decade, among the Turkish Kurds in Europe, 'Europeanness' has become a central anchor of identity in support of Kurdish ethnicity. Kurds call this emergent identity 'EuroKurdishness'. The defining dynamics of EuroKurdishness is transversality within the still strong European Cartesian national territoriality. The Kurdish identity appears to be conditioned by a certain 'aterrioriality', recognising and negotiating all of Europe as a potentially continuous space of living, even as territoriality still energises the predominant realities of nation-state oriented Europe. In this way, the Kurds can be claimed to be communicating to Europe's aspiring Europhiles how to grow Euroversal.

The key to understanding the practical force of the Kurdish diaspora lies in its 'heterotopic' position within the prevailing contemporary spatiality. Much as the dominant spatiality is still conditioned by territorial sovereigntist ideals, it is also under the pressure of an interplay of multiple new forces. From transnational activist citizen spaces to the fugitive spaces of migrants and refugees to capital's global economic and cultural spaces, these formations coexist as 'real sites' in life, but are neither fully 'reducible to one another nor fully superimposable' on one another.

[12] Mattelart, 'Communications/Excommunications', p. 34.

These 'other spaces' characterise our epoch as one of 'juxtaposition', an 'epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed.'[13] Nowadays, 'our life experiences', Foucault contends, are 'less those of a long life developing through time than those of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein'.[14] They are located in space yet exceed their localisation, for, as Foucault contends, their 'place' at any historical moment is but a point in their movement.

I locate the Kurdish diasporic space thus, as one of many 'other spaces' that constitute the rich and varied heterotopia of networks and flows energised and orchestrated by disparate political, economic and ethical sensibilities and desires in Europe and beyond. It expresses what Giorgio Agamben calls 'reciprocal extraterritoriality'. This strange and awkward spatiality turns out to be surprisingly dynamic in politically positioning the Kurds in a diasporic 'commonplace' all over Europe. Let us begin with one point in that movement: Stoke Newington Road.

Transversal politics of the Kurdish diaspora: whispers into the movement

Located in east London, England, Stoke Newington Road exemplifies the dynamics of reciprocal extra-territoriality, which accommodates rich and varied political, cultural and social aspirations. It creates lines of inexorable flights into new 'commonplaces' of subalternity.

Stoke Newington Road as a subaltern commonplace

Stoke Newington Road is a diasporic ocean of world communities in the greater London metropolis. It is a continuous thoroughfare for the surrounding communities: Kurds, Turks, Greeks, Poles, Russians, Ukrainians, Afro-Caribbeans, and Afro-British from Jamaica to Ghana as well as orthodox Jews, Pakistanis and Indians. Reflecting the spatial and temporal positions of similar subaltern geographies, it is tucked away into the wings of London's metropolitan periphery. One must cut through London's tourist façade presented to the world in order to get to it. From central London, it takes several Underground lines to get to the Dalston-Kingsland station. What awaits at the exit is reminiscent of the similar communities of migrancy one may visit in other Western metropolises from Frankfurt to Paris. On Stoke Newington Road, as one exits the underground station, one enters into a busy urban landscape of endless sensory interplays, an aterritorialised human landscape where ethnically, racially and culturally diverse people travel into and through each other. A constant buzz of this 'community of communities' is captured symbolically in the daily bazaar, where vendors sell household items as well as groceries. Just as the wet grounds of the bazaar are prone to slippages, people who sell and buy there inevitably slip into each other's lives, into one another's sights, sounds and sweat. To be sure, upon further examination, the relations among the different ethnic and racial peoples reveal a depth beyond the carnivalesque, one characterised by various forms of tension as well as cooperation. Still, a certain aterritoriality emerges in and around Stoke Newington Road despite the co-present ethnic, racial and national identities, which remain anchored in territoriality. As if to highlight this quality, the walls facing the Underground station exit are plastered with posters that read: 'Asylum-seekers Welcome'.

[13] Foucault, 'Of Other Spaces', p. 23.
[14] Ibid., p. 22.

It is in this dynamic human geography that one of the two hubs of the Kurdish diasporic communities in London is located, the other being in the Harringay area. Through their organic popular and political links, the Kurdish communities are linked with the greater Kurdish diaspora in Europe.

'From Spain to Sweden, more than a million Kurds [in Europe] are at a crossroads,' wrote the Turkish news magazine *Aksiyon* as it introduced its investigative piece on the Kurdish diaspora in Europe.[15] 'On the one hand, they remain interested in every development in Turkey. On the other hand, they are building their future in Europe. . . . The majority originally from Turkey, Kurds are now living in all parts of Europe. . . . Today, the Kurds are the best organized minority in all of Europe, with their presence reaching from Spain to the Baltic Republics.'[16] Remarkably, the magazine notes, it has taken only a couple of decades for the Kurds of Turkey to organise themselves into a Europe-wide presence:

> The Kurds arrived in Europe as labourers in the 1960s. In the absence of any political polarization, initially they identified themselves mostly as *Gurbetci*. . . . In the 1970s, the political stirrings in Turkey were transported to Europe, dividing the *Gurbetci* population of Turks and Kurds. Beginning with the 12 March 1971 military intervention the Kurdish identity reached its apex after the 12 September 1980 military *Coup de Etat* in Turkey . . . From then on, the Kurdish identity came to the fore in Europe [among the Turkish Kurds]. Between 1984 and 1989, the Kurds began to organize in Europe. The period between 1989 and 1996, tens of thousands of Kurds moved to Europe.[17]

Martin van Bruinessen characterises the influx of tens of thousands of politicised young Kurds to Europe as a 'watershed development', sustainably expanding the Kurdish diaspora in Europe.[18] The 1989–1996 period witnessed the deepening of the political-cultural consciousness among the Turkish Kurds in Europe. Hear Lyon and Ucarer on the political background to political formation:

> Kurds are the fourth largest ethnic group in the Middle East [spanning Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria]. Within each state the Kurdish minority has faced considerable oppression. The Kurds' quest for expression of their culture and language has been denied in all states in which they reside. . . . Many Kurds have not been able to express their 'Kurdishness' in any of their traditional homelands. Of these countries, the Turkish state has been the most emphatic in denying cultural and linguistic autonomy. Thus when they [Kurds] came to Germany in the 1960 and 1970s, the barriers to the expressions of their identity were lifted in the territory of a liberal state.[19]

Germany emerged as the locus of intensification of the Kurdish political activism.[20] The young Kurds who had arrived in Germany as asylum seekers functioned as the 'catalyst', organising the nascent ethno-cultural and linguistic identities into nationalist political consciousness. 'Fertile grounds' provided by the multitudes of disaffected Turkish-Kurdish immigrant population were efficiently exploited by

[15] Aslan, 'Avrupa Kurtleri Kimlik Arayisinda'.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Martin van Bruinessen, 'Transnational Aspects of the Kurdish Question', Working Paper, Robert Schuman Center for Advanced Studies, European University Institute, Florence, 2000, p. 14. Accessed at: ⟨http://www.let.uu.nl/~martin.vanbruinessen/personal/publications/transnational_Kurds.htm⟩.
[19] Alyanna J. Lyon and Emek M. Ucarer, 'Mobilizing Ethnic Conflict: Kurdish Separatism in Germany and the PKK', in Rey Koslowski (ed.), *International Migration and Globalization of Domestic Politics* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 65 and 68.
[20] Lyon and Ucarer, 'Mobilizing Ethnic Conflict', pp. 65–6.

promises of 'respect and meaning' in life by the devoted political operatives, especially of the PKK cadres.[21] Contributing to this process was the deterioration of *status quo.* The narrowing of political space in the early 1980s for expressing Kurdish identity in Turkey,[22] coupled with the eruption of the PKK into the politico-military arena, helped to widen the real and imagined chasms between Turks and Kurds not only in Turkey but also in Europe where they otherwise lived in close geographic proximity to each other in the subaltern migrant neighbourhoods of European cities. As the positions were further sharpened into clandestine political and armed conflicts within Turkey, in Europe Kurdish militants were galvanised in the relative safety of European democracies, organising enthusiastically in public domains as well as covertly across Europe to add a trans-territorial dimension to their controls.[23] The PKK became the focal force behind the proliferation of the diasporic organising, eclipsing several other influential movements active in the Kurdish diaspora originating from Turkey.

Notwithstanding the factionalism, common concerns continued to shape the overall outlook and disposition of the Kurdish diaspora. Evidence shows that despite the divergent political orientations, numerous confluences have emerged, where the disparate efforts cohered into the broader political project of the Kurdish subjectivity throughout Europe. The net result has been the formation of a militant diasporic polity with an increasing consciousness of its political position in Europe and beyond. Political and cultural networks of print and electronic media, social clubs and cultural centres link the community together. Small businesses of all varieties operate in the periphery of the formal economies while supported by the unstable resources of informal economies spanning Europe. 'Halkevi' ('the House of People') in London embodies the dynamics of such ties as the diaspora's grounds evolve.

Halkevi in London

Halkevi has operated out of the first floor of a very large building in Stoke Newington since 1984. I visited it numerous times over the years and observed the transformation it has gone through. Early in its life, it operated as a focal point for the organization of Kurdish diasporic nationalism. During my first visit in 1996, the center had an intense political aura. Pictures of 'Kurdistan', portraits of Kurdish figures as well as the dead guerrilla fighters covered most of its walls. The first ever Kurdish television station, MED TV broadcasts filled the air in the club hall. A small bookstore stocked books dealing with Kurdish politics, culture and history along with music cassette tapes by Kurdish and Alevi-Turkish musicians. The main office performed community outreach and provided legal assistance for the local Kurdish and Turkish community. By 2005, the place had a radically different feel and look. MED TV was replaced with ROJ TV, the latest Kurdish

[21] Bruinessen, 'Transnational Aspects', p. 10. For a PKK account of the historical political conditions that activated the PKK's rise and expansion and its adaptation to the present geopolitical circumstances, see a recent series run in *Yeni Ozgur Politika*: 'PKK'den KKK'ye' (From the PKK to KKK) *Yeni Ozgur Politika*, 6–12 October 2006. For PKK's Internet website: ⟨http://www.pkk.org/⟩. For the US State Department assessment of the PKK, declaring the PKK (in all its reincarnations since 1998) as a terrorist organisation, see: ⟨http://library.nps.navy.mil/home/tgp/kurds.htm⟩. See also Wikipedia at: ⟨http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/PKK⟩. Finally, an insightful 'GlobalSecurity.org' site at: ⟨http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/pkk.htm⟩.

[22] Lyon and Ucarer, 'Mobilizing Ethnic Conflict', p. 66.

[23] Ibid., pp. 66–7.

satellite station. Gone was the bookstore, turned into a room for computer and language courses. The walls now supported various announcements of community initiatives ranging from language and computer courses, to anti-drug campaigns, to participating in local elections. In the words of its director, Halkevi now concentrates on 'service provision, networking and gaining a lot of friends in social, economic and political areas'.[24] Yet its transformation does not seem to indicate the dissolution of the original political intentionalities. If anything, 'achieving the Kurdish identity in every arena', as put by Halkevi's director, remains key to Halkevi's transformations. The political consciousness that the Kurdish community in England is a part of a larger Kurdish diaspora in Europe still animates the center. In many ways, this internalized consciousness injects confidence into the community as it confronts the challenges of 'integration' into the larger British society. The rising gang membership and drug use among the Kurdish youth are two such challenges. Interestingly, I was also told about the latent racism in the Kurdish community against other diaspora communities, especially against the '*Siyahis*' (Blacks). In response to the racial tensions, Halkevi has been organizing 'Africa Week' for the last several years, where political, cultural and social events are arranged to facilitate the conscious gathering of these people who populate the overlapping and crisscrossing spaces of Stoke Newington Road. Halkevi's director indicated that while the interest in the events was limited, they were determined to counter the prejudices between these two groups by highlighting the common interests they have as immigrant communities. Ultimately, its political affinities and sympathies aside, Halkevi appears as a node, one of the many nodes on a map of Kurdish diasporic transversality, trans/im/posed over Europe. It is a line of flight representing a broader shift of nomadic nationalism in late/postmodern politics.[25]

Fashioning and communicating politics in transversality: 'the PKK's sublime' and the Kurdish diasporic features

The key to understanding the exhilaration of the Kurdish diasporic formation is its active consciousness of its own transversality, both as a condition and a mode of life-worlds. The centrality of the transversal consciousness in turn is due to the overarching Turkish-Kurdish subaltern identity communicated out of the remnants of lives from Turkey's Republican landscapes into a compelling organising story that construes exilic mobility as both a challenge and an opportunity. Often in diasporic mobilities the dispersal of communities across multiple geographies, whether imposed or self-directed, activates resources of gathering by developing modalities sufficient to the conditions of dispersal. As Felix Guattari puts it, the newly found or imposed spatio-temporal conditions engender novel orientations in time and space. Guattari regards such conditions as 'deterritorializing intensities' that form and support 'transversalist subjectivities.'[26] Unmoored from familiar experiential anchors, subjects enter into an existential terrain in which they articulate and distribute their autonomy throughout, an act that requires a certain self-awareness, a consciousness of the alterity to be expressed and communicated spatio-temporally. Following Guattari, the transversality orienting the Kurdish diasporic formations emerges as an expression of a self-conscious 'ethico-political desire.'[27] Embodying and concentrating these transversalist subjectivities, the diaspora's political and

[24] See Halkevi Annual Report 2003–2004, p. 16.
[25] These observations are based on my numerous research visits to Halkevi between 1996 and 2006.
[26] Felix Guattari, *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1995), pp. 4–38.
[27] Guattari, *Chaosmosis*, pp. 10–18.

cultural organisations take the latent, proto-nationalist feelings among Kurds and issue them forth into a (modern) nationalist identity in surprisingly postmodern forms. This is a nationalism without a bounded sovereign space – a nomadic nationalism through which Kurds cultivate and communicate EuroKurdishness and Euroversality.

As *Aksiyon*'s analysis suggests, nationalist aspirations still animate Kurdish diasporic trajectories. At the same time, as modern diasporas go, the Kurdish experiences in Europe present several novel characteristics within the political arena along both spatial and temporal dimensions, ultimately giving rise to EuroKurdishness.

First is the unprecedented transversality through which the Kurdish diaspora is organised and maintained as one organic community across Europe. In this sense, in the itineraries of their everyday needs, Europe's diasporic Kurds appear to visualise and communicate all of Europe as the 'commonplace' of their diasporic lives. To use the Glissantian metaphor, Europe is recast and acted upon as a 'transversal sea' that scatters and gathers diasporic Kurds from Sweden to Spain.

In transversality, identity practices of the Kurds take on different dynamics. The national inclusions and exclusions locating them among Europe's others grow increasingly less convincing as more and more Kurdish bodies are thrust into the 'shared deterritorializations' across Europe.[28] It is here that the Kurdish diaspora manifests a second distinct characteristic: the mastery of translation of cultural and political territorialities into borderisations that support the diaspora community as an organic network. Kurds emerge as borderised subjects consciously and in the course of their dispersal throughout Europe. Borderised Kurdish bodies are not hybrid bodies on the borderlines of two or three different cultures, but rather transversalist or extra-border bodies, maintained in flows, networks, and webs of relations.

Enabling these identities are cutting-edge instruments employed in support of the postmodern Kurdish identity formations, in which the land is not claimed as sovereign territory, but as Deleuze and Guattari put it, emerge as the '*sol*' or the grounds on which political agency is activated. The story of the satellite television station MED-TV, for example, is instructive in understanding the resourcefulness of the Kurdish diaspora, articulating and communicating Kurdish experiences into transversal coherence.

From MedTV to MedyaTV to ROJ TV: communicating people into nation

MED-TV was established in 1995 by Kurds closely associated with the political wings of the PKK. It quickly became an extra-territorial tool of identity for both the diaspora Kurds and the Kurds in the Middle East.[29] Turkey, however, saw MED-TV as the propaganda organ of the PKK and campaigned for the cancellation of its broadcasting license. In 1999 the British Broadcasting Authority (ITC) cancelled MED-TV's license on

[28] See Deleuze and Gauttari's *A Thousand Plateaus* on the concept of 'shared territorializations', which I find to be akin to Agamben's notion of 'reciprocal extraterritorialities' in his commentary on Hannah Arendt's 'We Refugees'. See Agamben, 'We Refugees'.

[29] For press statements and other articles on the significance of MED-TV, see ⟨http://www.med-tv.be/med/⟩.

the charge that it had not maintained its objectivity and that it had promoted terrorism. Overall, MED-TV's significance goes well beyond the immediate political context within which it emerged. It lies in the fact that it was established at all, and more surprisingly, established by a diasporic political movement, considered otherwise to be without agency in the international system of states. According to some observers, the establishment of MED-TV was a 'revolution in cyberspace by a stateless nation to overcome the fragmentation of its language and homeland.'[30] Its use of satellite technology to cross 'forbidden borders' was for a 'stateless' group unprecedented. Its production activities, however, were equally as mobile across various borders. MED-TV expanded from its corporate headquarters in London and its main studios in Brussels, operating production facilities in Cologne, Stockholm and Moscow. Maintaining production offices in five or six different countries allowed it to acquire the flexibility to continue broadcasting in the event of a closure of one or many of its production offices.[31] Its programs were in multiple languages, including Turkish and various Kurdish dialects, and were oriented towards a cross section of ethnic and cultural groups throughout the Middle East.

As previously noted, MED-TV's broadcast license was canceled in England. Shortly after, MED-TV was re-opened in Paris under a new name MEDYA-TV. As MEDYA-TV, its schedule, programming, and structure remained largely unchanged. Considering the financial and political capital Turkey expended to have MED-TV closed, the rebirth of MED-TV as MEDYA-TV was highly significant. It demonstrated the resources diasporic organizations can bring to their activities.[32] MEDYA-TV was forced off the air in 2002, but ROJ TV, based in Denmark, quickly replaced it. ROJ TV is still on the air. As with its predecessors, Turkey regards ROJ TV as the mouthpiece of the PKK terror and propaganda, demanding that it is closed down. Turkey's intense lobbying includes enlisting the United States' pressure on the Danish Government. Ironically, this pressure appears to be solidifying ROJ TV as a locus of political praxis and for communicating global Kurdish identity.[33]

The history of the Kurdish satellite television attests to a significant feature of the Kurdish diasporic formations across Europe. While the everyday imperatives of scattered Kurdish lives historically energised petite links of the diaspora into self-conscious presences, the inchoate expressions acquired definitive forms, thus political meanings and force, through the overarching political intentionality enacted primarily by the PKK. Either directly through the work of its professional cadres or indirectly through its proxies such as the satellite television networks, PKK was able to communicate and mobilise latent proto-nationalist emotions into a diasporic political community.

The PKK's position as an overarching orchestrator makes visible a third characteristic of the Kurdish diaspora in Europe. The disparate experiences of the Kurdish populations from England to France, Sweden to Spain, and Italy to Romania, are accorded their transversal convergence around or through the PKK's ambit. In an orchestration that appears paradoxical, conducted centrally yet Euroversally, a Kurdish 'diasporic commonplace' is formed under what I call the 'sublime politics' of the PKK. Even the rival Kurdish movements are influenced in the broader diasporic environment by the PKK's sublime.

[30] Rebwar Fatah and Siamak Rezaei Durroei. Centenary of the Kurdish Media (1998). Accessed at: ⟨http://www.cogsci.ed.ac.uk/siamakr/Kurdish/MEDIA/centenary.html⟩.

[31] Amir Hassanpour, 'MED-TV, Britain and the Turkish State: A Stateless Nation's Quest for Sovereignty in the Sky,' (1995) Accessed at: ⟨http://www.cogsci.ed.ac.uk/~siamakr/Kurdish/MEDIA/MED-TV/med-acad.html⟩.

[32] See 'Medya TV Starts Broadcasting'. Accessed electronically on 4 March 2000 at: ⟨http://www.cogsci.ed.ac.uk/~siamakr/Kurdish/KURDICA/1999/JUL/tv.html⟩.

[33] Find its Internet hub at: ⟨http://www.roj.tv/index/index.php⟩.

This transcendental force is critical to understanding the centrality of the PKK to Kurdish diasporic politics in Europe. The very name of the PKK invokes both terror and awe in the popular consciousness such that the name operates as a 'politics-machine', instituting its own hegemonic interpretive and constitutive orders layered into the existing terrains. Three stages of the sublime – 'apprehension', 'awe and terror', and 'exaltation', are experienced in the emergence of the 'emotive transcendence' associated with the PKK.[34] The experience of the ordinary Kurds with the PKK evolves into seeing it as an organisation larger than themselves (apprehension) in relation to which they see themselves as having infinitesimal powers (awe and fear) and finally, in association with which they feel empowered and enlarged (exaltation). Ultimately, the PKK's sublime appears as that force that 'supersedes' reason and realism and takes its Kurdish subjects to the edge of 'supersensibility, terror, and exaltation.'[35] The PKK's sublime, however, is a 'system'. It needs not only constant production, but also it 'morphs and adapts' to the critical conditions of the shifting political periods.[36] A remarkable amount of time, energy, and resources appears to go into the organisation of diaspora in light of the PKK's image and mystique, as shown in Rah's life.

Of trails and maps: 1997–2003, Rah the activist

I met Rah in Northern Germany. Rah was an organizing figure in Kurdish politics. He was also working for a Kurdish daily *Ozgur Politika*, printed in Turkish within Germany and distributed throughout Europe. I was always surprised to find this newspaper in news-stands in European cities – a sign of the diaspora's capacity to communicate. Rah also produced weekly radio programs on Kurdish issues and managed a Kurdish social center. He traveled frequently to organize and participate in Kurdish community activities. He was in contact with other activists all around Germany and Europe. These contacts revealed the trails and portals into the Kurdish diaspora communities at work around Europe, but visible only to those actively seeking them. Once, Rah invited me to a football tournament among Kurdish clubs from northern Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands. A simple yet instructive window into activism in community building, the tournament lasted a whole day, with families picnicking along the field, exchanging news about the goings on in their communities and caucusing in preparation for forthcoming events. Much of the coordination for an annual Kurdish march in Düsseldorf, one of many to be held throughout Europe, took place during the tournament. Movement emerges as central to Kurdish diasporic organizing as shown in Rah's life. When Rah was not traveling, he received traveling activists whose visits furthered the political orchestration of diasporic energies and whose appearance in the communities evidently worked to solidify the PKK's sublime as a terrifying and awe-inspiring force. An ideological inflexibility, coupled with the hierarchical and authoritarian elements of historic Kurdish identity, played a significant role in this politics of control and domination. Once a friend in Northern Germany remarked instructively that, 'a flick of finger will mobilize the masses of Kurds, because of both genuine commitment to the ethno-national aspirations and intimidation and fear of social ostracization'. Regardless, as people are mobilized and conditioned through a mixture of real concern and fear, a certain *habitus* of transversal or transnational nature is developed. Acting across multiple political landscapes in concert with the idea of collective

[34] See Lee Rozelle, *Ecosublime: Environmental Awe and Terror from New World to Oddworld* (Tuscaloosa, AL: The University of Alabama Press, 2006), p. 3.
[35] Rozelle, *Ecosublime*, p. 5.
[36] Ibid., p. 5.

Kurdish subalternity normalizes transversal space as the domain for the Kurdish subjectivity. Thus emerges the conceptualization that the diaspora Kurds are citizens of Europe, that is, they are EuroKurds. Rah himself reflected this emergent subjectivity through the contradictions in his orthodox, unmovable positions on Kurdish politics contrasting strikingly with his constant spatial mobility.

The organisational dimension of the Kurdish diaspora sheds light on a fourth characteristic defined by the speed of the diaspora's movements under fluid dynamics. Primarily, the Kurdish diasporic subjectivity is spatio-temporally shaped as a function of temporality compressed by the speed of its movements across Europe, rather than in a normative deference to exclusionary territoriality of states and borders as the appropriate limit of the political. Speed and mobility truncate territoriality as the definitive mode of political engagement.

While the Kurdish diasporic identities find a mélange of expressions, hypermobility as a strategy of politics appears common to all. From the most local clubs to the politically most far-reaching organisations, Kurdish diasporic institutions are astoundingly mobile. They add movement to movement and resource to resource. They create and communicate opportunities through unprecedented flexibility. Take for example the Kurdish Parliament in Exile.[37] Founded in 1995 in Brussels, Belgium, the Parliament wandered Europe as its exilic ground, meeting in Italy, Belgium, France, Spain and Sweden. In 2000, the Parliament was dissolved into the newly created Kurdistan National Congress (KNC). The KNC held its conventions in Brussels and numerous other European cities. What is noteworthy is that as one vehicle of Kurdish diasporic politics is blocked, another is opened elsewhere, which, akin to Paul Virilio's thinking on politics of 'flexibility and speed',[38] finds resources through flows and networks in the heterotopic spaces of the diaspora.

Against these four characteristics, it is possible to argue that the Kurds in diaspora grow transformative of the modalities of political identities both consciously and unconsciously.[39] They not only cut through modernity's spatial maps and borders but also their own familiar traditional identity borders to become what I have thus far called 'transversal' subjects. Put differently, Kurds cultivate transversality in part because they comprehend and privilege transversal politics as profitable and in part because they are compelled to do so in order to enact their agency in displacement. Transversality becomes the inexorable mode of their heterotopic living. The epigrammatic poem 'Doppelmann' (Doubleman) reflects such living. They carry multiple worlds within them, where borders run through their physical and emotional bodies.

It is through such existential tension that diasporic Kurds learn to walk on both banks of the river. Even further, they learn to inhabit the river itself as a space through which many shores of their lives – from the Middle East to Europe – are swept together. Comprehended in this way, transversality frames and communicates the Kurdish diasporic universe while speed and mobility emerge as its definitive elements.

[37] See: Bruinessen, 'Transnational Aspects', p. 18. Also see Bruinessen, 'The Kurds in Movement', p. 13.
[38] Paul Virilio, *Open Sky* (London: Verso, 1997).
[39] Fredric Jameson, *Political Unconscious* (London: Methuen, 1981).

Communicating diasporic grounds as transversal 'moral geographies'

The knowledge of the transversal is not produced and communicated easily, or without pain. It requires a certain 'detachment from earlier attachments'[40], though not by rejecting them but by engaging them, by working them into new spaces. 'Survival', Edward Said writes in *Culture and Imperialism*, 'is about the connections between things: in Eliot's phrase, reality cannot be deprived of the other echoes [that] inhabit the garden'.[41] So in diaspora the earlier attachments help shape new sensibilities, different ways of seeing and experiencing the world. The narrow gate of diaspora thus opens to new 'moral geographies'.[42]

We know that such a reconfiguration of consciousness in diasporic grounds is not unique to the Kurdish experiences. Historically, other diasporic formations have recast moral boundaries in order to create their own normative maps. What is unique in the Kurdish case is the deepening and intensification of the transversal mode as diaspora's political, cultural and economic mode of life. In light of their experiences, diasporic Kurds reshape the relations of moral exchanges in a strategic disregard for the presumed dominant anchors of states, territories and nations. The disregard is not organised chaotically but through a political calculus traceable to Euro-Kurdishness as a collective identity. The traces of EuroKurdishness as an ascendant subjectivity were expressed in an interview in 2002 in London.

'Kacaktik, tatil yaptik' (we were illegal, but we had a vacation)

Around his neck, he supported a gold necklace of the map of Kurdistan. He was from Elbistan in southeastern Turkey. He came to England illegally. Back in Turkey, he obtained a fake identity by bribing a 'muhtar' (a neighborhood or a village head), and traveled on a fake passport to Croatia. From Croatia he crossed into Slovenia, and was ultimately taken to Italy by a speedboat across the Adriatic Sea. He recounted with excitement his experiences on the speedboat. In Slovenia, they walked into a resort and spent a few hours relaxing and eating. He stated with a still visible excitement: '*Kacaktik, tatil yaptik*' (We were illegal, but we had a vacation). From Italy, he was taken to France by train, where his relatives picked him up from the train station and transported him to the north. His means of transportation to England was a train, but he would not tell me exactly how he managed non-detection. He has been in London for four years yet still speaks elementary English. He had enrolled himself in English and computer courses in the Halkevi. After improving his English, he said that he might go to Paris to join his relatives. His reasoning: anywhere in Europe would be acceptable so long as he can practice his Kurdish identity. 'We are Europeans (*Avrupaliyiz*)', he added.

Euro-Kurdishness is cultivated through such a sense of aterritoriality. Kurds often use the Turkish word '*sinirsiz*' (borderless) in order to define what they mean by Euro-Kurdishness. Arguably, in the modern imaginary, it is rare to think of borderlessness as an enabling condition productive of political coherence. In the diasporic condition of the Kurds, the tension is resolved through an appeal to the

[40] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), p. 335.
[41] Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 336.
[42] See David Campbell and Michael J. Shapiro, 'Moral Spaces: Rethinking Ethics and World Politics' in David Campbell and Michael J. Shapiro (eds.), *Moral Spaces* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

libratory possibilities of territorial dispersal. The following story highlights how displacement can be construed as the condition engendering a certain coherence of identity.

From Gulistan to Kurdistan: naming as politics

A young Kurdish women and her sister in London sit across the table, talking about their lives. The older sister does the talking while the younger one, named '*Kurdistan*', nods in approval. Her name is striking but not surprising given that many Kurds in Europe express their Kurdish identity through naming in Kurdish – a right constitutionally available in Turkey yet is subject to capriciousness of the political mood. It was intriguing, however, to hear that the girl had used a variation on the name, '*Gulistan*', back in Turkey. While in Turkey, in their mind, they used Gulistan as a substitute for Kurdistan, a knowledge communicated only within the family as a declaration of their identity and as a defiance of the Turkish state. Now in London, they can refer to her as Kurdistan publicly, which at once also resounds Gulistan. The displacement from the territorial source of their identity – Kurdistan – paradoxically appears to make it possible to recognize it precisely as such publicly.

In the Kurdish diaspora, the paradox of agency found in displacement is visible especially in families scattered across Europe. The story of a family I met in Germany in 1999 illustrates this diasporic unity that extends through networks and branches.[43] Most family members live in Germany; other members are dispersed over the Netherlands, Switzerland, France, and Sweden. They are in constant touch, creating the (familial) transversal space with its trails and paths, its passwords and code words, and its floating landmarks and shifting markers. Most members are multilingual, almost all speaking both Turkish and Kurdish, and many speaking one or more European languages with varying degrees of mastery. But, more importantly, the mastery they have is a mastery of the spaces they live and communicate across.

This condition is increasingly common. As the second and the third generations enter the scene, the proficiency of such agency is deepened and sharpened. Search for employment, asylum and political activism coupled with social and cultural shifts, such as marriage, generally work as centrifugal forces. Families are scattered across Europe, but their lives remain linked in familial and familiar routines. In this way, they transform the European map of territories and states. A young Kurdish woman I interviewed in London in 2002 embodied this dynamic.

From 'excommunication to communication': living in transversal 'crevices'

She was in her late 20s. She referred to me as *heval* (friend) in Kurdish throughout the conversation although we spoke in Turkish. She was born in Turkey, but grew up in Germany. She came to England several years ago after marrying a Kurd living in London. She traveled to Germany and the Netherlands regularly to visit her relatives and friends. She characterized her life as 'living through crevices' (*yariks*) in Europe, which for her signified diasporic life as a condition of both limitless openings and profound alienations.

[43] Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, pp. 7–10.

This tension seemed central to her thinking and yet signalled neither a paralysis nor a Pollyannic unrealism. At the end of our interview, she invited me to have dinner at a restaurant next door – one of many dozens of Kurdish-operated restaurants with Turkish names in the neighbourhood.

It is true that territory remains paradoxically central to the life of the Kurds in diaspora. Yet, in diaspora's protean links, territorial obstacles are often renegotiated into territorial resources that allow people to see and communicate throughout all of Europe as a space for living.

It is worth repeating that the Kurdish diaspora's openness is compelled in Europe's shifting political and economic landscapes. Europe is 'unifying' without evolving extra-territoriality or even aterritoriality. If anything, the very idea of a united Europe appears to be in crisis as the ethno-nationalist intensities coupled with the recessional conjuncture of the capitalist economy in Europe are augmenting neo-nationalist tendencies across many European countries. Unlike Europe's captivity to the idea of territoriality, the Kurdish diaspora owes no experiential debt to the ideas of territoriality. If anything, the *telos* of the statist territoriality is a reminder of their political subalternity in the world of states, nations, and territories.

Still, the diasporic Kurds appear to suffer from the trauma of letting go the central organising ideal of the territorial nation-state. Paradoxically, aspiring to this dream lies the foundation of their discovery of a new mode of life that casts Europe as a new homeland. That is how the Kurds begin to be shaped into EuroKurds, as the director of Halkevi first suggested in 2000 in London.[44] EuroKurdishness is thus occurring in spite of and because of the Kurds' nationalist desires. It is both resented and welcomed. The tensions inherent in this predicament are channelled into social centres and coffee houses, soccer fields and theatre halls, grocery stores and restaurants.

In fact, the Kurdish diaspora in Europe can be mapped by using such lines of departure that appear apolitical at first. Restaurants are particularly insightful as nodal points of different *ethnoscapes.* As in other historical migratory/diasporic formations, they are among the earliest registers of the sociocultural memories of Kurdish diaspora. Inversely, of course, these restaurants can be used to re-map Europe, to reveal Europe's 'ethno-migrant' countenance that never makes it into the tourist maps. Ultimately, linked to one another through the informal sub-political networks, these restaurants communicate a novel 'shared re-territorialisation', or better, transversalisation of individual European countries. What materialises is a common space of Kurdishness expressed extra-territorially in distinct sights, smells, and tastes. Travelling from Germany to the Netherlands with a friend, I've learned what this recasting of territory might mean in culinary terms.

Tales from history's culinary trails: communication, identity, and the yogurt soup

I was hungry and wanted to eat at a restaurant we had just passed by. My companion asked me to wait. His reason: there was an excellent Turkish-Kurdish restaurant across the border in the Netherlands. So I waited, deferring to the transversal knowledge of the culinary landscape. In Paris, I suppressed my hunger so that I could go to a restaurant near

[44] My interview in London, England (2000).

Gare du Nord, where, as I learned coincidentally, they served food in a room honoring Ahmet Kaya, a celebrated Turkish-Kurdish singer who died in late 2000 in exile in Paris. *Aksiyon* reported that the largest Kurdish center in Paris is now named 'Ahmet Kaya Cultural Center'.[45] In Vienna, I waited to have my dinner at a Turkish-Kurdish restaurant, now a chain across Europe, where they served my favorite *yayla corba* (yogurt soup) but had to tolerate the bitterness of the cook who berated me for being a 'half-bred' (Turkish and Kurdish) and refused to talk to me thereafter. The following day, I went to the second location of the restaurant and enjoyed the yogurt soup in silence. In Budapest, I was recommended a Middle Eastern restaurant, which turned out to be Turkish Kurdish-owned – an elaborate establishment where again I ordered the yogurt soup among other specialties. Last but not least, in Bremen, Germany, I was taken by my Turkish friends to a Kurdish restaurant with a '*tandir*' (tondour) oven and enjoyed a large plate of kebab variety and the yogurt soup. The soup clearly spanned diasporic emotions, communicating a certain identity.

The Kurdish culinary enterprises introduce new spatio-temporal rhythms into the host countries and their peoples. As *Aksiyon* reports, thousands of restaurants across Europe support the Kurdish agency. For example, reportedly, in Paris the majority of the 'Turkish' restaurants are, in fact, Kurdish owned or operated. In recent years, there has been a shift in naming restaurants reflecting claims to Kurdishness. The restaurants 'Roj' (the 'Sun'), 'Harran' and 'Diyarbakir' (famed Kurdish cities within Turkey) represent such examples in the Haringay area in London. While it appears that this is a limited economy of exchange, for the Kurds, as in similar diasporic communities, it also becomes a demonstration of their being, a declaration of their cultural and political agency traceable to kitchens. Culinary insurrections ultimately work to reorganise political cultural and economic flows.

After the sublime, Euro-Kurdishness

Undoubtedly, the Kurdish diaspora is not a seamless series of events. It is confronted by many challenges. Mirroring the present treatment of other diasporic populations across Europe, it is subjected to popular and governmental pressures. It is also challenged by its social and cultural traditions. The traditions on gender roles and feudal class hierarchy exercise considerable power. Patriarchal dispositions, for example, continue to operate in much of the Kurdish diaspora. Women's space remains truncated, although pressures from within and without the diasporic community work to expand its horizons. Subject to the steady and unexpected effects of diaspora as a constant movement, diasporic uncertainties and ambiguities loosen up male agency by virtue of displacing it from familiar social and cultural grounds. In addition to shifting gender relations, the Kurdish diaspora is replete with other forms of tensions and contradictions. Economic subalternity, manifested in unemployment or underemployment, is the foremost challenge, effectively subsuming Kurds' lives as epiphenomenal within the calculus of the dominant neoliberal regimes across Europe. In short, a 'relational subalternism' transfigures the Kurdish diaspora in the cauldron of both internal and external pressures.[46]

[45] See the Center's webpage in French: ⟨http://www.kurdeparis.org/⟩.
[46] Alberto Moreiras, 'Hybridity and Double Consciousness', *Cultural Studies*, 13:3 (1999), p. 377.

The immediate external challenges facing Kurdish organising are chiefly political. Kurdish organisations, under suspicion for links to the PKK, which is officially classified as a terrorist organisation in many European countries, are held up to stricter scrutiny. Given the Kurdish diasporic community's historical ties to the PKK's ambit of influence, many Kurds inhabit a liminal position, caught between the PKK's fearsome sublime and the ire of their host country governments. Ber, living in Germany, is a good example.

Ber and nationalism as an ethical-cultural ideal

Ber is a Kurdish refugee I met in Northern Germany. As far back as 2000, he talked about an emerging European Kurdish identity, both within and outside of the PKK's hegemonic ambit. As with many Kurds across Europe, Ber employed the word '*sinirsiz*' in order to highlight the expanding parameters of the Kurdish political and social identities. He suggested how Kurdish identities cannot, and should not, be confined to nationalist/nativist sentiments articulated by one movement or another. Until recently, Ber was ostracized from the 'mainstream' Kurdish community in his town, for his ideas were not in line with those of the PKK. However, as the PKK is 'disintegrated' in Europe, as a reflection of the changes afoot, he has now been treated differently. 'People', he stated, 'are now acknowledging and greeting me'. Ber was hopeful that the Kurdish diasporic dynamics would grow more 'pluralist' and 'democratic' in the near future. He also stressed that the Kurdish nationalism need not be limited by the idea that it needs a 'sovereign territory', but can be practiced 'internationally' more as an 'ethical-cultural orientation' than a territorial-political regime. By 2005, Ber was finally convinced that Kurds had become a permanent feature of European landscapes.

The PKK's hegemonic influence, as exercised in the 1980s and 1990s, has declined substantially since the capture and imprisonment of its leader in Turkey in 1998. While many Kurds recognise, even support, the PKK's hegemonic role in the mobilisation of the Kurdish diaspora throughout Europe, many others criticise it for stifling the creativity, openness, and autonomous politics in the constitution of the diaspora. In all my interviews, this point, while not uncommon, was often articulated in whispers for the fear of the PKK sanction. Given the PKK's security challenge to the Turkish government since the early 1980s, in the eyes of many Turks, any favourable sentiment towards the PKK is regarded as simply treasonous. For many Kurds, the retort is that the PKK is a 'symptom of their realities and not the cause'. A huge chasm separates these two positions, and the two peoples, ironically reinforcing the respective nationalisms. Overall, both Turkish and Kurdish observers caution against underestimating the role the PKK, if not the very idea of the PKK, plays through various political and cultural incarnations. Although it is difficult to map it empirically, the PKK is a focal player, having evolved and diversified through social, cultural, and economic organisations.

It has to be stated also that, to many Kurds, whether or not the PKK is becoming epiphenomenal within the Kurdish diaspora ought not to be the principal concern. The prevailing belief is that Kurdish political aspirations have been firmly established around the pan-Kurdish identity of EuroKurdishness. No single political organisation or movement is indispensable for its continued growth. Social and cultural centres, such as Halkevi in London and Ahmet Kaya Cultural Center in Paris, as well

as the Kurdish Institutes of Paris, Berlin and Stockholm, solidify and communicate EuroKurdish identity across Europe.

The Kurdish Institute in Paris

The Institute is located on Rue de Lafayette in Paris. Founded in 1985, the Institute is financed by the French government, and in that sense, it is distinguished from other organizations in Europe. It is a resource center, maintaining one of the largest libraries of Kurdish materials. The Institute organizes cultural and social events while also serving as clearing house of services for French Kurds. During my only visit, I witnessed a poetry reading by a young Kurdish poet who had published a French language poetry book and was receiving critical acclaim in France's literary circles. Such events, it was suggested, were exemplary of the main objective of the Kurdish Institute, which, working with its counterparts in Brussels and Berlin, and Washington DC, engenders political-cultural capital for Kurds in France and elsewhere.[47]

True to the conditions of its emergence, the diasporic community remains highly mobile. As I indicated before, this mobility is, at some level, a forced mobility. Because of the territorially unbounded realities of their identities – an absence of sovereign control over a territory by Kurds – Kurdish identity performances, including those of Kurdish nationalism, are practised in movement. And because they have to be practised in movement, in the process of moving, these performances issue a nomadic/transversal mode of identity, not as a temporary model of life, but as a mode of struggle. In the forced mobility of their diaspora, Kurds communicate and practise identity in forms disembedded from modern territoriality and statism.

This is not to intimate a total freedom from the territorial imperative, but to argue that territory can be creatively negotiated. It can be incorporated into the programmes and projects of identity performances. At other times, it can be marginalised, and yet elsewhere ignored altogether. Perhaps, as Deleuze and Guattari put it, for the diasporic person, territory ceases to be territory with its paradigmatic ties to the state/nation/citizen ensemble, and simply becomes a 'ground' for the negotiation of diasporic experiences and identities.[48]

2003–06: What happened to Rah?

In a sign of the changing Kurdish diaspora, in 2005, I found out that Rah had established his own business. He had moved to another town with his brother and their families to set up his venture. His neighbors remarked how Rah had become a businessman. Rah's journey is not exceptional among the Kurds in Europe. A number of developments in the last decade has inaugurated a shift in the content and contours of the Kurdish diaspora. With the coming of age of the second and third generation Kurds, increasing educational and linguistic competencies, accumulation of greater social and economic capital, coupled

[47] The Institute is not affiliated with the PKK. Its sympathies lie with a rival Turkish-Kurdish movement, KOMKAR, operating in many European countries. In contrast to the organisations within the PKK's sphere of influence in European countries, the Institute enjoys unparallelled legitimacy in France and beyond in both governmental and non-governmental circles.

[48] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, p. 381.

with the release from the 'sublime hold' of PKK politics, the Kurdish diasporic existence has arguably acquired both horizontal and vertical depths and intensity. Kurds remain active in more diverse ways than ever in the political, social and cultural life of their host countries. Moreover, their activities span national boundaries in organization and coordination of efforts and reflect a consciousness of the broader diasporic community.

Conclusion: communicating the world to IR

Time and again, the capacity of displaced people to speak and be heard surprises, even scares, many. What is instructive for me in this work is precisely that capacity, that agency, cultivated and communicated in a thousand channels and trails. As demonstrated by Kurds across Europe, the diasporic agency can recast bounded territories into transversal sites of living. Maps, trails, and diasporas come together in transformative ways that can undo the myth of modernity's spatial story and, as Richard K. Ashley put it, 're-inscribe the borders and boundaries of the world of historical happenings and possibilities'.[49]

Now more than ever, historical happenings are producing contemporary possibilities that militate against the disciplinary boundaries imposed upon our political imagination through traditional IR. The force of such shifts derives from people's willingness to employ practices and knowledges that mix, traverse and, in effect, communicate differently the boundaries of the methods and idioms of analyses traditionally dominant in IR and the convergent social scientific discourses. Ultimately, such practices and knowledges show how 'living' exceeds theory that attempts to contain it. IR ought to be more reflective of the struggles in contemporary politics. It ought to grow attentive and sufficient to novel contours and substances of shifting global relations. It ought to be sufficient to the disparate languages, from verbal to visual and from poetic to political, which express and energise new horizons.

Following Mattelart, it is possible to contend that IR has largely failed to effect a transition from the 'paradigm of the mechanic' (of states, territories, and nations) to the 'paradigm of the fluid' (of rising interactive transversality) which characterises the increasingly post-Cartesian spatio-temporalities.[50] IR's fidelity to the paradigm of the mechanic, communicated under the guise of 'theoretical rigour' in the dominant literature, has ironically rendered it increasingly incapable of comprehending the rich and complex transformations of the subjects IR claims as its own. IR has resisted efforts aimed at theorising and communicating this nexus even as states and nations have always been (and are now more deeply and intensely) enacted and communicated in the confluences of the networks of the mechanic and of the fluid.

However, the intransigence has also spawned critical 'counterplots' from within and without the domain of international relations. The post-structuralist interventions, which communicated historical contingency and process into IR discourses, the 'Aesthetic turn' revealing the political in the poetical, and finally, the 'Ethical turn', embodied in part in theorisations of the bio-political governmentalities, have begun

[49] Richard K. Ashley, 'Imposing International Purpose: Notes on a Problematic of Governance', in Ernst-Otto Czempiel and James N. Rosenau (eds.), *Global Changes and Theoretical Challenges: Approaches to World Politics for the 1990s* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1989), p. 259.
[50] Mattelart, 'Communications/Excommunications', p. 28.

to realign, in Mattelart's words, a 'discourse [that had been] imprisoned within [its own] occidental[ist] logos.'[51]

Together, the central contribution of this critical mass of works has been to reveal the inexorable 'heterogeneity' of the many parts that constitute the actual and theoretical commonplaces of international relations. Yet, without the syncretic modes of their theoretical and methodological attitudes, the ontological transversality between the mechanic and the fluid, the political and the poetical, and aesthetics and ethics could not have been communicated. Resounding the subterranean transversality at work in such common or shareable places, locations, and positions reveals radical democratic openings and unexpected possibilities in politics.

I suggest that the Kurdish diasporic militations across Europe highlight such lines of shift, communicating fresh political formations. Take the 'transversalist' potential in the life of Rah, the Kurdish activist in Germany.

Rah and the crossroads of future horizons

In spite of his orthodox positions on the Kurdish politics, Rah had very amicable relations with the members of the Turkish community. As a source of hope for the future, I witnessed such friendly relationships between Turks and Kurds throughout Europe. A playful antagonism prevailed in their encounters, based on the recognition of each other's relative positions as ethnic contenders in the political context of Turkey and as immigrants collectively inhabiting spaces of subalternity within Germany, Austria, France, or the Netherlands. This knowledge, coupled with the historical cultural confluences produced in Turkey, appeared to bring them into overlapping, although occasionally conflictual, circles and networks. The ethno-nationalist rivalry was never sufficient to terminate the reciprocal transversal negotiations. The millennium-long co-existence of the two peoples continues to bring them together.

While not the definitive condition, this dynamic operates throughout Europe in both Turkish-Kurdish communities. It points to the 'lines of flight' by which the relations between Kurds and Turks can be reoriented from orchestrated antagonism to conscious and peaceful alliances and partnership based on the recognition of one another's political humanity. Kurds and Turks engaging in such reciprocal 'aterritorialities' is not a dream, but an already extant reality. Given that, one expects, indeed demands, that IR picks up on such realities at work and communicates them as the obscured substance of international relations. That this does not happen is, as I said in the introduction, a political artifact and not a historical inevitability. In the end, life overrides attempts to reduce the rich and complex texture of the political to states, nations, and borders alone. Our task, among others, appears to communicate the world to IR.

[51] Ibid., p. 28.