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This chapter examines the Kurdish diaspora's ethno-political battles for identity. Much work on the Kurdish diaspora has been carried out in relation to Kurds on the continent and has focused on the Kurds' antagonistic relationship with Turkey, examining Kurds' desire for the recognition of their ethnic identity and struggle, and their associated anti-Turkey mobilisation and activities. For example Demir (2012), Griffiths (2000), Wahlbeck (1998) have identified the ways in which Kurdish politics have featured in the lives and discourses of Kurds in the UK since the late 1980s. Eccarius-Kelly (2002) has provided a fascinating exposition of legislative pressures and political lobbying of Kurds in Germany to the European Parliament and the Council of Europe. Others, for example, Eliassi (2013) Leggewie (1996); Lyon and Uçarer (2001), Østergaard-Nielsen (2001) and Van Bruinessen (1998) have examined in detail the ways in which Kurdish diasporic activism has an impact on the Kurdish movement in Turkey and in Europe. Whilst acknowledging the importance of diasporic Kurds' mobilisation activities, this chapter will examine the translational activities of Kurds in London by presenting detailed ethnographic data and analysis on the various ways in which diasporic Kurds translate their suffering and rebellion to British audiences. The chapter will discuss how this translation involves the need to

undertake ‘ethno-political tuition’; the difficulties of making the battle ‘palatable’ for British audiences; the ‘ethnic entrepreneurial labouring’ in which Kurds engage as well as how the *translation* of Kurdish culture, struggle and rebellion is central for the *transnational* battles of Kurds.

Kurds from Turkey¹ make up a sizeable proportion of north London’s ethnic minority population. In fact it is thought that many who are regarded as ‘Turks’ in London are of Kurdish origin,² having arrived in the UK as refugees from the late 1980s onwards. Most originate from Maraş, Elbistan, Malatya and Sivas (Griffiths, 2002; Wahlbeck, 1998). The movement of Kurds from Turkey has been brought about by the suppression of their cultural and linguistic rights in Turkey, their forceful displacement from Kurdish villages, as well as their facing multiple forms of economic deprivation and social exclusion in Turkey (see for example, Bayir, 2013; Houston, 2004; Human Rights Watch, 2010 and 2012; Saraçoğlu, 2010; Zeydanlıoğlu, 2012). Kurds have been seeking asylum in the UK since the 1980s. Most Kurds in London are Alevis, a minority religious sect in Turkey (Demir, 2012). Alevis - whether they are Kurdish or Turkish - have faced persecution in Turkey, for example, as demonstrated by the events of ‘Madımak’ in Sivas in 1993 and Istanbul Gazi in 1995. Whilst Sunni Turks are the dominant group in Turkey (both numerically and culturally), in London Alevi Kurds constitute the majority of those from Turkey.

¹ Throughout this article when I refer to ‘Kurds’, I mean Kurds from Turkey.

² The total number of Kurds from Turkey in the UK is a rough estimation. It is thought to be between 100.000 and 180.000. The Home Office only records the country of origin of asylum seekers, but not their ethnicity. The 2011 census in the UK, on the other hand, is thought to underestimate their numbers. This is due to a mixture of reasons. For example new migrants can be reluctant to complete the census or have informal living and work arrangements and thus can fall through the gaps. Also, Kurds from Turkey can be reluctant to define themselves as ‘Kurdish’ for various historical and social reasons, especially due to what has been regarded as ‘Turkification’ policies in Turkey.

Kurds are now a considerable component of multicultural North London, not only in terms of size but also in terms of their political voice and activism. In Haringey they run many community organisations, off-licences, catering businesses and shops. They are politically active and increasingly involved in the cultural, social and political life of North London (Enneli, Modood, Bradley, 2005; Pattison and Tavsanoglu, 2002). Since 2006 they have been successful in electing councillors for Hackney, Haringey and Enfield. As Hassanpour and Mojab state, the Kurds of Turkey, in comparison with Kurds from elsewhere, for example, 'have maintained a hegemonic presence in diaspora politics' (2004, p. 222). In recent years such activism has expanded and widened, and increasingly involves a battle with Turkey via civic and cultural activism and recognition in Europe. Kurds have created a vibrant diasporic space in Europe and have engaged in various types of transnational activities, for example, via social and economic remittances aimed at Kurdish civil society and parties in Turkey and via broadcasting to Turkey from Kurdish satellite channels based in Europe (Ayata, 2008, 2011; Gunes, 2012). Their transnational networks are also sustained through the grounded everyday links and contacts they form and continue to form, spanning various EU countries and Turkey. As highlighted by Soguk (2008, p.176), they are becoming increasingly 'Euroversal'. My aim in this chapter is to examine how politicised diasporic Kurds in London have built and crafted a battlespace where they tell a story of Kurdishness, especially Kurdish suffering and uprising which challenges and undoes the way in which the Kurdish question is told both in Turkey and by Turkey to the outside world. In particular, I will focus on the ways in which this battlespace is brokered and translated to British audiences by diasporic Kurdish leaders and elites.

Methods

In order to examine the diasporic battles and translation of Kurds, the research employed an ethnographic approach encompassing two qualitative methods: one-to-one, semi-structured interviews were conducted and key public meetings, gatherings, political demonstrations and cultural festivals were observed. I conducted in-depth interviews with 90 '*Kurdish brokers*' who revive, construct and maintain a diasporic battlespace in London and who thus translate Kurdish suffering and uprising to British audiences. Kurdish brokers comprise the authoritative Kurdish actors, in particular the Kurdish leaders of community organisations, and the leading and elite members of the Kurdish community in London. The '*Kurdish leaders of community organisations*' are Kurds who formally run, manage and direct the community organisations, including serving on boards, management committees, sub-committees or who act in an advisory role. The '*leading and elite members of the Kurdish community*', for the purposes of this research, are defined as individuals who are mobilised, politicised and influential, but who do not run or lead a Kurdish organisation in a formal capacity.

There are a significant number of influential Kurdish leaders who are not formally associated with a Kurdish organisation yet are prominent and mobilised, mostly due to their educated, elite, social positioning or due to the political allegiances and links brought from home. I interviewed Kurds from organisations with a close and explicit link with the Kurdish struggle in Turkey, for example the Kurdish Community Centre (KCC) in Haringey, and the Kurdish and Turkish Community Centre (Halkevi). However, there are many diasporic organisations in London with a Kurdish leadership

and a significant Kurdish constituency, albeit many without ‘Kurdish’ in the title of their community associations. Since brokerage is also carried out by their leadership and by those who frequent such associations, interviews with them were carried out. The sample of 90 includes both the leaders and the leading members of the community.

Interviews were continued until saturation was reached. I attempted to achieve a balanced sample in terms of age, place of origin in Turkey, and gender. Even though senior heads of the community organisations are usually male, there are prominent female Kurds in management committees, sub-committees, or serving in an advisory or consultative role. In addition to ensuring female leaders were included in the sample, special attention was paid to interviewing Kurdish leaders from different backgrounds and with varying political stances. I also attended numerous community meetings. I undertook observations during various demonstrations, public meetings, gatherings, and festivals in which the Kurdish community and organisations participate. As much time as possible was spent participating in the activities of the community to get a full sense of their diasporic brokerage and translational activities.

Battlespace Diaspora

The political struggles and disputes of Kurds with Turkey have come to play a central role in the identity formation and everyday lives of Kurds in London (Griffiths, 2002; Wahlbeck, 1998). Since the late 1980s, Kurds in London have been engaged in a rigorous battle with their country of origin, Turkey. The Kurdish ‘ethno-political entrepreneurs’ have been heavily involved in keeping the battle alive. There is no

question, however, that this battle has been sustained by Turkey's uncompromising attitude to the Kurdish question. The 'fetishism of the military solution' to the Kurdish question in Turkey has contributed to the stepping up of the diasporic battle and hence the galvanising of the Kurdish diaspora (Demir, 2014).

The battles undertaken by the Kurdish diaspora are aimed at creating an alternative political sphere, alternative to the way in which the Kurdish question is constructed in Turkey. I call this alternative political space that diasporas construct 'battlespace diaspora'. It is a space 'victim diasporas' (Cohen, 1997), who have been suppressed in their country of origin, create as they carry out their identity and political battles in the host country. Battlespace diaspora is a type of 'diaspora space'. The latter has been discussed in the literature. It refers to a political and cultural space where belonging ties and identities brought from home are crafted as well as challenged (Brah, 1996). Adamson (2002) also discusses the mobilisation activities of transnational communities and refers to the sites they create as a diasporic 'political space' whilst Mavroudi (2008) has examined the 'informal political spaces' diasporic Palestinians in Athens, Greece have created. The battlespace diaspora I refer to is a type of diasporic space in that it is aimed at challenging the official construction of the Kurdish issue by Turkey and crafting new identities and stories around Kurdishness. It is thus a dynamic and situated place, responsive to the events and changes in Turkey and contingent upon Kurds' reception by the host community. However, since galvanising support and communicating their suffering and uprising are essential, and their battling is often intense, resilient and radical, their political mobilisation space is better described as a battlespace. The Kurdish community (alongside, for example, Palestinians and Tamils) are an exemplary case of a

diasporic group who has revived, constructed and translated their rebellion and struggle whilst living in diasporic neighbourhoods of European cities (Baser and Swaim, 2011; Eccarius-Kelly, 2002).

The focus of my ethnographic research, namely the Kurds of London, have carried on their identity battle in varying degrees of intensity with the Turkish state. This has, since the late 1980s, been actualised through multiple methods and needs to be understood as a spectrum. At one end of this spectrum one can find examples such as expressing Kurdish ethnic and cultural identity through giving Kurdish (rather than Muslim or Turkish) names to one's children, or ensuring there are Kurdish television satellite channels (almost always in addition to Turkish mainstream ones) at home or in community centres. The other end of the spectrum can involve recruiting support for the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)³ by promoting pro-PKK activities and demonstrations, collecting money, and even joining the PKK guerrilla fight in Turkey. As some of my interviewees indicated, a number of second generation Kurds who were born or who were brought up in London have moved back and joined the guerrilla warfare in Turkey: 'The PKK has a strong bearing on Kurds in London as it does in the rest of Europe. Some of our young men have also gone to fight the Turkish army.' Another highlighted: 'Kurds will fight the Turkish state even from London. We will not run out of guerrillas.'

As my research reveals, battling goes beyond what has been described above. The ways in which Kurdish suffering and uprising are translated to the British audiences are now a central aspect of the battlespace diaspora Kurds create and maintain. In the

³ The PKK is listed as a terrorist organisation by Turkey, the European Union and the United States.

rest of the chapter, I will discuss the difficulties and pains associated with the translation of Kurdish culture, struggle and rebellion by making the insights gained from translation studies central to the study of diasporic identity battles.

Diasporas and Translation

Diasporas have traditionally been placed within two spheres, namely the homeland and the host community. The ways in which the battles from home are picked up, salvaged and translated to the host community have not typically been studied. How an ethno-political identity is revived and translated in diaspora allows one to explore, as I will below, the various difficulties diasporas face, as well as the various strategies and creative coping mechanisms they develop when ‘home’ and ‘away’ meet or clash via translation.

Examining the translational political activities of diasporas is extremely fruitful, both in terms of enabling us to collect data which would otherwise go amiss about a particular diaspora, but also in terms of opening up new perspectives and avenues in diaspora studies in general. For example, it can allow us to examine how diasporas strategically exclude certain stories about their history and identity whilst highlighting certain other cultural and personal memories, solidarities, histories and practices in their translations. It can also do this by recognising that such omissions and additions are not always strategic but at times unintentional, contingent and inadvertent and at times depends on the community’s knowledge of, and reception by, the host community. As those who have led and defended the ‘cultural turn’ in translation studies have argued, translation is in fact always a site of ‘gain and discovery’

(Bassnett and Trivedi, 1994, p. 4). It is at the same time a site of erasure and exclusion (Bielsa, 2010). This is because there is never full and accurate translation. Studying what diasporas choose to translate, therefore, can tell us what a particular diasporic community prioritises, as well as what they deem as unimportant, irrelevant or perhaps shameful and thus exclude or leave out in their translations.

Secondly, and following on from the above point, translation is always a form of ‘rewriting’ (Lefevere, 1992). Translations of diasporas, including the Kurdish, need to be understood as forms of rewriting and transformation rather than as one trying to create equivalences with identities formed at home. Thirdly, translation studies centre our attention on audiences. It can reveal if different translations are put forward for different audiences, albeit by the very same diasporic group. In particular, studying the translational activities of diasporic groups can reveal the extent to which *different* kinds of ethno-political identity are conveyed to different audiences, and for what purposes. Fourthly, shedding light on the ways in which diasporic brokers ‘keep a lid’ on the diasporic identity that is salvaged and translated (e.g. the silencing of ‘unsuitable’ groups and demands, whilst encouraging and even inciting some others to speak) is yet another avenue translation can open for diaspora studies. Last but not least, how well diasporas relate to, and associate with, the host community can be recovered through an examination of how they choose to translate the home, especially what they deem as significant, and how, if at all, they can make their stories ‘palatable’ to the host community.

Studying translational activities of diasporas means that one does not overlook the difficulties of translating across spatial and cultural boundaries, including

misunderstandings and missed-understandings. There are always losses and gains in translation, including in the salvaging and translation of an ethno-political identity and culture in diaspora. Below I will focus on some of these possible insights which a focus on 'translation' can bring to the study of diasporas by discussing the difficulties the Kurdish brokers face, as well as the various coping mechanisms they employ, when they translate the Kurdish struggle and rebellion to British audiences.

Translating Kurdish Battling in Diaspora

The Kurds of London are an invisible diasporic community, not only in academic debates on immigration and diasporas, but also in public debates in the UK. Despite their dynamism and presence politically and socially, and despite the intense cultural and identity struggles they are involved in, they remain largely invisible (King et al., 2008). Due to this *invisibility*, they have had to put a lot of effort into making Kurdishness *visible* to the British, that is ensuring that they translate Kurdish identity, culture, battles and suffering. This translation is critical if the invisibility they face is to be overcome. As one of my interviewees put it: 'The associations in London had their face turned towards Turkey. They were obsessed with politics in Turkey. We are now shaking off this attitude and gradually turning our face to Britain. But we need to do much more to explain our struggle to the world.'

Salvaging and translation of an identity, especially displaying a politically united identity for purposes of resistance and struggle, are never easy or effortless. They require negotiation and rendering of history and identity, the reshaping and re-telling of collective memory, ethnic gate-keeping, 'strategies of inclusion and exclusion'

(Demir, 2011) as well as thinking about audiences, that is whom to say what and, perhaps more importantly, whom not to say what. It should come as no surprise that if an ethno-political identity was oppressed and subject to policies of erasure (e.g. policies of Turkification), reviving, salvaging and translating it will require a lot more effort and labouring. There is also the added problem that the translation of Kurdish suffering and rebellion are occurring in the context of increasing compassion fatigue whereby receptive audiences are difficult to find, never mind to enrol as supporters.

'Ethno-Political Tuition'

The Kurdish leaders I interviewed in London, on the whole, have argued that the diasporic battle they are engaged in needs to move beyond the Kurdish community and neighbourhoods (Haringey, Dalston), and what one interviewee defined as 'our insular struggle with Turkey'. They underlined how important it was to be able to translate effectively their struggle to the British audiences and authorities. This has come about as a result of two important changes. First, the community, over time, has recognised the importance of being able to tell the Kurdish struggle and suffering to their host community, akin to other communities such as the Tamil. Secondly, Kurdish brokers, over the years, have come to understand Britain and the British better. They have more comprehensive knowledge of Britain, and thus, better knowledge of how to present the Kurdish struggle to British audiences. Consequently, not only have the brokers' attitudinal and dispositional orientations changed and their willingness to engage with the host community on Kurdish issues intensified, but also, and perhaps more importantly, their practices and competencies of being able to engage and translate. One interviewee put it succinctly: 'At community centres few

people understand the British or do things with the British. But now people like us are bursting the bubble.’⁴

This has had the impact of getting the Kurdish diaspora to think about what kind of a battle one is to have and who exactly the audience for their battle should be. It has been pushing the community to think about their strategies for the most effective battling with Turkey in London. My findings clearly indicate that the Kurdish community has increasingly become proactive in their engagement with the British authorities and ‘sympathetic’, mostly left-wing, political movements and actors in the UK. This has also been intensified by the recognition that their host community (the UK) is relatively ignorant about the struggles of Kurds, making the translation of their rebellion and struggle to the British all the more critical. Kurdish brokers state that they have realised that they need to move from ‘Haringey’ to ‘Trafalgar Square’, as clearly identified by many of my participants. For example:

In the past we used to march in Haringey, do demonstrations in Green Lanes, go to a talk at the Kurdish [the KCC] and then head back to our homes. We now want to occupy central London. We want to fill Trafalgar Square. (Female, 30)

We now know we need to engage the British and other immigrant communities, not just talk amongst ourselves. (Male, 28)

⁴ The category ‘British’ emerges from the informants’ use of this term and is mainly associated with ‘white English’, especially those who hold positions of power and authority. As was previously identified, ‘us and them’ divisions in London exist between Kurds and Turks (those politically sympathetic to Kurdish sensitivities) on the one hand and ‘whites’ on the other (Demir 2012: 822). However a more heterogeneous and multicultural understanding of Britishness exists in the form of ‘Londoners’ amongst the newer generations.

We are now carrying banners and chanting [in demonstrations] in English as well as Kurdish and Turkish. We want the English to hear us, and recognise our concerns. (Female, 33)

Dragging [Kurdish] people to central London is not always easy but we are doing it. We're moving from Haringey to Trafalgar Square. (Male, 36)

This, they argue, is fuelled primarily by the relative lack of knowledge of Kurdish culture and suffering, and the prioritisation of Turkishness over Kurdishness, for example, the classification of Kurds from Turkey as 'Turks' by the British authorities (King et al., 2008). As a result, Kurdish diasporic battling has had to engage in what I call 'ethno-political tuition'. Kurdish brokers, in their daily, professional or political engagements constantly provide explanations of who Kurds are, why they now live in the UK, the history of their struggle to the British public, authorities, friends, teachers, as well as the citizens of other countries they meet in London. This ethno-political tuition, however, requires a lot of labouring. It is not an easy task. It can be a painful, or even a cumbersome, experience to explain centuries-old ethno-political battles, suffering and rebellion in a few words to a British person you meet at a party or at the work place next to the coffee machine. It can create a lot of emotional turmoil (see, for example Christou, 2011). The interview excerpt with Rakibe (pseudonym, female, 33) is typical of what the participants said on this issue:

Rakibe: When a British person asks where I am from, I usually say 'I am from Turkey but that I am a *Kurd* from Turkey'. I am always careful not to just say 'I am from Turkey'.

Interviewer: You are careful because...?

Rakibe: I want them to know that I am not Turkish. I want them to know that I am Kurdish. If I only say that I am Kurdish they think I am a Kurd from Iraq. I always make an effort to explain that there are millions of Kurds in Turkey. And in Haringey (laughs...).

Interviewer: Do they not already know?

Rakibe: If they are from North London and if they are political they know about Kurds and our struggles. But if they are not, they usually have no idea. Then they ask me various other questions. Who are Kurds? Are Kurds different to Turks? Why don't Kurds have their own country? Why don't you speak Kurdish?

Interviewer: So, what do you say to them?

Rakibe: I always tell them that we have our own Kurdish language but it was banned and we had to speak Turkish. I tell them where Kurdistan is, and the history of Kurdistan, how our land was divided up [by imperial powers] and given to other countries. I tell them that we are the biggest nation without a

state. I tell them the suffering and torture Kurdish people faced when they rebelled.

Interviewer: What do you want them to remember at the end of that conversation?

Rakibe: I want them to learn about my people, not just the suffering but also the rebellion we put up. I have nothing against Turkish people but I want Brits to know we were denied basic human rights and were subjected to assimilation in Turkey.

Making it 'Palatable' to the British

Many Kurdish brokers stated in the interviews that this ethno-political tuition required what might be called 'ethnic entrepreneurial labouring'. It involves raising the interest of non-Kurds in the battle, involving them, educating them, perhaps falling short of enrolling⁵ them. 'Ethnic entrepreneurial labouring' also requires paying attention to the fact that there are multiple British audiences and hence pitching the story effectively, to the appropriate audience. For example:

You have to judge whom to say what. Not all Brits are interested. Also sometimes I don't have the energy to explain all that, especially if I sense the person is not very political or interested. Political Brits are curious. So it is them I spend my energy explaining about Kurds. (Male, 37)

⁵ Enrolling is more oriented towards the second generation of Kurds. Due to space limitations I focus my discussion on translations to the British.

I meet British people at school or at work. I have to judge whether or not it is worth talking to them at length about Kurds. I will always make a point of mentioning that I am a Kurd from Turkey but I only tell people [in greater detail] if I see that they can relate. (Female, 28)

Neither finding the right person to talk to nor engaging in ethnic entrepreneurial labouring is easy. But ensuring that the Kurdish struggle and rebellion are rendered in a manner palatable for the British is an even bigger hurdle. Even though specific political steps were not outlined by my interviewees, their overall goal was to gain recognition of their Kurdish identity by the British authorities and the public. There was also hope that through such recognition and understanding, support for the Kurds in Britain and Europe would intensify pressures on Turkey, forcing it to take the necessary steps towards greater democratisation and increased recognition of Kurdish rights in Turkey.

Some of my interviewees told me various strategies, and coping mechanisms they employed to achieve 'palatability'. Some highlighted that one needed to 'mirror' the British, that is ensure that the body language, the style of the communication, the mannerisms parallel those of the British. It was argued that adjusting these in line with British tastes and modes of communication eased the reception of the story Kurds were telling. One went as far as to say 'otherwise we come across as too passionate and thus aggressive'. Another coping strategy, which some of the brokers employed when making their case palatable, was to draw comparisons with injustices with which the British were already familiar or sympathised. For example,

comparisons with Northern Ireland, Scotland and Palestine were often drawn. Kurdish brokers said that they drew similarities between the trajectory of Abdullah Öcalan (the imprisoned leader of the PKK) and Nelson Mandela, a leader admired by many, in order to ‘get the British on one’s side’. This parallels the current European-wide Kurdish initiative which is campaigning for the release of Abdullah Öcalan, comparing his imprisonment to that of Nelson Mandela. Effort was also spent on coalition-building with other diasporic groups, akin to the strategies which Arab-Americans deploy (Nagel and Staeheli, 2005).

Some of the Kurdish brokers I spoke to also stated that in their engagement with the British public and authorities they have made an attempt to move away from the use of critical and strong language towards Turkey. Their language has modified to become more reconciliatory and based around human rights discourse, one that the British could associate with more easily. It was, for example pointed out that if the struggle was too self-centred, or Turkey-oriented, it did not engage the British effectively:

English people are intrigued because it is news to them. I don’t think the first generation sold it [the struggle] that well to the English. The slogans we use [in demonstrations] are too much based on criticisms. We come across as too biased. Also we keep on saying Turkish state did this and that. We have to show them that it affects them [the British] too and that they have a stake in solving it.
(Female, 25)

In demonstrations the banners we used to carry and the slogans we chanted even used to be in Turkish– we were just talking to ourselves. Then during a demonstration some of us who were brought up here in London started shouting slogans in English. We now use more English [in addition to Kurdish and Turkish]. (Male, 29)⁶

As can be seen, diasporic battling and the associated translational activities then, require rendering the suffering and rebellion in a way which creates empathy and easy accessibility. Domesticating the struggle, taking out its foreignising elements, for example rendering it in a language and style the host community understands and appreciates, making it palatable and engaging to the non-Kurds of London all demand ‘ethnic entrepreneurial labouring’. This labouring also requires that whilst the British are ‘got on board’ one still remains loyal to the struggle (and oneself). In other words, a lot of labouring and fine-tuning are needed in order to strike the right balance between defending, translating and rendering the struggle correctly (and in a loyal way), and making it palatable and attractive for non-Kurds.

Conclusion

The suppression of Kurdish cultural and linguistic rights in Turkey, and the relative ignorance of their host community (the UK) about the struggles of Kurds in Turkey make the cultural revival and translation in which Kurds engage all the more important. It arises from, and is enhanced by, the collective injustices Kurds have

⁶ Assimilation strategies and the suppression of the Kurdish language in Turkey mean that Turkish is not only used extensively by ordinary Kurds in London, but ‘somewhat ironically, Turkish is often the common language of Kurdish political mobilization’ (Houston 2004, p. 412).

faced in their homeland, akin to the ‘victim diasporas’ discussed in Cohen (1997). As I tried to show in the chapter, this *translation* of Kurdish culture and struggle is central to the *transnational* battles of Kurds in Britain and across Europe. It allows the recovery and reconstruction of their culture and rebellion whilst simultaneously serving the transnational Kurdish audience and their fight for identity reconstitution.

The chapter examined Kurds’ ethno-national struggles in London by introducing the notion of ‘battlespace diaspora’, an alternative political sphere diasporas create and maintain as they carry on their identity battles with their country of origin. Battlespace diaspora, as I argued, is a type of ‘diaspora space’. The latter has been much discussed in the literature (e.g. Adamson, 2002; Brah, 1996; Mavroudi, 2008). I identified and described ‘battlespace diaspora’ as a political diasporic space where the mobilisation of ethno-political identity is intense and the disputes with the country of origin are buoyant, resilient and at times radical, and contextualised it within the dynamic and occasionally troubled relationship Kurds establish with their country of origin.

Much work on the Kurdish diaspora has focused on Kurds’ antagonistic relationship with Turkey, and Kurds’ associated anti-Turkey mobilisation and activities. In this chapter, however, I attempted to extend our understanding of the types of battles in which diasporas engage by making the translational activities of Kurds in London as central. I turned attention to an aspect of their struggle which makes the British (rather than the Turkish state) its audience. By using the insights of translation studies, I discussed the ways in which new perspectives and avenues in diaspora studies could be opened up if translations that diasporas undertake are seen as sites and vehicles of

gain and discovery as well as erasure. I drew attention to the multiple audiences diasporas present themselves, hence challenging the singular understanding of ‘the host community’ typically envisioned in diaspora studies. In addition, I examined translation through introducing new conceptual tools such as ‘ethnic entrepreneurial labouring’, ‘ethno-political tuition’ and ‘palatability’.

The chapter focused on the various strategies and coping mechanisms the Kurdish diaspora employ when ‘home’ and ‘away’ are encountered through translations. As the data I presented showed, translating their struggle and rebellion to the British is perceived as essential for Kurdish brokers. It is through such translations and renderings that Kurds become transnational agents, making their identity battles dynamic and situated. The chapter also demonstrated that the translation of an ethno-political identity in diaspora is not an easy task. It requires Kurds to engage in ‘ethnic entrepreneurial labouring’ and ‘ethno-political tuition’. It requires them to make the struggle ‘palatable’ for the British audiences. As such, the alternative political sphere they create, the battlespace diaspora, does not come easy; it requires much upkeep, labouring and maintenance.

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