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# Boundary Spanning and Reconstitution: Migration, Community and Belonging

Editor

Anya Ahmed

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Editorial

# Boundary Spanning and Reconstitution in Migration

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**Abstract**
The focus of this thematic issue is on migrants' experiences of belonging and non-belonging, and how communities are constructed in the destination country. It includes a group of international scholars across disciplines who are studying migration in a range of different contexts. Migration spans multiple disciplines and encompasses a variety of epistemological, ontological and methodological orientations. Despite such divergent approaches and positions however, there is consensus across the social sciences that understanding the dynamics of migration and mobilities is central to illuminating social relations within societies.

**Keywords**
belonging; community; identity; networks; non-belonging; place

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All forms of migration involve an attempt to enhance one's life in some way, whether this constitutes the choice to seek economic or employment opportunities, the drive to seek asylum or opting for a different lifestyle (Ahmed, 2015). Migration also necessitates motion across boundaries which can be geographical, political and cultural and, frequently, such boundaries are reconstructed in the migration destination (Ahmed, 2015). These boundaries can be symbolic, in flux, conditional and are reconstituted to signify belonging and non-belonging (Ahmed, 2015; Anthias, 2008; Cohen, 1985; Yuval-Davis, Kannabiran, & Vieten, 2006). Belonging can be understood as "the process of feeling or being a part of—rather than apart from" (Ahmed, 2015, p. 54). There are also temporal and spatial elements involved with belonging and again context is important. How and to what people construct belonging in a specific time and place illuminates how they see themselves in context, at both micro and macro levels (Ahmed, 2012, 2015; Marsh, Bradley, Love, Alexander, & Norham, 2007). Community can be framed as multifaceted representations of belonging (Ahmed, 2011, 2015; Delanty, 2003). Another way of understanding belonging is to conceive of it as "a sense of intimacy with the world" (Boym, 2001, p. 251). The impetus to address belonging (and non-belonging becomes more acute in the context of migration (Anthias, 2006), since we are not usually asked to define what we belong to unless we find ourselves in unusual circumstances (Amit, 2012).

Exploring how migrants search for, construct, imagine, symbolise, evoke and experience (or not) belonging and community in the host country provides the opportunity to consider what this represents from different perspectives in new contexts. Additionally, how people construct and experience belonging and community in migration sheds light on processes of social change and continuity from multiple vantage points (Ahmed, 2015). Boundaries characterise all forms of belonging and community whether related to place, networks or shared identity. Physical or geographical divides indicate who is of and from a place; for networks there are designated insiders and outliers; and with regard to identity, there are tangible and illusory characteristics which denote belonging and non-belonging (Ahmed, 2011, 2012, 2015). Yet although community is a well-known term, which is often "idealized" (Crow, 2002), it remains an ambiguous concept which is often called into question (Ahmed, 2015; Crow, 2002).

Community denotes security, warmth and cosiness (Bauman, 2001), things in common (Cohen, 1982) and solidarity (Crow, 2002). It is also subjective and contextual encompassing belonging and non-belonging, sameness and otherness and inclusion and exclusion (Clark, 2007). In spite of this, community's elusiveness makes it useful to "think with" (Ahmed & Fortier, 2003) in order to explore people's lived experiences of belonging and non-belonging through migration (Ahmed, 2011, 2012, 2015). In this way it can reveal the agency of individuals and groups in the context of social processes (Ahmed, 2015; Crow, 2002; Seeley, Sim, & Loosley, 1956) and illuminate how this is influenced by wider structural factors (Castles, 2010; Giddens, 1991; Sherlock, 2002).

Individuals and groups can belong to different types of community concurrently and these can also be shifting (Temple et al., 2005) and it is impossible to completely separate them since place, networks and identity overlap (Ahmed, 2015). Belonging to place represents an emotional and embodied connection to the world (May, 2013) and community as place denotes living in or feeling belonging to a locale in a specific geographical area (MacIver & Page, 1961; Murray, 2000). Network representations of community indicate being part of the social fabric (Anthias, 2008), relations of social bonding (Sherlock, 2002) or relational belongings (May, 2013) which are frequently symbolic for migrants (Ahmed, 2015; O'Reilly, 2000). Further, examining social relations and what people construct as shared (Amit & Rapport, 2002) in conjunction with processes of exclusion and inclusion (King, Warnes, & Williams, 1998; Rodriguez, Fernández-Mayoralas, & Rojo, 1998) illuminates experiences of migration. is useful to understand migration experiences. There are multiple identities which people can claim or be ascribed, and again, identity is significant in discussions of community and migration. (Anthias, 2008). In this sense, community does not need to be tied to place or relate to networks but can instead relate to individual and group identification and ascription (Milner, 1968).

**Conflict of Interests**

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Article

# Beyond Legal Status: Exploring Dimensions of Belonging among Forced Migrants in Istanbul and Vienna

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**Abstract**
Migrants with precarious legal statuses experience significant structural exclusion from their host nations but may still feel partial belonging. This article explores two dimensions potentially relevant for this group's sense of belonging: city-level opportunity structures and public political discourses. Specifically, we examine perceptions of belonging among forced migrants with similarly precarious legal statuses located in Istanbul and Vienna. Drawing from semi-structured interviews, we argue that opportunity structures in the cities provide a minimal sense of social normalness within a period of life otherwise considered anomalous or exceptional. Any articulations of belonging in this context however remain inherently tied to the conditions of legal limbo at the national level. With regard to public political discourses, migrants display a strong awareness of the role of religion within national debates on culture and integration. In a context where religion is discussed as a mediator of belonging, we found explicit affirmations of such discourses, whereas in a context where religion is discussed as a marker of difference, we found implicit compliance, despite feelings of alienation. Overall, this article shows the importance of differentiating belonging, and of cross-regional comparisons for highlighting the diverse roles of cities and public political discourses in facilitating integration.

**Keywords**
asylum; belonging; city; culture; integration; Istanbul; legal limbo; Vienna

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## 1. Introduction

The political crisis of migration governance in 2015 spurred new public debates on immigrant integration in host societies within the EU and beyond. Policymaking classically entails a discursive construction of policy recipients (Pierce et al., 2014), and in the context of integration, political debates oftentimes evolve around immigrants' willingness or capability to belong to a nationally defined society. In this vein, research has long been focused on the way in which powerful actors construct immigrants as part of or excluded from the society (e.g., van Leeuwen & Wodak, 1999; Wright & Bloemraad, 2012; Yuval-Davis, 2006). However, scholars are increasingly paying attention to a subjective dimension of integration, namely, the way in which newly arrived immigrants experience belonging—a sense of identification and attachment to society (Antonsich, 2010; Crowley, 1999; Howes & Hammett, 2016; Simonsen, 2016).

The topic of belonging is far from trivial. At the individual level, a sense of belonging can create meaning and a feeling of safety (Lambert et al., 2013); at the societal level, it contributes to social cohesion (Schiefer & Noll, 2017). In this article, we take up the topic by examining perceptions of belonging among forced migrants located in Vienna and Istanbul and living in legal limbo. We re-

fer to the social group of our study as “forced migrants” because of their position vis a vis state categories of migration governance. This umbrella term encompasses people requiring asylum or another form of protection abroad and holding a variety of related legal statuses. It does not preclude the possibility that their process of migrating is at least partially voluntary or that receiving states may not formally recognize them as refugees (cf. Erdal & Oeppen, 2018).

In this article, we are first interested in whether and how the level of cities as a subnational entity may contribute to feelings of belonging, providing integrational structures in an exclusionary national context. The two cities were chosen because they are both immigration cities offering opportunity structures in countries that received relatively high numbers of asylum seekers in recent years. The choice of these cities also allows for a novel comparison between European and non-European contexts. Second, we seek to address the level of public political discourse on culture and integration, which differs considerably between Austria and Turkey. National debates on culture and integration can be viewed as important venues of negotiation regarding who belongs to a society and based on which features.

Thus, we study perceptions of belonging by analyzing qualitative interviews with forced migrants who arrived in Austria and Turkey between 2011 and 2017, paying particular attention to our interlocutors’ discussions of city specific opportunity structures and public political discourses on forced migrants. The central question that we address in this article is: How do persons with a precarious legal status experience belonging in specific urban contexts? Drawing together results from two different cities enables us to explore the practical and cognitive-cultural role of cities and public political discourses in integration processes.

In the following section, we introduce the concept of belonging, explain how it is tied to the structural conditions of forced migrants, particularly in the context of cities, and discuss how it is related to public political discourses on integration and culture. In the third section, we present our two cases. First, we discuss the national legal and discursive settings that forced migrants face, then we look at city-specific integration policies for this group. Afterwards, in section four, we elaborate on our data and methodology. In section five, we present the central findings deriving from an analysis of semi-structured interviews with asylum seekers and beneficiaries of protection status in Vienna and Istanbul. The final section of the article sums up the major conclusions about the role of cities and public political discourses for migrants’ perceptions of belonging.

**2. Theoretical Framework: The Concept of Belonging**

The concept of belonging addresses a person’s identification and feelings of attachment to a community (Kannabiran, Vieten, & Yuval-Davis, 2006; Simonsen, 2018). In our context, the focus is on forced migrants located within communities at the geo-political level of host-states and cities. Considering this nested situatedness, we seek to understand how persons who are nationally not granted full legal inclusion experience belonging. Thereby, we specifically take into account the role of the urban sub-spaces and public political discourses.

Belonging is an important component of immigrant integration. Integration is a concept that is widely used by policy makers, but it is a contested term for migration scholars who do not agree about its definition or measurement (Castles, de Haas, & Miller, 2013). One primary critique of integration research is that it is overly focused on functional indicators and that scholarship does not sufficiently take migrant points of view into account. Increasingly, researchers are pointing to the importance of affective and subjective measures of integration, including social bridges, bonds and links (Ager & Strang, 2008), as well as the cultural and religious dimensions of belonging (Garcés-Mascareñas & Penninx, 2016).

Thus, the question of belonging is inherently tied to established social boundaries and their permeability in relation to newcomers. Specifically, boundaries might be related to being part of a territory, entering formal institutional settings or joining a symbolic community. Building on Max Weber, Andrew Geddes (2005, p. 789) argues that a political community is constituted by the confluence of three types of boundaries: territorial, organizational and conceptual. Accordingly, belonging is mediated (in chronological order) through a mid—to long-term presence within a legally demarcated space, a formally organized status of residence and access to major institutions, and self-identification or ascription processes in relation to collectively shared concepts of “us” and “them.”

With regards to the first two categories (territorial and organizational belonging), forced migrants entering host countries like Turkey and Austria via the asylum system typically have overcome territorial boundaries, but they do not immediately receive long-term residence status and associated rights with regard to labour market participation, social welfare, or education. This condition is often referred to as legal limbo. Goldring and Landolt (2011, p. 327) describe limbo as “precarity” resulting from “complex institutional and geographic pathways” that force migrants into insecure legal statuses. Being in limbo may mean uncertainty and anxiety about the future and limited economic and social access to the host society (Robertson & Runganaikaloo, 2014; Yijala & Nyman, 2017). The longer that migrants have an unsecured status, the more frustrated and less interested in integration they may become. Against this background of limited organizational belonging within the nation-state, it seems worth looking at two other dimensions that might play a crucial role in mediating belonging, namely opportunity structures at the level of cities as organizational boundaries at the sub-national level and pub-

lic political discourses on “us” and “them” as conceptual boundaries.

### *2.1. Belonging Mediated by City Level Opportunity Structures*

Similar to debates on integration, questions of belonging are usually discussed in the context of national politics (e.g., Simonsen, 2018). The nation-state as an “imagined community” (Anderson, 1991) certainly retains its importance in a globalized world, especially as a guarantor of “the right to have rights,” to put it into the terms of Hannah Arendt. However, as literature on civic stratification has shown, the inclusion of newcomers, especially asylum seekers, is always partial and conditional (Atac & Rosenberger, 2013; Morris, 2003). Thus, for persons in legal limbo, who are furthermore often framed as unwanted or non-belonging in political discourses, non-national opportunity structures are particularly relevant.

Cities per se display distinct socio-economic and socio-cultural conditions, which may be of relevance to immigrants given their specific formal and informal labour market opportunities as well as the increased possibilities to engage in interethnic networks that they offer. This can be referred to as indirect opportunity structures. However, it has also been shown that cities often lead national levels in terms of developing direct opportunity structures in the form of integration policies (Bauder & Gonzalez, 2018; Penninx, 2009). In order to explain why some cities are more open to absorbing newcomers, scholars have pointed to favourable political conditions (de Graauw & Vermeulen, 2016) and the ultimate necessity to deal with ethnic diversity that they face (Hickman, Mai, & Crowley, 2012). Some even argue that cities are “urban imagined communities” (Callen, 2004) coexisting with the nation, due to their clear limitedness, their community building efforts, and their constant boosting of quality of life. Thus, cities might offer additional resources, structures and discourses that work as supplementary or compensatory sites of belonging for specific migrant groups.

### *2.2. Belonging Mediated by Public Political Discourses on Integration and Culture*

Conceptual boundaries are frequently negotiated in terms of discourses on “us” and “them,” which are often reflected in debates on culture and integration. Politicians and commentators may set out the criteria of cultural membership in terms of language mastery or other formal criteria, but more often they make recourse to more abstract notions of values, respect and national loyalty. Scholars have shown that such debates about culture and integration are very important for determining migrants’ sense of belonging as they constrain possible narratives, reinforce inequalities (Cederberg, 2013) and can damage political trust and faith in democratic systems (Simonsen, 2019). These discourses may even be more important than legal policies for determining subjective belonging (Simonsen, 2019) and thus are worth examining in detail.

In ethnically diverse societies, integration issues are often brought up in connection to religion, and in Western European cases like Austria, Islam in particular (Permoser & Rosenberger, 2012). Prior research has examined Muslim integration in several European countries (cf. Statham & Tillie, 2016), compared immigrant integration in Europe and North America (Chambers, Evans, Messina, & Williamson, 2017; Foner & Alba, 2008) or Christian and Muslim integration in the Middle East (Chatty, 2010). There are, however, no comparative studies analysing the role of integration discourses on religion for perceptions of belonging, despite the noted significance of these discourses. Kassaye, Ashur, and van Heelsum (2016) for example point out how discourses on Muslims in Western European countries are dominated by an emphasis on cultural and religious difference, which often constructs the presence of Muslim migrants as a threat. In a study of the effects of media discourses on belonging among Somalis in the Netherlands, Kassaye et al. (2016) found that news about Muslims in the media are perceived as negative and excluding. The effect on belonging varies considerably, causing some Dutch Somalis to discount the importance of media coverage, some to deemphasize their Muslim background and some to display a strong attachment to the “Muslim community” as a reaction to excluding media discourses.

## 3. The Two Cases: Istanbul and Vienna in Their National Contexts

### *3.1. National Level: Legal Conditions and Public Political Discourses in Turkey and Austria*

In both Turkey and Austria, we focus on forced migrants in legal limbo. In Turkey, the vast majority of forced migrants are Syrians (3.6 million total), but the country is also home to around 115,000 migrants from nine other countries, with Iraq and Afghanistan representing the second and third largest groups respectively (AIDA, 2018) Legally, most Syrians have Temporary Protection Status, which they may hold for an unspecified length of time and which comes with access to services (health, education, and the limited ability to obtain a work permit), but no access to citizenship or political rights. Non-Syrian asylum seekers have Conditional Refugee Status in Turkey (unless they are Europeans), which is similarly limited in terms of rights. Both groups lack freedom of movement between cities. All non-European asylum seekers in Turkey are excluded from becoming refugees because Turkey retains a geographic reservation to the United Nations 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees and its 1967 protocol, restricting the definition of “refugee” to those forced to leave Europe. Forced migrants may be considered to be in limbo in Turkey because they lack any guarantee that they may remain.

Due to their large numbers, Syrians are often the focus of policy objectives and media treatment. Increasingly, the political discourse is turning to the need for Syrians to return to Syria as soon as possible, which worsens their sense of instability. This group has often been described by policy makers as "guests" or "religious brothers," and culture is not seen as a significant integration issue in Turkey on either national or municipal levels. In addition to a shared religion (Sunni Islam), Syrians and Turks have a shared history dating back to the Ottoman Empire (Chatty, 2017; Kaya, 2016). In Istanbul, integration is not designed around ideas of cultural adjustment and change, but rather focuses on functional integration issues, such as education and labour market access (Coşkun & Yılmaz Uçar, 2018; Erdoğan, 2017). In contrast to the discourse of religious brotherhood promulgated by leaders, newspapers and social media are increasingly taking a more negative view of Syrian migrants as a strain on Turkey's economy or involved in crime (Efe, 2018). Nevertheless, even in these reports, culture is usually not seen as an important factor for Syrians' non-belonging. Thus, not surprisingly, culture is *not* a focus of integration programming in Turkey or Istanbul.

According to the online database Statistics Austria, in Austria, 208,000 persons filed an asylum application between 2011 and 2016. The most important countries of origin of these forced migrants are Afghanistan (52,600 persons, 25% of asylum applicants) and Syria (44,400 persons, 21% of asylum applicants). Forced migrants have different levels of legal statuses with varying rights and obligations: Asylum applicants receive basic welfare support including health care. They have de facto no access to the labour market except for apprenticeships and charitable work and are required to live in the federal province where they receive basic welfare support. Once a positive decision on the asylum application has been made, beneficiaries of asylum or subsidiary protection may access the labour market and can choose where they want to reside. However, an element of uncertainty has been implemented in 2016 as even decisions on asylum can be revisited after three years. For persons with the title "subsidiary protection" this time span is even shorter (one year). Otherwise they are also allowed to work and to choose their place of residence. None of these statuses include direct access to citizenship or political rights and all of them include a limbo component—from very strong in the case of asylum seekers to weaker in the case of beneficiaries.

Immigrant integration has become a highly debated topic in Austria over the past few decades. At the national level, civic integration policies were particularly pushed during the early 2010s, obliging certain third country nationals and beneficiaries of international protection to take part in language and citizenship courses. A meritocratic paradigm (Gruber, Mattes, & Stadlmair, 2016) followed the logic whereby integration is considered an end-result of individual efforts. Asylum seekers, however, generally remain excluded from national integration policies. In this context, the dominant public narrative problematizes integration as something that immigrants lack (Permoser & Rosenberger, 2012). Tellingly, the frame "unwillingness to integrate," once a rhetorical device of right wing populists, has moved to the political centre in recent years (Wodak, 2015). Furthermore, the arrival of people from Syria and Afghanistan in particular since 2015, has spurred public debates on culture and integration. Especially conservative and right wing political actors discussed values and religion, in particular Islam as major markers of difference. In this regard, Mattes (2017) points out how the category of "Muslim" is a racialized one in Austrian integration discourses in the sense that it is used to produce in- and outsider groups specifying the "truly" European population (Mattes, 2017, p. 101).

### *3.2. City Level: Population Structure and Integration Paradigms in Istanbul and Vienna*

Istanbul and Vienna can both be called immigration cities, and each is also home to the highest numbers of forced migrants in their countries. Istanbul is the city with the highest foreign national population in Turkey and has the highest rate of immigration (166,044 people arriving in 2017; TurkStat, 2018). In Istanbul, most forced migrants are Syrians (558,437 total); they constitute 3.7% of the city's total population (Directorate General of Migration Management, 2019). Vienna is a destination for internal as well as international migrants. According to Statistics Austria, 40% of Vienna's population were born in another country and/or held a foreign citizenship at the beginning of 2018. Among these migrants, 40% come from EU/EFTA countries and 60% from third countries. Around the year 2015, Vienna also received forced migrants, most notably from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq (40,998 total); they make up 2.2% of the city's total population. Despite representing a small percentage of the total population, these migrants receive outsized attention in the mainstream media in both countries making it essential to understand more about their feelings of belonging and how to strengthen social cohesion.

There is no coordinated integration policy either on national or local levels in Turkey. Officially, municipalities are barred from serving non-citizens (Erdoğan, 2017). However, some Istanbul municipalities, such as the Sultanbeyli and Sisli Municipalities, have taken leads in fostering integration by setting up affiliated associations. They are providing or supporting the provision of vocational training and job placement services, healthcare, psychological services, and social and economic aid (Coşkun & Yılmaz Uçar, 2018).

Austria for a long time lacked a comprehensive national integration policy. However, Vienna has a long history of making integration policy, and started more than two decades earlier than the national level. As early as 2015, the city implemented a program called "Integration from Day 1," which provides integration measures for asylum seekers and refugees. It also has

a stand-alone Municipal Department for Integration and Diversity (MA 17) that has defined its own integration concept for Vienna, which is rather inclusive in nature, contrary to the agenda of the federal level. Furthermore, the City of Vienna offers non-mandatory workshops on a large number of relevant issues, such as education, employment, housing, and even conviviality.

## 4. Data and Methodology

In order to analyse perceptions of belonging among persons with precarious legal statuses in Istanbul and Vienna, we draw on fieldwork carried out under the HORIZON 2020 project "RESPOND—Multilevel Governance of Mass Migration in Europe and beyond." We conducted a total of 40 semi-structured interviews in Istanbul and 12 interviews in Vienna. The central sampling criterion was to include persons who had arrived within the last seven years, whose presence was tied to humanitarian or asylum related provisions, and who had thus experienced some form of legal limbo in their recent past. Both Istanbul and Vienna samples included approximately equal numbers of men and women over 18 years of age. In Istanbul, all except two interviewees had temporary protection status (one had a residence permit and one had no legal papers). In Vienna, seven persons were beneficiaries of asylum, four were asylum seekers and one had received subsidiary protection. Our sample includes variation with regards to the ethnicity and socio-economic background of migrants but can be considered homogenous with regards to religious background (Muslim) and experience of legal limbo. Both cases included Syrian citizens, representing an important group within migratory dynamics from the Middle East during the 2010s. While in Istanbul the majority of our interlocutors came from Syria, one person was Palestinian, and one was Circassian. The Viennese sample included six Syrians, five persons from Afghanistan and one person from Iran.

The difference in the size of samples resulted from the different sizes of the research teams as well as limited resources. While the 40 interviews in Istanbul can be considered at the upper end of qualitative sample sizes, the 12 interviews in Vienna are located at the bottom. Yet, in line with Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006), who contend that on the average, 12 interviews of a homogenous group are sufficient to reach a knowledge saturation, we assume the Viennese sample to be within an acceptable scope size-wise. Limitations however arise out of the fact that all Syrians in Vienna were beneficiaries of asylum, while only one Afghan carried a protection title. Likewise, this sample displays a greater variation with regard to socio-economic backgrounds than the Istanbul sample.

The interviews in Istanbul were conducted between July and September 2018 and in Vienna between August 2018 and January 2019. The recruiting process of interlocutors in both cities benefitted from existing contacts among civil society actors and NGO members active in the field of refugee reception and integration. In Istanbul, the assistance of an Arabic-speaking research assistant was also essential for securing migrants' participation. We established our first contacts via these gatekeepers and later combined this approach with snowballing. Typically, interview situations were preceded by written conversations, or small talk often including intermediary persons. These aspects contributed to establishing a trusting relationship and thus added to the validity of data.

The interview guide covered: (1) general questions about the person, (2) their current everyday life in Turkey/Austria, including questions of housing, employment and educational activities, (3) their life in the country of origin, (4) the migration journey, (5) their asylum procedure and status, and (6) their current mental and physical health conditions. The conversations varied in length between approximately one to one and a half hours. All participants were provided oral and written information about the aim of the study, confidentiality and voluntary participation. The conversations were recorded, anonymized and transcribed.

In Istanbul, interviews were conducted in Arabic with a native Arabic-speaking research assistant and an author of this study. Interviews were later transcribed and translated into English. In Vienna, most interviews were led in German by the researchers themselves, due the fact that the participants' language skills were sufficient to make sense of our questions and provide meaningful answers. In one instance, the interview was led by a native speaker of Dari, who had received a thorough introduction by the project leader on methodical and ethical approaches. In many German language interviews however, we had to deal with grammatical errors during the transcription. In order to render the material accessible to researchers other than those involved in the interviews, we changed the grammatical structure of sentences where necessary and only to the degree that it did not alter the meaning of a statement. In case of doubt about the meaning, we refrained from editing.

Once the conversations were transcribed, we conducted a software-supported content analysis of the interview material. This method allows for a systematic analysis of verbal communication and is apt for a contextualized reconstruction of personal perceptions (Krippendorf, 2004). First, we looked at the manifest, descriptive dimension of the material, relating to condensed meaning units that we captured in specific codes. We combined this approach with a hermeneutic exploration of the latent, interpretive dimension of the material by reading and analysing longer text passages, which include latent patterns representative of four dimensions of belonging. Namely, we examined belonging in terms of identification and feelings of attachment characterized as "naturalness," "safety," "home" and "comfort." This deductive approach was apt as the categories have already been deployed in existing empirical research

(Simonsen, 2017, p. 22), offering both teams a standardized template for analysis. Four dichotomies were thus used in order to capture perceptions of belonging or non-belonging: naturalness—distinctiveness, safety—threat, home—alienation, and comfort—discomfort. In order to examine the role of opportunity structures and public political discourses, latent patterns thereof were traced in relation to discussions of:

- Social encounters: e.g., "when I met them…" "people here…" "Austrians/Turks are…"
- (Non-)participation in institutional or organizational settings: e.g., problems and chances regarding the labour market, language courses, education, and social benefits. Here, we paid particular attention to elements that are specifically related to interviewees' circumstances of living in the two cities.
- Public political discourse: e.g., "the media reports that…" "they think we are…" "politicians say that…"

## 5. Findings: Striving towards a Tenuous Normalness within Cities and amidst Religious Debates

Among our interlocutors in both cities, the topic of being in legal limbo was unsurprisingly a highly relevant issue. It was discussed in a variety of contexts and typically carried attributions of fear and uncertainty. Two reoccurring themes were the inability to establish solid expectations about the future as well as the feeling of being a partial member of society who cannot decide about his/her own destiny (although the latter appeared to be more pronounced in the case of Vienna). On an emotional level, this oftentimes implied a constant state of worrying or a sense of lethargy.

For example, a 26-year-old female migrant with Temporary Protection Status in Istanbul, related:

> I am afraid about tomorrow, not from the far future, but about tomorrow I am afraid. I am living an unknown destiny. You don't know if you will stay here or travel to a European country or go back to Syria. Most of the Syrian people who are living here have an unknown destiny.

Similarly, a 26-year-old male asylum seeker in Vienna, explained:

> What is our future here: We cannot decide that ourselves, the others decide about our future. That's bad, if you can't do something for yourself, then there are big problems. But yes, life is like that, like the Austrians say "let' s wait and see."

Thus, what role does the city and public political discourse play in this context?

### *5.1. Belonging Mediated through Organizational Boundaries: Opportunity Structures at the City Level*

Against the background of partial exclusion at the national level, our interviewees positively associated both Istanbul and Vienna with classical features of large cities in general: increased labour market opportunities, ethnic networks due to pronounced socio-cultural diversity and anonymity. Particularly in Istanbul, people expressed a sense of local embeddedness, with some explicitly relating their belonging to the city's indirect opportunity structures. This feeling was largely linked to their ability to survive and thrive through finding employment and as a consequence learning the language, meeting people and enjoying their neighbourhood. For instance, a 34-year-old woman with Temporary Protection Status in Istanbul related that she felt happy because she is running her own childcare centre:

> When I started working, the situation became better somehow. But still the work situation is not stable. There is no work permit and we have low salaries. This is the only difficult thing. Other than that, the society is so good, and there are a lot of places for children to play, so we are happy here.

There is a clear disconnect between her sense of being integrated and comfortable on the one hand, but also unstable with regard to the lack of legal certainty on the other. Whereas economic conditions in Istanbul render irregular employment a viable, although precarious, option to engage in social and economic life, this is no real alternative within the highly regulated Austrian labour market. Here, the welfare state provides minimum living standards, but strongly restricts and controls labour market participation. What remains for migrants in Vienna are direct opportunity structures. One could hardly assume that asylum seekers are able to relate them to city policies and thus thematise them explicitly as such. However, given the fact that they can make a substantive difference in everyday life, we looked deeper into the ways in which our interviewees thematised activities, which we knew or could assume were provided or supported by the city administration.

Here, we found that minor employment, language courses and vocational basic education courses may be the only meaningful structure in the everyday lives of asylum seekers, which is otherwise characterized by endless waiting, sleeping or watching internet videos. These activities are often the first articulated in response to what one currently does in his/her everyday life—simply because there are barely any other occupations constituting some kind of social life. The normalness and naturalness expressed in relation to these activities is only made possible through inclusionary city level policies, which, on a daily basis, compensate for an otherwise lonesome life in reception facilities. Educational courses and minor formal work opportunities were often ad-

dressed as venues for establishing networks, gathering systemic knowledge about "how things work in Austria," or simply being busy. Thus, they display an intrinsic social value.

However, what appears to be equally important is the instrumental character of these activities. They do not only offer moments of comfort or safety but are also experienced as efforts towards what is perceived as necessary for integrating and what is oftentimes attached to hopes of improving one's prospect of stay. In some instances, interlocutors described the discrepancy between their efforts to integrate on the hand and immigration authorities' reluctance to recognize these efforts when making decisions on their status on the other hand. Thus, city-level opportunity structures, while creating a sense of normality among persons in a legal limbo, also reinforced awareness of a growing dilemma between their individual efforts to become part of society and the national policy logics of granting statuses:

> Integration is a little bit like…I got a negative decision for my asylum application. In the first interview, I had 15 letters of recommendation from other people. "Yes, we know this person. He is a good person and we hope that he can stay here." But with the BFA [Immigration Office], it didn't matter at all. Integration, ok, voluntary work, I already learned the language, I got to know so many people in Austria. Or school and so on….But if all these things are not integration, what does integration mean? (Male asylum seeker, 18 years old)

In the case of Istanbul, target group specific integration structures at the city level played a minor role. Clearly, a reason for this might be the lack of systematic offerings throughout the city and the fact that meaningful services are provided by many different groups. Integration-related activities are only sometimes associated with municipalities. Furthermore, there is no immediate prospect of receiving a different status, similar to beneficiaries of asylum in Austria. As a consequence, the perceptions of our interviewees in Istanbul reflect a relatively minor pressure to adopt particular skills (like language ability) or attributes (like cultural practices) to become integrated.

In contrast, we found that explicit perceptions of the city as an imagined urban community of relevance to our interlocutor's situation were more pronounced in Istanbul than in Vienna. This relates to perceptions of the city or to Viennese/Istanbul people as different from Austria/Turkey and Austrian/Turkish people. Although not a dominant aspect, some interviewees experienced Istanbul as an Islamic and Ottoman cultural centre within Turkey. They were familiar with it even before the war through tourist advertisements and Turkish television shows based in Istanbul. One 40-year-old woman with Temporary Protection Status explained:

> In the past when I was in Aleppo and walking between the shops, I always saw many tourist shops with a lot of advertisements about Istanbul, saying that Istanbul is heaven on earth. I was always thinking: "When can I go there?" And saying to myself "Allah is Generous, maybe one day I will go there." So I decided to go to Istanbul. But I didn't think that I would come as a refugee.

In Vienna, there were no explicit notions of attachment to the specific urban locality deriving from established ideas of what the city stands for in relation to immigrant opportunities and in opposition to the national level.

### *5.2. Belonging Mediated through Conceptual Boundaries: Discourses on Integration and Culture*

In both cases, our interlocutors were strikingly affirmative of dominant national public political discourses on culture and integration. In Istanbul, this means that our interviewees explicitly addressed historical cultural-religious ties, whereas in Vienna this involved implicit compliance with dominant discourses by deemphasizing Muslim identity and addressing claims of individual efforts to integrate within a meritocratic system. Across all interviews, cultural debates were mainly perceived as debates on religion and ethnicity. In Istanbul, such debates were largely a mediator of comfort and naturalness; in Austria, they were a source of discomfort and alienation.

As discussed, dominant political discourses in Turkey posit a cultural and religious connection between Turks and Syrians. Some of our interviewees claimed to feel at home in Turkey's religious milieu and due to a shared Ottoman past. For example, a 52-year old man with Temporary Protection Status related:

> We chose Istanbul because it is the biggest city which has Islamic rituals. It was the capital city of Islamic countries, so it still has an Islamic spiritual side, and it is part of our spiritual identity….Because it was ruled by the Ottomans, it gives you an Islamic and oriental spirit more than other cities.

He went on to praise Turkish president Erdoğan, who he argued "is working on our behalf." He compared President Erdoğan to an historical Muslim military leader, Salah Al Din, who unified Syria, Egypt and Mesopotamia.

In contrast to such statements, interviewees in Vienna expressed a sense of alienation, given the fact that the category of "Muslim" is often politically used as a marker of difference and even more of deviance. This perceived symbolic rejection from national level politics is reflected in an asylum seeker's discussion of the meaning of integration:

> The Islamic people, if they give away their Islamic religion, then they are well integrated. If they give nothing away, then they are not well integrated. Why is

> that so? Because the politicians and so on, they want to take away the religion of [people from] Islamic countries and so on, and then they say: "You can just integrate." (Male asylum seeker, 26 years old)

Such a position however did not necessarily imply an affirmation of one's own religious identity. In fact, throughout our interviews, statements on religion were often followed by comments relativizing its role in our interlocutor's lives. This became particularly evident during the introduction part of the interview, where the question of one's religion was only one of many short-answer bullet points, but interlocutors frequently further elaborated, as in this example:

> Religion, I don't know, my mother and father are Muslims, but I can't necessarily say I'm a Muslim….So I don't know, religion is not so important for me. (Female beneficiary of asylum, 31 years old)

This is also interesting against the background of some interviewees' statements about their appreciation of a liberal society and the freedom from intrusive religious rules that they experience.

Rather, Viennese interviewees expressed anger about national authorities who seemingly cared more about what one is in terms of his/her religion than about what one is doing in terms of integration efforts. They perceived politicians as promoters of a negative discourse on migrants, arguably creating stereotypes and setting them in a criminal context. In some instances, this was contrasted with real life encounters with people "on the street" who were argued to be different, namely welcoming. In other instances, our interlocutors described how a negative discourse was mediatized and adopted by "normal" people. They would thus receive weird looks on the street or experience racism.

In the case of Istanbul, we also found statements both contrasting with and also affirming national level political discourses with social encounters. Some interlocutors juxtaposed the acceptance they felt from the president and other political leaders to the rejection they experienced among some Turkish neighbours who they think have gotten inaccurate and negative information about Syrians from news sources. A 46-year-old woman with Temporary Protection Status explained:

> There are some conditions where the Turkish people are not good, but it is normal, generally they are good….They have the right to be afraid of us. They hear the news and feel afraid of us. They are good in general thanks to President Erdoğan. My only dream is to meet him.

Interviewees in Istanbul often asserted belonging by latching onto the public political discourse of shared history and religiosity, which some specifically linked to President Erdoğan's influence, and they contrasted this with negative media reports that they felt are increasing tensions with neighbours. Although people described some religious discrimination, for example due to their style of wearing a headscarf, many interlocutors claimed to have positive interactions due to their being Muslim. A common example given is that migrants are appreciated by neighbours for being able to recite the Qur'an with correct pronunciation. Thus, amidst some discrimination and negative treatment from neighbours, the public political discourse on religion and neighbours' appreciation for their religiosity fosters a tenuous sense of belonging.

## 6. Conclusion

This article explored experiences of (non-)belonging among forced migrants in a similar legal limbo, addressing the role of cities and public political discourses. The two cities we study, it seems, are able to create a minor sense of belonging, which is mainly articulated in terms of social normalness within a period of life otherwise considered anomalous or exceptional. However, this sense of belonging is at best implicitly felt on a day-to-day basis and cannot compensate for the long-term fear and lethargy produced by legal limbo. In Vienna, the capital of a classical destination country, where forced migrants have a chance of receiving a stable legal status as beneficiaries of international protection, city level opportunity structures are perceived as a basis for personal efforts of putting down roots and thus showing that one is integrating. In Istanbul, which may be both a transit or destination city, indirect opportunity structures and the imagination of the city's historical and cultural qualities are the key features conferring belonging.

However, our research also shows that these mediators of belonging remain inevitably tied to a person's legal status. Statuses attributed from the state level are the core point of reference when it comes to both people's practical life planning, but also to their engagement in opportunity structures at the city level. Discussions of engagement in both socio-economic opportunity structures and politically created target group specific integration structures are deeply related to notions of what one cannot do given his/her status or what one could potentially do with a stable status. The case of Vienna demonstrates how integration opportunities are sometimes seized upon in an instrumental manner. This leads to a growing dilemma for individuals who fully comply with a dominant national integration paradigm, but whose longstanding efforts remain disregarded by national immigration authorities.

The importance of the second dimension, namely national political discourses on integration and culture cannot be overlooked. The cases selected offered the opportunity to compare experiences of belonging among forced migrants with Muslim background in two different national settings with differing political discourses: one underscoring the shared cultural heritage of Islam,

the other highly sceptical of Islam. In both cases, forced migrants engage in discourses similar to those dominant in the public sphere: in Istanbul about their similarity to Turks' religion and culture and in Vienna about the importance of individual integration efforts to become more "Austrian." Clearly, this article cannot provide a quantitative account of the determinates according to which more or less religious migrants chose one place of destination over another. Considering pre-existing ideas about the city of Istanbul, it is of course possible that some migrants to Turkey have positive associations with the notion of living in a pre-dominantly Muslim society before migration. Likewise, such findings have to be considered against the background of a social desirability bias inherent to qualitative research. Yet, regardless of whether religious identity is affirmed or downplayed, it is striking to see the sensibility of interlocutors in both Vienna and Istanbul concerning the role of Islam for public notions of "us" and "them." In the case of Austria, perceptions typically appeared to be racialized in content, just as literature suggest, yet they could also be seen as an independent marker of difference. In Istanbul, the framing of Syrians as "religious brothers" forms a basis for superseding the perception of ethnic differences between Turks and Arabs.

Our research shows that legal limbo remains a serious issue as this topic was repeatedly raised by interviewees who feel frustrated, sad and indeed, often hopeless as a result of it. This article has tried to offer new perspectives on the role of cities and national discourses for fostering identification and attachment. We argue that understanding belonging requires a differentiated picture. Future research must further examine the role of such soft mediators of belonging, without romanticizing them nor overlooking long-term issues in relation to legal limbo.

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**Conflict of Interests**

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

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Article

# Split Households, Family Migration and Urban Settlement: Findings from China's 2015 National Floating Population Survey

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**Abstract**
For decades, China's rural migrants have split their households between their rural origins and urban work locations. While the *hukou* system continues to be a barrier to urban settlement, research has also underscored split households as a migrant strategy that spans the rural and urban boundary, questioning if sustained migration will eventually result in permanent urban settlement. Common split-household arrangements include sole migration, where the spouse and children are left behind, and couple migration, where both spouses are migrants, leaving behind their children. More recently, nuclear family migration involving both the spouse and children has been on the rise. Based on a 2015 nationally representative "floating population" survey, this article compares sole migrants, couple migrants, and family migrants in order to examine which migrants choose which household arrangements, including whether specific household arrangements are more associated with settlement intention than others. Our analysis also reveals differences between work-related migrants and family-related migrants. The findings highlight demographic, gender, economic, employment, and destination differences among the different types of migrant household arrangements, pointing to family migration as a likely indicator of permanent settlement. The increase of family migration over time signals to urban governments an increased urgency to address their needs as not only temporary dwellers but more permanent residents.

**Keywords**
China; family migration; rural–urban migration; settlement; split households

**Issue**
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## 1. Introduction

Over the past four decades, China has witnessed unprecedentedly speedy urbanization, where the level of urbanization increased from only 18% in 1978 to 56% in 2015 (Wu, 2016). Rural–urban migration has been a key driver of this process. Since the 1980s, a prominent feature of China's rural–urban migrants has been their split-household arrangement, namely, migrants live and work in urban areas while leaving behind family members in the countryside. Common split-household arrangements include sole migration, where one of the spouses, usually the husband, leaves for migrant work, leaving behind the wife and children; and couple migration, where both spouses pursue migrant work without their children. More recently, nuclear family migration where the spouses and their children stay together in the host location has been on the rise, increasing from 41.46% to 44.96% of rural–urban migrants from 2011 to 2015 (Fan & Li, 2019).

Based on a 2015 nationally representative "floating population" survey, this article compares sole migrants, couple migrants, and nuclear family migrants. Our objective is two-fold. First, we aim at describing which migrants tend to choose which household arrangements in order to better understand the phenomenon of split

households. Second, we would like to shed light on the relationship between household arrangements and the likelihood of permanent settlement, which is of particular interest to policymakers. Section 2 of the article briefly reviews migration theories that are of relevance for split households and permanent settlement. Section 3 focuses on the Chinese context. Sections 4 and 5 are concerned with the data and modeling that constitute our empirical analysis. The concluding section summarizes and discusses our findings.

**2. Split Households and Permanent Settlement**

A split household refers to a situation where family members who under "normal" circumstances would be living in the same place are actually living in separate places. This is contrary to the traditional understanding of a family, which assumes that members of the same family live together most of the time. Migrants all over the world engage in splitting the household, sometimes over a long period of time. Some examples include goldmine workers in South Africa, Mexican braceros in the American Southwest, Chinese laborers in the US in the late 19th century and early 20th century, Hong Kong astronaut families in Canada, transnational households in Afghanistan, and split migrant couples in Kenya (African Population and Health Research Center, 2002; Glenn, 1983; Harpviken, 2014; Kobayashi & Preston, 2007).

When households are split, migrants may circulate for an extended period of time before settling down permanently, if at all. Zelinsky (1971) defined circulation as "a great variety of movements, usually short-term, repetitive, or cyclical in nature, but all having in common the lack of any declared intention of a permanent or long-lasting change in residence." Circular migration and its persistence have been noted in a number of developing countries, prompting a rethinking of the inevitability of permanent migration. Hugo (1982) observed that migrants in Indonesia did not necessarily perceive their mobility as a preliminary stage leading to the ultimate permanent relocation of themselves and their families. Rather, they "exhibit a strong and apparently long-term commitment to bilocality, opting for the combination of activities in both rural and urban areas that a nonpermanent migration strategy allows them" (Hugo, 1982). According to Chapman and Prothero (1983), "rather than being transitional or ephemeral," circulation "is a time-honored and enduring mode of behavior, deeply rooted in a great variety of cultures and found at all stages of socioeconomic change." In this vein, instead of being considered as lacking means and agency towards permanent migration, migrants who engage in circular migration can be seen as pursuing a strategy, one that facilitates their obtaining the best of both worlds by earning in high-income places and spending in low-cost origins (Hugo, 2006). For example, Mexican immigrants to the US can use the farmland in rural Mexico as an economic asset and a basis of household activities (Roberts, 2007). Rather than committing to return or stay, circular migrants are seen as engaging in "migranthood" in order to accumulate migration experience and social and human capital that increase their competitiveness in the urban labor market (Wang, 2007).

From the migrants' point of view, the new economics of labor migration theory explains that, when migrants pursue work elsewhere and leave part of the family behind in their home villages, they can continue to make full use of family resources such as land and housing in the origin, while at the same time access employment opportunities at the destination, thus maximizing income and minimizing risk (Hugo, 1982). From the labor market's perspective, as summarized by the dual labor market theory (Piore, 1979), the low-paid and unstable jobs in the labor-intensive secondary sector fail to attract the local labor force, thereby creating demand for temporary and circular migrants. Given job uncertainty and inferior status in the secondary sector, a split-household strategy helps maintain both economic and social resources in the origin for migrants' possible eventual return.

It is uncertain whether a split household will eventually give way to permanent settlement and family reunification in the host location. Zelinsky's (1971) original mobility transition model predicts that rural–urban migration, and by extension circular migration, is expected to decline as population growth subsides. Skeldon (2010) observed that as urbanization increases, rural–urban circulation as a means to support village life would be replaced by long-term and permanent migration to cities. In South Korea, from 1966 to 1997, the proportion of household heads who migrated for economic reasons decreased from 72% to 36%, while that for family reasons increased from 6% to 24%, signaling a rise in family reunification (Schwekendiek, 2016). In China, however, permanent settlement of rural migrants in cities is still uncommon, as discussed in the next section.

**3. Migration, Split Households and Family Migration in China**

Since the 1980s, China has experienced a tremendous increase in population mobility, especially in the form of rural–urban migration. Household-splitting, defined by who migrate(s), for how long, and to where, and who is left behind, constitutes the core of migrants' strategy. Demographer Duan Chengrong has identified four stages of household arrangements (Duan, Lv, & Zou, 2013). The first stage involves migrants who leave during the farming off-season to work in the city, mostly migrating alone and returning during the farming season. During the second stage, couple migrants pursue work in cities, leaving behind children to be taken care of by grandparents or other relatives. The reunification of the nuclear family constitutes the third stage when couple migrants arrange for their children to join them in the host city. Finally, the fourth stage involves the migration of the extended family.

Empirical studies have provided support for Duan's framework, at least up to the third stage. During the 1980s, migrant work was regarded as a new means to increase income for rural households, and most migrants were singles (single migration) or married men (sole migration), the latter typically leaving behind wives to shoulder farming and childcare responsibilities (Fan, Sun, & Zheng, 2011). By the 1990s, migrant work had become even more prevalent, such that "couple migration" where both the husband and wife leave for urban work became increasingly common. According to China's censuses, the percentage of both the household head and the spouse being migrants increased from 7.44% in 1990 to 46.06% in 2000 (Duan, Yang, Zhang, & Lu, 2008). Since the 2000s, the nuclear-family arrangement, where both the spouse and children join migrants in urban areas, has fast gained prominence (Yang & Chen, 2013). According to the 2011 National Floating Population Dynamic Monitoring Survey (NFPDMS), 47% of all married rural–urban migrants have reunited with their spouses and children (Yang & Chen, 2013). What's more, over time, migrant families require fewer batches and shorter batch intervals to reunite (Fan & Li, 2019).

Despite the increased prevalence of nuclear family migration, it is unclear if rural–urban migrants' likelihood of and intent for permanent settlement in urban areas have also increased. The literature has suggested a number of factors that influence settlement intention: institutional factors, demographic characteristics, marital status and household arrangement, migration experience and work, social factors, housing condition, and destination characteristics (Fan, 2011; Yang & Guo, 2018; Zhu & Chen, 2010). Research has shown that migrants are cautious about settlement (Yang, Xu, Liu, Ning, & Klein, 2016) and that circular migration and the split-household arrangement persist, reflecting migrants' prioritizing economic considerations over family reunification (Ren, 2006). The most common explanation for migrants not settling down in urban areas is the *hukou* system, which denies and limits rural migrants' access to jobs, health care, education and other social and economic benefits enjoyed by urban Chinese (Chan, Cai, Wan, & Wang, 2018). Another explanation for split households is that it is a household strategy enabling migrants to take advantage of both origin and destination resources (Fan & Wang, 2008). In that light, having more family members in the city is not necessarily indicative of a long-term plan towards permanent settlement (Fan, 2011). Whether couple migrants bring the children along may depend on the children's age and whether migrants' parents are available to help, rather than signaling permanent migration (Fan et al., 2011; Li & Zhang, 2016). However, some studies have indeed found that bringing more family members, especially children, to destination cities helps rural migrants become more integrated into the host society (Wang, Zhang, Ni, Zhang, & Zhang, 2019).

Over the years, the Chinese government has launched a series of policies and reforms to lower *hukou* barriers and facilitate rural migrants' settlement in urban areas and by extension their integration into urban society. In particular, the "National Plan on New Urbanization (2014–2020)" aims at providing urban *hukou* to 100 million rural migrants (The Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council, 2014). Nevertheless, local governments, especially those of large cities and megacities, continue to set their own criteria for granting *hukou* and public services to migrants. While small cities and towns are now more accessible to rural migrants, large cities, whose *hukou* are much preferred by rural migrants, are still not within reach. In other words, there is a mismatch between *hukou* reforms and migrants' preference; as a result, rural migrants are reluctant to give up their rural *hukou* and instead continue to straddle the city and the countryside (Chen & Fan, 2016).

On the other hand, migrants' behaviors and aspirations may be changing. According to NFPDMS, the percentage of rural migrants who had stayed at the respective destination for more than three years increased from 53.83% in 2011 to 56.28% in 2015 respectively, suggesting that rural migrants are staying longer at urban destinations (National Health and Family Planning Commission of the People's Republic of China [NHFPC], 2012, 2016). Intra-provincial migration, which used to be less voluminous than inter-provincial migration, has increased much more rapidly than inter-provincial migration, such that by 2010 the two volumes were nearly the same (Liu, Qi, & Cao, 2015). This hints at a greater likelihood of permanent urban settlement, given that short-distance migrants tend to have a stronger intention and ability to permanently settle down in the destination compared to long-distance migrants. In addition, migrant families' motivations may change, especially when they enter different stages of the life cycle. When economic return is no longer the overriding priority of household decision-making, migrants may forgo the economic benefits of migration in order to keep the household intact. For those households, non-economic factors, such as location-specific amenities and children's education, may become more important migration considerations (Chen & Liu, 2012).

Through a comparison of sole migrants, couple migrants and nuclear family migrants, and considering both migrants who move for work reasons as well as those who move for family reasons, in the empirical analysis that follows we aim at describing the characteristics of migrants that select specific household arrangements, including their likelihood and intention to settle down in urban areas. Given endogeneity in the model, our focus is the statistical association between selected independent variables and migrants' household arrangements rather than causation; and our results are descriptive rather than predictive.

## 4. Data and Definitions

We employ data from the 2015 NFPDMS. "Floating population" refers to migrants who stay in places different from their *hukou* locations, the vast majority of whom are rural–urban migrants (NHFPC, 2012, 2016). Piloted in 2009 in just five cities and administered by the National Population and Family Planning Committee, the NFPDMS project was expanded to 31 provinces in 2015. Among publicly available data on the "floating population," these surveys are considered very robust because of their rigorous and random sampling framework, large samples, national coverage, and provincial representativeness.

The 2015 survey has two important features that are especially useful for our research. First, it includes information about household members who are 60 years or older—commonly considered the elderly—who may play a role in household arrangement decisions. Second, compared to past surveys, the 2015 survey has expanded the sample size for each province, thus enabling it to be both nationally representative and provincially representative. The survey has two limitations. First, the information it provides about migrant households' rural resources, such as farmland and rural housing, is limited. Second, the survey does not provide information for the "elderly" who are younger than 60.

The survey defined "floating population" as migrants who had moved across a county (*xiàn*) boundary from where they were registered and had been in their current location for more than one month. Interviewees must be at least 15 years old. Altogether, the 2015 survey included 193,125 interviewees and 499,406 family members. From the 193,125 interviewees, we arrive at a subset of 58,240 via the following seven steps. In step 1, we select the 137,534 migrants (71.22%) whose host location was an urban neighborhood (*juweihui*) and exclude migrants whose host location was a rural neighborhood (*cunweihui*). In step 2, we select the 109,853 (79.87%) migrants who had rural *hukou* and exclude those with urban *hukou*. In step 3, we select migrants who were married and were in their first marriage, yielding 85,336 (77.68%) interviewees. This is because we are interested in couples and not singles (unmarried), and the numbers of remarried, divorced, and widowed are small (less than 4% in total). In step 4, we keep the 61,930 (72.57%) interviewees who had at least one child under 16 and exclude those who do not have children or whose children are all over 16 years old. In step 5, we keep the 61,368 (99.09%) interviewees whose spouse lived in either the host location (56,991) or the home village (4,377) and exclude those whose spouse lived elsewhere. In step 6, we keep the 58,646 (95.57%) interviewees whose children were either all living in the host location (43,055) or all living in the home village (15,591) and exclude those who had some children in the host location and some in the home village or had children who lived elsewhere.

Finally, step 7 is concerned with migrants' household arrangements. We are especially interested in the role of young children (under 16)—including left-behind and migrant children—in shaping the migrant households and their settlement intention. Based on previous research on split households (Fan et al., 2011), we define sole migrants as those who migrate alone, leaving the spouse and all young children behind at the home village; and couple migrants as spouses who migrate to and reside together at the same host location, leaving all young children behind in the home villages. For simplicity's sake, hereafter we refer to nuclear family migration, where both spouses and all young children reside together at the same host location, as family migration; and the migrants with this arrangement as family migrants. We exclude interviewees who were with their children in the host location without the spouse (i.e., one parent with children) because this arrangement accounted for less than 1% of the interviewees. The 58,240 interviewees that remain after step 7 constitute our sample for the statistical analysis (3,872 sole migrants, 11,719 couple migrants, and 42,649 family migrants).

Before estimating models on household arrangement, one important distinction needs to be made, namely, migrants' reasons for migration. While 86.45% of the migrants in our sample came to the host location for work, 13.55% came for family reasons. What's more, these two types of migrants are considerably different (Table 1). While women constitute 93.40% of family-related migrants, they account for only 41.14% of work-related migrants, suggesting that the wife is more likely the follower in migration. With regards to migration distance, 46.79% of work-related migrants are interprovincial migrants, compared to 39.27% of family-related migrants, suggesting that the latter's moves tend to be of shorter distances. Family-related migrants are younger, with an average age of 30.89 compared to 33.96 for work-related migrants. The former also have younger children; more than half have pre-school children (under 5 years old) compared to only 35.91% of work-related migrants.

In rural China, the elderly are often the ones providing care for young left-behind children. About 60% of work-related migrants and 50% of family-related migrants have at least one elderly family member at the home village, suggesting that the former have more elderly support than the latter. While more than 90% of work-related migrants are working, only about 30% of family-related migrants are, suggesting that the follower migrants, mostly women as observed earlier, tend to join the spouse to help with household chores and caregiving. The high proportion of non-working family-related migrants results in a much lower per capita monthly income (1,166 yuan) than work-related migrants (4,121 yuan). Respectively 31.33% of family-related migrants and 21.85% of work-related migrants gave birth to their oldest children (under 16) at the host location. This may be a result of the former's relative lack of elderly support in the home village, but may also hint at their greater integration into the host society than work-related migrants. Family-related migrants' host lo-

**Table 1.** Migrants by migration reason.

| Category | Variables | Migration reason | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Family-related migrants* | Work-related migrants* |
| **Individual factors** | Gender: Male | 6.60% | 58.86% |
| | Female | 93.40% | 41.14% |
| | Interviewee's age | 30.89 | 33.96 |
| | Education: Middle school and below | 71.73% | 70.08% |
| | High school and above | 28.27% | 29.92% |
| | Migration distance: Interprovincial | 39.27% | 46.79% |
| | Intercity | 35.49% | 31.77% |
| | Intercounty | 25.24% | 21.44% |
| **Family characteristics** | Number of children under 16 | 1.3324 | 1.3391 |
| | Oldest child's age: under 5 | 50.13% | 35.91% |
| | 6–11 | 31.41% | 37.31% |
| | 12–16 | 18.46% | 26.78% |
| | Number of elderly (over 60 years old) in home village | | |
| | 0 | 49.08% | 39.58% |
| | 1 | 13.83% | 16.96% |
| | 2 | 37.09% | 43.46% |
| **Economic condition** | Occupation: Non-working | 69.49% | 9.02% |
| | Self-employed | 14.93% | 50.04% |
| | Employee | 15.58% | 40.94% |
| | Monthly income (yuan) | 1165.57 | 4120.63 |
| | Household's monthly income (yuan) | 6258.60 | 6889.15 |
| | Ratio of total expenditure to total income | 63.36% | 58.06% |
| **Experience at host location** | Duration at host location (years) | 4.92 | 4.55 |
| | Birthplace of oldest child under 16 | | |
| | Host location | 31.33% | 21.85% |
| | Home village or other places | 68.67% | 78.15% |
| | Mother's location during pregnancy | | |
| | Mainly at host location | 48.47% | 40.45% |
| | Mainly at home village | 51.53% | 59.55% |
| | Settlement intention (for over 5 years) | | |
| | Yes | 65.69% | 65.66% |
| | No | 8.29% | 9.18% |
| | Undecided | 26.02% | 25.16% |
| **Regional factors (host province)** | GDP per capita (yuan) | 50065 | 51888 |
| | Ratio of teachers to students in primary schools | 0.0648 | 0.0620 |
| | Public green space per capita ($m^2$) | 13.08 | 12.96 |

Notes: Family-related migrants (*) refers to individuals who moved primarily for family or social reasons, including "joining family members," "marriage," "housing change," "seeking help from relatives or friends," and "giving birth;" and work-related migrants refer to individuals who moved for work and employment reasons, including "industry/business," "study/training," and "joining army" (Fan, 2008, p. 55). "Industry/business" and "joining family members" account for respectively 86.33% and 11.91% of all respondents.

cations have higher ratios of primary-school teachers to students and more per capita public green space, while work-related migrants' host locations have higher GDP per capita. These differences suggest that family-related migrants are more concerned with the educational and environmental resources while work-related migrants' focus is more on economic opportunities. In addition, Table 2 shows that nearly 90% of family-related migrants have a family-migration arrangement, compared to about 71% of work-related migrants. Given the differences between family-related and work-related migrants observed above, we estimate models for them separately, summarized in the next section.

## 5. Modeling

We have identified five groups of independent variables that might be related to migrants' household arrange-

**Table 2.** Household arrangement by migration reason.

| Migration reason | Sole migrants | Couple migrants | Family migrants | All |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Family-related | 42 (0.53%) | 758 (9.61%) | 7,089 (89.86%) | 7,889 (100%) |
| Work-related | 3,830 (7.61%) | 10,961 (21.77%) | 35,560 (70.62%) | 50,351 (100%) |

ments (Tables 3 and 4). Individual variables include age, gender, education, and migration distance, similar to Table 1 presented earlier. We use the interaction term of education and gender because the effect of education may be very different between women and men. Migration distance refers to intercity, intercounty, and interprovincial migration, from the shortest to the longest in general. Family variables include the number of children under 16, the age of the oldest child who is under 16 and having at least one elderly (60 or older) in the home village.

Economic condition variables include occupation, monthly income, monthly household income, and the ratio of total household expenditure to total household income. Since the effects of occupation and income may differ between women and men, we use the interaction term with gender for both variables. Host-location experience variables include the birthplace of the oldest child under 16, the mother's main location during her pregnancy, duration of stay at the host location, and settlement intention measured by willingness to stay in the host location for more than five years. Regional variables include GDP per capita, the ratio of teachers to students in primary schools, and the amount of public green land per capita in the host province.

As mentioned earlier, we are interested in the descriptive, statistical relationship between the independent variables and migrants' household arrangements. Therefore, when interpreting the modeling results, the independent variables may represent both the outcomes of and explanations for the household arrangement.

Among family-related migrants, only 42 interviewees or 0.5% are sole migrants. Therefore, we have decided to drop them from the modeling and will focus on the differences between couple migrants and family migrants, using logistic regression (Table 3). For the work-related model (Table 4), all three types of household arrangements are included, and multinomial logistic regression is used to test the differences among sole migrants, couple migrants, and family migrants.

*5.1. Family-Related Migrants*

The family-related model is statistically significant, and the Pseudo $R^2$ (0.1680) and its correct classification (90.46%) into couple migrants versus family migrants are reasonable (Table 3). We tested multicollinearity by running an ordinary least square regression using the same dependent and independent variables and concluded that correlations among independent variables have not unduly biased the model's estimates.

Among individual variables, only interprovincial migration is statistically significant with a negative coefficient. In other words, couples who migrate over long distances are less likely to bring their children with them. The odds of intercounty migrants being family migrants relative to couple migrants, is about two times that of interprovincial migrants.

Among family variables, the number of children under 16 is positive and significant, suggesting that having more children increases the odds of being family migrants. However, having an oldest child of 6–11 years decreases the odds of being family migrants by about 24% and having an oldest child of 12–16 years decreases the odds by about 47%. In other words, the older the children, the more likely they are left behind. This is consistent with existing findings of the age distribution of migrant children at destinations: The older the children, the less likely they are brought to cities (Chan et al., 2018).

Education opportunities, governed by government policy and the *hukou* system, are the key to understanding the age structure of migrant children in cities. Preschool children (under 5 years old) are most likely to be taken to cities by their parents, because they need care and because they are not yet enrolled in schools. The majority of primary-school-age (6–11 years old) children can enroll in public schools, as instructed by the Compulsory Education Law that city governments should provide grades 1–9 education for children of eligible migrants (The National People's Congress Standing Committee, 2006). However, high school education beyond the 9th grade is not mandatory; and local high school admission in many provinces is tied to parents' social security contribution years, which severely constrains migrant children's eligibility (Chen, 2018). Furthermore, the curriculum of high school admission examinations is different in different provinces (Hornby, 2013). Therefore, migrant children usually return to their home location much earlier than grade 9, often as early as grade 6 or 7, in order to study for local high school admission exams. In other words, while young children accompanying parents to migrate to the host location is feasible or even appealing, it is difficult and generally not desirable for high-school-age or even middle-school-age children to remain in the host location.

Results of economic variables confirm that it is revealing to examine interaction terms between gender on one hand and self-employed, non-working, and monthly income on the other. Female migrants are more likely to be non-working, less likely to be self-employed, and more likely to earn less than male migrants, all of which is consistent with the expected gender division of labor among

**Table 3.** Binary logistic regression model for family-related migrants.

| | Family migrants | |
|---|---|---|
| **Base category: Couple migrants** | Coefficient | Odds Ratio |
| **Individual factors** | | |
| Age | 0.0133 | 1.0134 |
| Gender (ref = male) | −0.2579 | 0.7727 |
| Education (ref = below high school) | | |
| High school and above* Male | −0.4667 | 0.6271 |
| High school and above* Female | −0.0817 | 0.9215 |
| Distance (ref = intercounty migration) | | |
| Intercity | −0.0175 | 0.9310 |
| Interprovincial | −0.7368*** | 0.4787 |
| **Family factors** | | |
| Number of children under 16 | 0.3252*** | 1.3844 |
| Age of oldest child (ref = under 5 years) | | |
| 6–11 years old | −0.2464** | 0.7616 |
| 12–16 years old | −0.6286*** | 0.5334 |
| Have elderly at 60 or older at home village (ref = no) Yes | −0.0122 | 0.9879 |
| **Economic condition** | | |
| Occupation (ref = employee) | | |
| Self-employed* Male | 0.0859 | 1.0897 |
| Self-employed* Female | −0.2733** | 0.7608 |
| Non-working* Male | −0.3608 | 0.6971 |
| Non-working* Female | 0.9364*** | 2.5507 |
| Interviewee's monthly income* Male | −2.21e−5 | 0.9999 |
| Interviewee's monthly income* Female | −5.27e−5*** | 0.9999 |
| Ln (Household's monthly income) | 0.7875*** | 2.1978 |
| Ratio of total expenditure to total income | 2.2744*** | 9.7223 |
| **Experience at host location** | | |
| Birthplace of oldest child under 16 (ref = home village or other places) | | |
| Host location | 1.1020*** | 3.0100 |
| Mother's main location during pregnancy (ref = mainly at home village) | | |
| Mainly at host location | 0.0224 | 1.0226 |
| Duration at host location | 0.0341*** | 1.0346 |
| Settlement intention (ref = no) | | |
| Yes | 0.6397*** | 1.8959 |
| Undecided | 0.3034** | 1.3545 |
| **Regional factors** | | |
| GDP per capita | −1.86e−06 | 0.9999 |
| Ratio of teachers to students in primary schools | 42.2538*** | 2.24e+18 |
| Public green space per capita | 0.1011*** | 1.1064 |
| Constant | −10.9845*** | 1.7e−5 |
| Number of observations | 7,844 | |
| LR chi-square | 837.13 | |
| Pseudo $R^2$ | 0.1680 | |
| Percentage correctly classified | 90.46% | |

Significance levels: * 0.10; ** 0.05; *** 0.01

family migrants, that is, the wife is the family's designated caregiver and she most likely spends much more time than the husband taking care of the children in the host location. At the household level, both monthly income and ratio of total expenditure to total income are positive and significant for family migrants. Despite the wife's weaker earning outcome than the husband, it seems that the latter's earnings more than make up for it. And, not unexpectedly, family migrants spend more than couple migrants due to the former's larger household size at the host location.

The odds of family migrants giving birth to the oldest child at the host location as opposed to the home village are three times more than couple migrants. The location where children are born may signal further settlement intention. In addition, migrants who have stayed at the host location longer are more likely to be family migrants than couple migrants. As for settlement intention,

migrants who are willing to stay for at least five more years, as well as those who are undecided, are both more likely to be family migrants than couple migrants.

Among regional factors, the ratio of teachers to students and public green space per capita are both positive and significant. In other words, to migrants who move for family reasons, better educational resources and living environment are instrumental to their choosing the arrangement of family migration versus leaving their children behind. To them, the host location is seen as a place to live rather than just a place to make money.

### 5.2. Work-Related Migrants

Table 4 summarizes the multinomial logistic regression model for work-related migrants, where couple migrants

**Table 4.** Multinominal logistic regression model for work-related migrants.

| | Sole migrants | | Family migrants | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Base category: Couple migrants** | Coefficient | Odds Ratio | Coefficient | Odds Ratio |
| **Individual factors** | | | | |
| Age | 0.0064 | 1.0064 | 0.0098*** | 1.0099 |
| Gender (ref = male) | −0.5756*** | 0.5624 | −0.1569*** | 0.8548 |
| Education (ref = below high school) | | | | |
| High school and above* Male | 0.3124*** | 1.3667 | 0.0482 | 1.0494 |
| High school and above* Female | 0.5406*** | 1.7171 | 0.1078** | 1.1138 |
| Distance (ref = intercounty migration) | | | | |
| Intercity | −0.2658*** | 0.7666 | −0.1766*** | 0.8381 |
| Interprovincial | −0.4708*** | 0.6245 | −0.7194*** | 0.4870 |
| **Family factors** | | | | |
| Number of children under 16 | 0.0867*** | 1.0905 | 0.1285*** | 1.1371 |
| Age of oldest child (ref = under 5 years) | | | | |
| 6–11 years old | −0.1331** | 0.8754 | 0.0754** | 1.0783 |
| 12–16 years old | −0.2277*** | 0.7963 | −0.2424*** | 0.7847 |
| Have elderly at 60 or older at home village (ref = no) | | | | |
| Yes | −0.0583** | 0.9434 | −0.0658*** | 0.9364 |
| **Economic condition** | | | | |
| Occupation (ref = employee) | | | | |
| Self-employed* Male | −0.9479*** | 0.3876 | −0.1075*** | 0.8981 |
| Self-employed* Female | −0.8417*** | 0.5941 | 0.1598*** | 1.1733 |
| Non-working* Male | −0.4824*** | 0.6173 | 0.1883** | 1.2072 |
| Non-working* Female | −0.5207*** | 0.5941 | 0.6036*** | 1.8286 |
| Interviewee’s monthly income* Male | 1.303e−4*** | 1.0001 | 3.52e−5*** | 1.0000 |
| Interviewee’s monthly income* Female | 1.176e−4*** | 1.0001 | −5.81e−06 | 0.9999 |
| Ln (Household’s monthly income) | −2.0507*** | 0.1286 | 0.2796*** | 1.3225 |
| Ratio of total expenditure to total income | −1.6554*** | 0.1910 | 1.9538*** | 7.0554 |
| **Experience at host location** | | | | |
| Birthplace of oldest child under 16 (ref = home village or other places) | | | | |
| Host location | −0.0279 | 0.9724 | 1.3426*** | 3.8291 |
| Mother’s main location during pregnancy (ref = mainly at home village) | | | | |
| Mainly at host location | −0.8073*** | 0.4460 | 0.1537*** | 1.1662 |
| Duration at host location | −0.0233*** | 0.9770 | 0.0395*** | 1.0403 |
| Settlement intention (ref = no) | | | | |
| Yes | −0.5887*** | 0.5550 | 0.8314*** | 2.2964 |
| Undecided | −0.4098*** | 0.6638 | 0.2330*** | 1.2624 |
| **Regional factors** | | | | |
| GDP per capita | −3.08e−08 | 1.0000 | −3.57e−06*** | 0.9999 |
| Ratio of teachers to students in primary schools | −23.9102*** | 4.13e−11 | 31.2198*** | 3.62e+13 |
| Public green space per capita | −0.0641*** | 0.9379 | 0.0441*** | 1.0451 |
| Constant | 20.3817*** | 7.11e+08 | −5.7367*** | 0.0032 |
| Number of observations | 50,329 | | | |
| LR chi-square | 14064.62 | | | |
| Pseudo $R^2$ | 0.1806 | | | |
| Percentage correctly classified | 74.11% | | | |

Significance levels: * 0.10; ** 0.05; *** 0.01

are defined as the reference group, to be compared with sole migrants and family migrants. The model is statistically significant, and the Pseudo $R^2$ (0.1806) and its correct classification (74.11%) are both reasonable. We tested multicollinearity by running an ordinary least square regression using the same dependent and independent variables and concluded that correlations among independent variables have not unduly biased the model's estimates. However, the model did not pass the Independence of Irrelevant Alternatives Test (IIA), which is probably due to the endogeneity of the association between the dependent and independent variables. As mentioned earlier, we are more interested in statistical associations than causation directions, and thus our interpretation of the results is descriptive rather than predictive.

Age is positive and significant for family migrants; that is, older migrants are more likely to be family migrants than couple migrants. Gender is negative and significant for both sole migrants and family migrants; that is, women are more likely to be couple migrants and family migrants than sole migrants, reflecting as expected that sole migration is mostly pursued by men. Education is positive and significant for both male and female sole migrants as well as female family migrants, suggesting that couple migrants are the least educated among the three types of migrants. Intercity and intercountry migrations are both negative and significant for sole migrants and family migrants. In other words, couple migrants travel the farthest.

The number of children under 16 is positive and significant for both sole migrants and family migrants. That is, couple migrants tend to have the least number of children, which is consistent with the expectation that parents desire to be with their children. But the age of children matters. The odds of being sole migrants relative to being couple migrants decrease by about 13% and 21% when the oldest child is 6–11 years old and 12–16 years old respectively. In other words, having preschool-aged children encourages the sole-migration arrangement, with the spouse (usually the wife) left behind for caregiving. When the children are older, the couple-migration option becomes more viable. Similarly, for family migrants, having the oldest child at 12–16 years old is negative and significant. As mentioned earlier, children at high-school age tend to return to their home village for the respective curriculum. Having elderlies who are 60 years or older at the home village is negative and significant for both family migrants and sole migrants. In other words, older parents may not be capable of taking care of young children, thus motivating migrants to take their children to the host location rather than leaving them behind. They may also need care themselves, thus making it difficult for couple migration to take place.

Both the coefficients of self-employed and non-working sole migrants are negative and significant for both men and women, suggesting that a more flexible work arrangement, compared to urban jobs such as factory work and domestic work, is more desirable for couples. Furthermore, a more flexible work arrangement, which facilitates childcare, increases the odds to be family migrants relative to couple migrants. The odds of non-working women are higher than the odds of non-working men to be family migrants relative to couple migrants, indicating that among family migrants, women are more likely than men to play a caregiving role at the expense of employment and work. Likewise, self-employed is positive and significant for female family migrants but negative and significant for male family migrants, relative to couple migrants, suggesting that, among family migrants, women are more likely than men to pursue more flexible work in order to manage their caregiving responsibility.

Monthly income is positive and significant for both male and female sole migrants. It is not difficult to understand that earning outcome is a priority of sole migrants, being the only person in the city while leaving everyone else behind. Monthly income is also positive and significant for male family migrants, but is not significant for female family migrants, which is consistent with the expectation that female family migrants tend to play a supporting role, including enabling their husbands to increase their earnings. Both household monthly income and the ratio of total expenditure to total income are negative and significant for sole migrants and positive and significant for family migrants. This probably reflects household size: Sole-migrant households have the least people and therefore earn and spend the least, whereas family-migrant households have the most people and hence earn and spend the most.

All the host-location experience variables have positive and significant coefficients for family migrants, while four of the five variables have negative and significant coefficients for sole migrants. The odds of migrants giving birth to the oldest child at the host location being family migrants is about four times that of being couple migrants. A woman who mainly stays at the host location during her pregnancy is more likely to be a family migrant and less likely to be a sole migrant, relative to being a couple migrant. A longer duration at the host location is positively associated with family migrants and negatively associated with sole migrants, relative to couple migrants. Intention to stay and indecision to stay for the next five years are both more likely associated with family migrants and less likely associated with sole migrants than couple migrants. All in all, the above suggests that family migrants are the most integrated at the host location and that sole migrants are the least integrated.

GDP per capita is negative and significant, whereas the ratio of teachers to students, as well as public green space per capita, is positive and significant for family migrants. These results suggest that the decision to bring children to the host location is less a function of economic opportunities and more a matter of educational resources and the living environment. On the contrary, educational opportunities and living environment are negative and significant for sole migrants, further supporting

the observation that sole migrants primarily consider the host location a place to work rather than a place to live.

## 6. Conclusion

Family migration of rural Chinese to urban areas, involving both the spouse and children, has been on the rise, while split households of other forms still persist. Based on a 2015 nationally representative "floating population" survey, this article compares sole migrants, couple migrants, and family migrants in order to examine which migrants tend to choose specific household arrangements, and to shed light on the relationship between household arrangements and the likelihood of permanent settlement.

First, our modeling identifies the demographic, gender, economic, employment, and host-location differences among different migrant household arrangements. Both sole migrants and family migrants are more likely to have young children who lack intergenerational support at the home village, so they either leave one spouse behind or take the children to the host location. But in both cases, children of high-school age tend to return, reflecting the rigidity of *hukou*-based high-school curriculum. Husbands are more likely to be sole migrants and employees, and wives among family migrants are more likely to be non-working as they tend to assume caregiving and supporting roles. Couple migrants are the least educated and they travel the longest distance and to host locations with higher GDP per capita, reflecting strong motivations to earn income. Family migrants travel the shortest distance to host locations with better educational resources and environmental quality, signaling the importance of the living environment to them.

Second, our analysis reveals some differences between work-related migration and family-related migration. When deciding whether to take the children to the host location, family-related migrants consider mainly children's need for care, while work-related migrants also consider the availability of support at the home village. And, economic opportunities as well as the cost of living matter more to work-related migrants than to family-related migrants.

Finally, our results support the notion that family migration is associated with permanent settlement. Family migrants, compared to sole and couple migrants, are likely to have spent longer duration, children born, and long-term settlement intentions at the host location. They tend to consider urban areas not only as a place to make money but also a place to live.

Crossing the rural–urban boundary as a family may hint at increased integration into the urban community. Having said that, two caveats serve as reminders that rural–urban integration remains an aspiration rather than a reality. First, despite the increased prevalence of family migration, split households continue unabated among rural migrants in China. There is no indication that rural Chinese would give up their rural *hukou* wholesale in order to settle down in urban areas (Chen & Fan, 2016). What has emerged, rather, is rural Chinese buying homes and finding work in nearby towns where permanent settlement is more feasible (Wu & Zhang, 2018). Second, our data is cross-sectional, which does not fully address the frequent changes in the household arrangement among migrants, many continuing to circulate between the city and countryside. Despite these caveats, our results highlight rural–urban migrants as increasingly long-term dwellers rather than short-term guests for work and underscore the urgency for urban governments to invest in both economic and non-economic opportunities for migrants and their family members, including jobs, housing, and schools.

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## Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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Article

# Socio-Economic Participation of Somali Refugees in the Netherlands, Transnational Networks and Boundary Spanning

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**Abstract**

In this article we analyse the socio-economic participation of Somali refugees in the Netherlands. Unemployment is higher among Somalis than any other refugee or immigrant group in the Netherlands and they face many obstacles when it comes to social and economic participation. At the same time, they are known for having a strong transnational orientation. We were interested to learn whether and, if so, how Somalis use their transnational networks to overcome obstacles on the Dutch labour market and how boundaries around formal labour markets are negotiated in order to access employment and to participate. We did so by focusing on two strategies employed to participate, namely through Somali organizations in the Netherlands and elsewhere, and by Somalis moving to the UK. In doing so, we looked at Somalis' ability to span boundaries to create opportunities. The concept of transnational networks is helpful in understanding Somalis' daily realities, but conceptually it does not seem to fit entirely as these networks usually only refer to connections with the 'homeland.' We argue that Somalis' boundary-spanning activities move beyond national levels and involve various scales, sites, and settings. The data we refer to are derived from focus group discussions with 66 Somali people in Amsterdam and 20 interviews with experts who work with the Somali community in the Netherlands. These discussions and interviews were held in 2013–14. We also draw on 20 interviews with Somali organizations in the Netherlands about their transnational orientation, which were conducted between 2010 and 2013 in the context of another research project.

**Keywords**

boundary spanning; socio-economic participation; Somalis; transnational networks

**Issue**

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## 1. Introduction

Many Somalis in the Netherlands find themselves in a vulnerable position on the Dutch labour market, which translates into the highest unemployment figures amongst immigrant and refugee groups in the Netherlands. More than 30% are unemployed compared to 15% of all non-Western immigrants (Andriessen, Gijsberts, Huijnk, & Nicolaas, 2017). At the same time, Somalis are known for their strong transnational orientation (Horst, 2008; Ismail, 2011) and their entrepreneurial activities. In this article, we raise the question whether and, if so, how transnational networks are used to overcome obstacles on the Dutch labour market and how this impacts their socio-economic participation. We thus analyse Somalis' socio-economic participation through a transnational lens and move beyond national levels by taking various scales, sites, and settings into account. Networks can be formal or informal, and can have different qualities. In the literature, a distinction is often made between strong and weak ties (Granovetter, 1973). Strong ties are often based on connections through fam-

ily and friends, as well as on a shared country of origin. Weak ties are much looser and can be ties between acquaintances or business relations. These weak ties are, however, crucial in exchanging information across different groups and binding together groups of strong ties (i.e., networks). Networks can be helpful in facilitating mobility (Massey et al., 1998). Migrant networks can serve different goals, as they can be used to share information about, for example, a migration destination or job opportunities. Upon arrival, many migrants fall back on their networks for housing, jobs, and all sorts of practical issues related to the country of destination. Through networks people also send money back to their relatives at home and elsewhere, and networks can help to facilitate onward migration (Danso, 2001; Dekker & Engbersen, 2014; Poros, 2001; Ryan, Sales, Mary, & Siara, 2008), just like they can facilitate initial migration. Networks thus can be used before, during, and after migration as well as in preparation for new trajectories.

The literature on migration and networks is in general rather positive, especially the literature that looks into the use of networks for integration purposes. Migrants using their own networks to find jobs is often perceived as an efficient way of gaining employment. A few authors, however, nuance this picture because labour market participation through social networks often results in migrants having lower pay and a more homogenous labour market position (i.e., as lower skilled workers). Migrants' own networks thus often result in less attractive jobs and working conditions (Kalter & Kogan, 2014; McKay, 2009).

Another observation is that the literature on the role of networks in socio-economic integration is often limited to an analysis of networks at a local and national scale and does not take into account the transnational dimension. When the transnational perspective is taken into account, it is usually argued that transnationalism limits integration (Portes, Escobar, & Arana, 2008; Snel, Engbersen, & Leerkes, 2006). Since 2001, Western states have increasingly questioned the political loyalty of their immigrant residents (Waldinger & Fitzgerald, 2004). In the Netherlands, for instance, the government opposes dual citizenship because it deems the resulting dual loyalties of migrants unacceptable and requires immigrants to have citizenship of only one country. Transnational activities (e.g., sending remittances) and a continuing identification with the sending country or the diaspora are often perceived as an impediment to the integration of immigrants into the host country. Taking into account Somalis' strong transnational orientation, for the purpose of this article we take a closer look at the role transnational networks play in their socio-economic participation. We do so by looking beyond the nation state and using the concept of boundary spanning, that is, the 'crossing, weaving and permeating' (Williams, 2002) of boundaries. These boundaries can take many forms: They can be national borders, but also organizational, sectoral, professional, linguistic, and cultural and political borders (Jöns & Freytag, 2015). Examples from the literature point to partnerships between universities and local communities as institutional boundary spanning (Weerts & Sandmann, 2010); interaction in a multidisciplinary team as knowledge boundary spanning (Ratcheva, 2009); and cultural and linguistic boundary spanning in a multinational corporation (Barner-Rasmussen, 2017).

Central to boundary spanning are boundary spanners—people who can work across boundaries. Several characteristics are ascribed to these spanners: They seem to focus on interpersonal relationships, are entrepreneurial and innovative, act as cultural brokers, and exhibit trust and leadership. In order to cross boundaries, personal mobilities and interactions are assets for boundary spanners, since these facilitate the transfer of ideas, knowledge, and practices (Jöns & Freytag, 2015).

In this article we argue that Somalis are boundary spanners par excellence because they use their transnational networks to cross different boundaries for several purposes, including socio-economic participation. Recognizing the capital that is developed through these acts of boundary spanning, also in informal ways, would do more justice to the lived experiences of Somali refugees, and providing greater flexibility to enable these boundary-spanning activities would help to strengthen the socio-economic position of Somali refugees. Although policymakers mainly understand socio-economic participation as a phenomenon that exclusively takes place within national borders, Somalis also participate in other spaces/sites. By showing how socio-economic participation works from a transnational perspective, we add another layer to the representation of Somalis in the Netherlands as a socio-economically weak and passive refugee group and show that a lot of their activities take place in another realm.

In the following section we describe the methodological foundations of this article and provide the background to the presence of Somalis in the Netherlands, with a special focus on their socio-economic participation in the Netherlands. We then discuss the role of their transnational network within this participation. We end with a discussion on the wider meaning of these findings concerning the role of transnational networks in socio-economic participation.

## 2. Methodology

This contribution draws upon qualitative data collected in two research projects. The first study focused on the integration position of Somalis in Amsterdam and formed part of a larger European study on Somalis in European cities (Open Society Foundations, 2014). The second project investigated Somali diaspora organizations in the Netherlands and their transnational activities. Data for the first study were collected in 2013–14 through ten focus group discussions (FGDs) with Somalis in Amsterdam and interviews with stakeholders in Amsterdam and elsewhere. Some FGDs had a broad design, discussing multi-

ple topics, while others had a more thematic focus, addressing education, employment, health, policing and security, and so on. The intention was to engage participants from a wide variety of backgrounds, and in particular a balance between women and men, different age groups, and different levels of education. Some of these criteria appeared difficult to meet, such as an equal representation of both genders in one FGD. Both men and women talked more openly when they participated in a group with people of the same sex. As such, this article provides more room to FGDs that involved only men or women. Another condition was that participants should not know each other. Since the Somali population in Amsterdam is very small this was difficult to accomplish. By using multiple entry points to this community, the Somalis who participated in the FGDs represented the broad diversity within the Somali community in Amsterdam. Most group discussions were conducted in Somali except for those with young Somalis and a group of older Somalis who have lived in Amsterdam since the early 1990s. All FGDs were recorded and transcribed by two Somali research assistants (Open Society Foundations, 2014).

Tables 1 and 2 provide an overview of some of the basic characteristics of the participants in the FGDs. About 40% were women, and a majority of all participants had arrived in the Netherlands after 2005. A majority of the participants were relatively young (i.e., in their twenties or thirties), which is a fair reflection of the presumed age distribution of the Somali population in Amsterdam.

In addition, 23 interviews were conducted with key individuals, such as city officials working in relevant departments, leaders of Somali organizations, representatives of non-governmental organizations working in relevant fields, journalists, and policy officers working in the national government.

For the second study, which was conducted in 2010–13, we started by mapping Somali organizations in the Netherlands. We then selected the 20 most important organizations and interviewed their boards. The topics addressed included the aims of the organization, the characteristics of their activities in the Netherlands, in Somalia and elsewhere, and their views on development in Somalia.

**3. The Somali Diaspora**

Somalis who left their country as asylum seekers are spread over the globe. Many have family members and relatives all over the world. The largest Somali diaspora is in America. Minneapolis—which is sometimes called 'little Mogadishu'—hosts the largest group of Somalis outside Somalia (Horst, 2007). The second largest Somali diaspora is in the UK. There is a strong tie between the two countries as a result of the colonial past and their common language. Migration has been taking place between Somalia and the UK since the 19th century. This migration started with seamen and steel workers who stayed on in the UK after doing temporary work during the colonial period (Griffiths, 2002; Kleist, 2004). As a result of this history, many Somalis in the UK live in harbour cities such as London, Liverpool, Bristol, or Cardiff, and in industrial cities such as Birmingham. Later, Somalis fleeing the civil war in Somalia in 1991 sought asylum in the UK. Yet later, a wave of European Somalis migrated from the Netherlands and Scandinavian countries (Bang Nielsen, 2004; Fangen, 2006) to the UK as EU citizens. These Somalis sometimes arrived in cities like Leicester that had large Muslim communities but no specific relation to Somali migration (van Liempt, 2011).

Although the Somali diaspora is geographically spread, they are psychologically and emotionally very much oriented towards Somalia. Research in the Netherlands showed that 84% of the Somalis in the Netherlands feel strongly attached to Somalia (Andriessen et al., 2017). A large number of remittances are sent to Somalia and there are numerous projects in the Netherlands aimed at the development of Somalia. The high frequency of visits to Somalia by Somalis from the diaspora and the number of people who follow the daily news in Somalia also evidence this strong orientation towards the homeland. Many Somalis send money home, as explained by one of the leaders of a Somali development organization:

> There is a huge difference between transnational development activities and remittances: Remittances are not development activities; they are compulsory, a moral obligation. People always feel the pressure. You get phone calls every day, SMS: 'When will you

**Table 1.** Study 1: Participants in FGDs according to gender and year of arrival in the Netherlands.

| | Before 1995 | 1995–99 | 2000–04 | After 2005 | Born in the Netherlands |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Male (N = 39) | 9 | 3 | 1 | 21 | 5 |
| Female (N = 27) | 2 | 3 | 3 | 18 | 1 |

**Table 2.** Study 2: Age of participants in FGDs.

| Under 20 | 20s | 30s | 40s | 50s | 60s | Unknown |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | 26 | 16 | 11 | 5 | 1 | 3 |

> send money?' The vast majority of Somalis in the Netherlands are not involved in development activities, in structural activities. No, they just remit.

Of the roughly 40,000 Somalis in the Netherlands (on 1 January 2019 there were 39.947 Somalis registered; see CBS, 2019) one third were born in the Netherlands. Most Somalis live in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Tilburg, or the Hague, although many of them first lived in other parts of the country as a result of the Dutch dispersal policy. Research shows that only one third of Somalis still live at the addresses they were originally dispersed to. The rest have moved on (van den Tillaart, 2000) to access job opportunities and/or be closer to friends and family. This is also in line with the study by Zorlu and Mulder (2008), who pointed out that over time some of the dispersed refugees regroup in larger cities.

The Somali community in the Netherlands is usually categorized into two groups, namely Somalis who arrived at the start of the 1990s, right after the collapse of the regime of Siad Barre, and those who came from 2007 onwards. The contrast between the two groups is big. The first group is mainly from the north and from urban areas and is relatively well educated (diplomats and businessmen, many with a university background). The second group is younger and mainly consists of people from the south, the majority from Mogadishu (Moors, van den Reek-Vermeulen, & Siesling, 2009). This group is less well educated and until they came to the Netherlands, most of them had lived all their lives in a country at war. These Somalis have not had the same opportunities as the first group to, for example, attend school. Since 2007, there has been a low but steady inflow of Somalis into the Netherlands.

## 4. Socio-Economic Participation of Somalis in the Netherlands

The economic participation of refugees is not straightforward and in general does not evolve smoothly (see e.g., de Vroome & van Tubergen, 2010). In 2013, only 46% of all refugees had a job and, in many instances, this was a part-time job without a fixed contract (VluchtelingenWerk, 2014). The situation of Somalis is worrisome. For example, in 2016, only 34% of Somali men were employed; for Somali women, the figure was 13%. In addition, 54% of Somali men depended on welfare in 2016; for Somali women, the figure was 71% (CBS, 2018).

Figure 1 shows that unemployment is the highest compared to any other refugee or immigrant group in the Netherlands. In 2016, 34% of Somalis were unemployed—twice as many as other non-Western immigrants.

In addition to showing how Somalis' unemployment figures differ from those of non-Western immigrants and autochthonous people, Figure 1 also shows that Somalis' unemployment has been hit hard by the economic recession that started in 2008, which can be explained by the vulnerable and often temporary jobs Somalis have in the Netherlands. Only a third of Somalis who work have permanent jobs; the rest work part time and often without fixed contracts (Andriessen et al., 2017). They also earn very little and with the possibility of receiving benefits there is not much incentive to stay in precarious and low paid jobs. During one of the FGDs, a 45-year-old man pointed out how he thought the welfare system in the Netherlands was unfair:

> I do not think the system is fair. I work 40 hours per week, get up at 5.30 every day, spend eight hours in a noisy factory, and return home tired. For all this, I receive €1,200 every month. My Somali friend here gets up at 10, watches television all day, and receives only €100 less.

Apart from precarious jobs, low pay, and the possibility of receiving benefits in the Netherlands, the literature also points out that the relatively high levels of unemployment among Somalis can be explained by the 'refugee gap' (Connor, 2010). The educational and job careers of most Somali refugees have been interrupted by war and their escape from it. This is aggravated by specific context-related issues. Dutch asylum and integration policies do not allow asylum seekers to work when they first arrive, and then later on force them to integrate quickly. The asylum process and the long waiting times have often made this gap bigger (Engbersen et al., 2015). Difficulties getting diplomas certified or recognized can result in the gap never being completely closed. Moreover, Somalis face double discrimination on the labour market because they are both black and Muslim.

The language barrier and a lack of knowledge about how the labour market works in Europe also makes it hard for Somalis to find their way on the Dutch labour market. Especially, the recent arrivals with lower educational levels are struggling to learn Dutch (de Waal, 2017; Open Society Foundations, 2014), which makes it more difficult to participate socially and economically. Many Somalis feel caught in a vicious circle: Because they do not speak Dutch well, it is hard to find a job, and because they do not work, it is hard to improve their Dutch.

The way refugees can use their social capital differs from the way other people can use theirs because refugees' networks often consist of people who also have little knowledge of the Dutch labour market and often lack connections that can improve socio-economic integration. Van Tubergen (2011) found that jobless refugees in the Netherlands often seek work through employment agencies rather than through families or friends. This could be because refugees' co-ethnics are also not so well connected to the Dutch labour market and that refugees have few contacts outside their co-ethnic networks. Some of the Somalis in the Netherlands, especially the older and the lower educated ones, have networks that consist

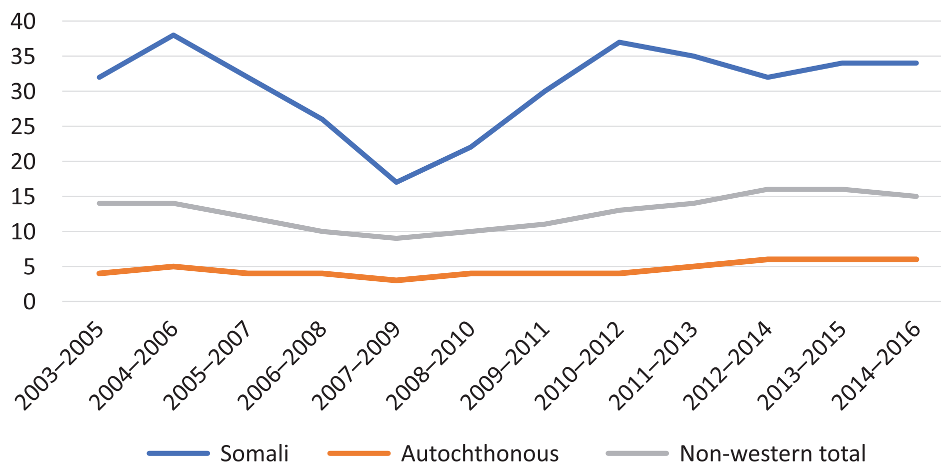


**Figure 1.** Unemployment figures for Somalis, autochthonous people and non-Western total, in the Netherlands 2003–2016, in percentages (based on Andriessen et al., 2017).

mainly of other Somalis. The same applies to women with young children, because they mostly interact with other Somali women (Open Society Foundations, 2014). Young Somalis have the most diverse social networks (Andriessen et al., 2017). There are also differences between the first and second group of arrivals; for example, the 'newcomers' seem to interact more exclusively with other Somalis compared to those who arrived in the 1990s. However, transnational networks play an important role in the lives of all Somalis in the Netherlands. Many, for example, have connections to Somalis in the UK, which sometimes makes it easier to find a job in the UK than in the Netherlands. The head of a Somali organization explained to us how in the mid-2000s, many Somali men moved to the UK to find work:

> In 2005 we started IFTIN [Stichting Somalische vrouwen Amsterdam en Omstreken—Somali Women in Amsterdam and the Surroundings Foundation]. At that time, a lot of Somali families were leaving for the United Kingdom. Most of the time, the man—the provider of the family—went first. These men were highly educated and not satisfied with their situation; living on benefits was not why they had come to the Netherlands.

Size also matters. Refugees are a small and relatively new community, which means that people are dependent on small networks. The networks of refugees are thus often less equipped to support socio-economic participation at the local level in the new place of arrival. Their networks are also often relatively small as a result of migration and dispersal.

The unemployment figures show that there are quite substantial differences within the group of Somalis (as mentioned, in 2016, 34% of the men had a job, while only 13% of the women had one; CBS, 2018). Somali women are less oriented towards the Dutch labour market and more oriented towards their families than men, because most of them have caring obligations (Pels & de Gruijter, 2005). Our interviews show that some women encounter barriers when it comes to childcare possibilities, which makes it less easy to work. Some Somali women want to work but do not know how to arrange it in a situation where they are the only one responsible and their local network is too weak. For example, a 28-year-old Somali woman we interviewed said:

> I would like to work, but I am a single mother. Who will take care of my kids? That is the problem. For a Dutch mother, it is not so hard to work, even when she has three kids. She has a safety net of grandmothers, neighbours and friends who can take care of her kids. Somali women do not have these safety nets when they arrive in the Netherlands.

Here we see that transnational networks can be useful for advice and support, but they cannot be used for practical matters such as daily childcare support, which can be an obstacle to finding a job and thus to the socio-economic participation of Somali women.

Discrimination on the Dutch labour market also needs to be looked into when trying to explain the high levels of unemployment amongst Somalis. The Somalis we interviewed told us that sometimes the employment agency explicitly stated that certain jobs were not meant for them—even in the case of lower skilled jobs. One 32-year-old Somali man explained how he had been discouraged from applying for a job as a rubbish collector:

> I wanted to apply for a job as a rubbish collector. But they told me that this was a job for which you need Dutch citizenship. I told them no problem, I'm Dutch. Well, he said, I am sorry but you cannot get this job.

Many interviewees said that the reasons they had been given for not getting a certain job, or not even being allowed to apply for it, were unclear and unjust.

Finally, it is known that mental health problems and daily stress, and worrying about relatives who are still in a war zone or are trying to escape from one, can make it difficult for refugees to participate in society in general (Bakker, 2016; Dourleijn & Dagevos, 2011; Engbersen et al., 2015; Maliepaard, Witkamp, & Jennissen, 2017). As a result of the high unemployment rate in the Netherlands and the difficulties that Somalis encounter when trying to find jobs, a large number of Somalis live on benefits (Andriessen et al., 2017): In 2015, for example, 52% of Somalis aged between 15 and 65 years received social security benefits. The majority of those receiving benefits were women or people aged 45 or over—a worrisome situation. On the other hand, we see an increase in the number of people doing 'voluntary' jobs (Andriessen et al., 2017), which might be an indication that they find alternative ways to participate in the labour market.

Studies on Somalis point out that they have very strong transnational orientations. From research we know that these networks are important for social, cultural, and political reasons (Bang Nielsen, 2004; Hammond, 2015; Horst, 2006), but we do not know much about what these networks actually do or mean in the context of economic participation, or whether they impede or support the participation of Somalis in host societies. In the following section, we explore two forms of socio-economic participation of Somalis in the Netherlands that are facilitated by Somali transnational networks, namely working for Somali organizations in the Netherlands that are focused on developing Somalia, and moving to the UK from the Netherlands to work as an entrepreneur. We opted for these two forms of socio-economic participation as they clearly reflect the use of transnational networks.

## 5. Making a Job out of Participation in Somali Organizations

One way of participating socio-economically in the Netherlands by using Somalis' transnational networks is to make a job out of social, cultural, and political activities organized by Somali organizations in the Netherlands. There are around 160 active Somali organizations in the Netherlands (van Heelsum, 2011), mostly in the Randstad area. The organizational density amongst Somalis is very high as a result of the Dutch dispersal policy and also because of the clan structure (van Heelsum, 2011) and the high levels of mistrust among Somalis and the resulting lack of collaboration between the different groups. Another explanation for the high number of diverse organizations is the heterogeneity in their agendas: They all have different missions and very different scopes of orientation (Open Society Foundations, 2014). Somali organizations in the Netherlands can generally be divided into two groups. One group offers local support to help Somalis integrate themselves into the Netherlands. Examples of such organizations are Dalmar, SOMVAO, and the umbrella organization FSAN. They offer practical support to the Somali community like conversation classes, support for students with finding internships, and various sorts of information events. The other group is made up of organizations mainly orientated towards Somalia. They work around topics such as female genital mutilation, healthcare, peacebuilding, and social and economic development in Somalia. Examples of such organizations are HIRDA and NedSom.

Both types of organizations provide important 'participation spaces' for Somalis in the Netherlands, as they offer both voluntary and paid jobs. Of the 20 organizations we interviewed, five had paid staff. It should be noted that paid staff often have temporary part-time jobs that are strongly dependent on outside funding, which may come from the local or national government in the context of civic integration, for example an organization subcontracted by a municipality to provide training, or for projects in the field of international development, through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs or development NGOs. In the period 2004–2010, the Dutch government actively promoted diaspora engagement in development cooperation through migration and development policies. The underlying rationale was that migrants with knowledge of the area and linguistic capacities would have added value as experts in development cooperation programmes. These co-development programmes consisted of matching funds, capacity building, and temporary deployment schemes (Frouws & Grimmius, 2012; Nijenhuis & Broekhuis, 2010). Somali organizations were eligible for funding, and at least four of the organizations we interviewed had managed to access some of these co-development funds. The importance of such funds is in line with the findings of Moret (2018, p. 163), who points out how one of her interviewees participated in the Netherlands in the founding of an NGO with a strong transnational orientation towards Somaliland and the objective of rebuilding social infrastructure there, with financial support from the Ministry. Upon her relocation to the UK, she founded a UK branch of this organization. Interestingly, one of her respondents mentioned that she regularly returns to the Netherlands, as it is easier to get funding there. This illustrates the importance of transnational networks and the boundary-spanning capacities of Somalis engaged in these organizations. Notwithstanding the presence of funding opportunities, these jobs are also vulnerable as they are mostly temporary and highly dependent on subsidiary frameworks, which are becoming more transnational and competitive. Some of our interviewees said that it is becoming more difficult for Somali organizations in the Netherlands to get funding, because there is less national funding available and at the European level one now needs to compete with European partners with very impressive track records.

Three quarters of the organizations interviewed received support from between three and over 300 volun-

teers. These volunteers are indispensable for the organizations, in terms of labour and network, as the following quote illustrates:

> Many of our projects could not be carried out without the help of our volunteers. We have a pool of some 30, 35 people who provide support in a more structural way—in fundraising, the practical organization of events, or giving presentations at secondary schools. They have their own expertise. One of our volunteers was trained as a controller in an educational institution, so he helps us with financial issues. (Chair of a Somali organization, Amsterdam)

Although Somali organizations in the Netherlands that focus on Somalia have philanthropical motives, some volunteers expect and hope that their activities will result in economic gain. They regard this type of volunteering often as an investment in their future as well and some talk about these transnational activities in terms of 'exploring a possible return,' framed by Sagmo (2015) as a 'return assessment.' As one respondent, who runs a small charity, remarked:

> We do small projects in Somalia, and it is mostly our local partners who do the actual implementation. But I go twice a year as well, to talk with people at the Ministry and with NGOs. Actually, it is not only to explore opportunities now, but also to explore options for the future, as I might go back to Somalia. (Male respondent, 2011)

This finding is in line with the observations of Sagmo (2015, p. 657) in her study on return visits by Burundian migrants living in the UK and Norway. She argues that regular visits are deemed important when migrants are planning a more permanent return. In order to make such a return, they need to secure economic capital and return visits are used to explore 'niches' in the market that might be used to set up a business. Other authors also refer to economic motives, in terms of employment and job creation, to establish or become engaged in a migrant organization (Griffiths, 2000; Open Society Foundations, 2014). Idil Osman (2017) also describes how the Somali diaspora elite saw opportunities and possibilities for themselves in Somalia during election time, and travelled back and forth constantly between the UK and Somalia to network and lobby—a phenomenon also observed by Hammond (2015). During our fieldwork we too observed this, with people going to and from to Somalia on a regular basis. Such 'pendular mobility' is also mentioned by Moret (2018, p. 167), who describes how interviewees who run a Somali organization can be characterized by transnational living. They frequently travel to Somalia, building social and cultural capital in such a way that they might be able to get a job in this field. In short, they intend to validate their capitals, making use of their transnational assets, namely their exposure to the 'West' and their networks and linguistic and cultural skills related to their Somali background (Hansen, 2014; Kleist, 2007). Having citizenship in the Netherlands enables a mobile livelihood strategy, and the large majority of the migrant organizations we interviewed considered citizenship a prerequisite to running the organization.

Somali organizations in the Netherlands that focus on Somalia use their networks in different ways. Strong ties, like family, where trust plays an important role, are used to ensure that local projects are run properly. For example, they function as a local entry point where containers of goods can arrive, local people can be paid and problems can be solved:

> In Somaliland we work with a guy we've known for a very long time. A few years ago, he returned, and since then we contract him for projects, to hire construction workers for example and to oversee the work. So, in a way, we also create jobs. (Board member of a Somali organization, the Hague)

The weaker ties—such as contacts with other development organizations, ministries and coalition partners—are important for sharing information about, for example, funding opportunities. Somalis thus use their human capital, in the form of knowledge and contacts, to improve their own economic situations.

Boundary spanning is essential in this case for making the activities of these organizations a success. Those who run these organizations often have traits that are commonly ascribed to boundary spanners. They speak Dutch with ease, have knowledge of Dutch and European funding opportunities, and know how to access networks at different levels to raise money. They also have strong and weak connections in Somalia that make all of this possible.

## 6. Becoming a Self-Employed Entrepreneur in the UK

Around the year 2000, many Somalis started to leave the Netherlands to try their luck in the UK (van den Reek & Hussein, 2003; van Liempt, 2011). Research has shown that there are many explanatory factors behind this, such as reuniting with the larger Somali diaspora for social and cultural reasons. But economic considerations also played an important role: Many Somalis were unsatisfied with their economic position in Dutch society and frustrated that their skills were not recognized. The language barrier also played a role in some decisions to move to the UK, where there were better job prospects.

The UK was assumed to be a country where it is easier to start your own business. In the Netherlands, many Somalis want to start a business, but most do not succeed or even start because of regulations and other obstacles. In the Netherlands it is important to have certificates, which makes it harder to start a business if you are from another country. There are also regulations and

formal requirements, such as permits, that are not easy to understand—especially if you are not fluent in Dutch. Dagevos and Odé showed that, in 2008, less than 1% of Somalis were registered as self-employed entrepreneurs (Dagevos & Odé, 2011). This figure has recently increased a little, but at the turn of the century it was very low.

In the UK there is a longer history of family-run shops. Such shops are dependent on cheap and sometimes free labour provided by family members and friends (Theodorakopoulos & Ram, 2007). Most Somali shops run by Dutch Somalis in the UK are family run. It was discussed in the FGDs how much easier it is to enter the system in the UK and that one does not always need certificates to set up a business. As such, there is more space for boundary spanning between formal and informal aspects of labour participation. The UK system is perceived as rewarding experience rather than focusing on the possession of certificates, which is what Somalis experience in the Dutch system (see also Momatrade Consultancy, 2004).

This shows that the transnational networks of Dutch Somalis extend beyond connections between the Netherlands and Somalia (Moret, 2016; Open Society Foundations, 2014) and involve other countries and specific cities and even specific connections to Somali entrepreneurs.

Many of the Somalis who left the Netherlands to settle in the UK perceived starting a business as an attractive alternative to formal employment. We argue that those who moved to the UK to start a business can be conceptualized as boundary spanners, because they found a way to overcome obstacles on the Dutch formal labour market by making use of their own networks in innovative ways and moving beyond the national market that they were supposed to integrate into. Many already knew somebody who ran a business in the UK. Through them they had heard that the rules and regulations around starting a business in the UK were less strict than in the Netherlands (Klaver, Poel, & Stouten, 2010; Open Society Foundations, 2014; van den Reek & Hussein, 2003). With this specific access to local knowledge and networks, they can be seen as cultural and institutional brokers. Dutch Somalis' alternative economic strategies that span national borders and involve transnational economic activities fit very well with Williams's (2002) description of boundary spanners as entrepreneurial and innovative. Their willingness to move is fundamental to their stretching of the labour market.

## 7. Conclusion

Somalis receive a lot of attention in the media and from policymakers in the Netherlands and elsewhere, often for negative reasons. Because they have a higher unemployment rate than any other refugee group, it is often argued that their prospects are poor. Our research shows that Somalis indeed face many difficulties accessing the Dutch formal labour market, because they lack human and social capital and suffer from mental health problems and discrimination. However, in this article we showed that Somalis also actively use their transnational networks to participate socio-economically. The labour markets in which they participate are, however, not always fixed to national territories and they do not always start in the formal paid sector. We found that outside formal channels, Somalis sometimes manage to find job opportunities, either through voluntary or self-created jobs, for example in the context of Somali organizations in the Netherlands or on the margins of the British labour market, where it is easier to bend the rules and regulations and start a small business and become self-employed.

A broader type of participation needs to be included in the definition of 'participation' to understand the real participation of Somalis. Dagevos (1998) has called these jobs 'ethnic functions'—often jobs that are not paid but are very important in initiating participation in a new labour market. Funding structures for self-organizations used to be supportive of these types of jobs, but they are currently under pressure because of budget cuts. What is important to point out, however, is that these boundary-spanning activities between paid and voluntary jobs also move beyond national borders. In the case of Dutch Somalis, the UK is an important labour market and Somalis use their connections in the UK to increase their opportunities to participate economically there, mostly by starting a business, but also in Somalia there are opportunities for Somalis from the Netherlands to create jobs. Through our interviews we found that some Somalis in the Netherlands are actively orienting themselves towards Somalia, trying to create jobs and/or seeking future opportunities for jobs there.

Participation is generally only recognized when it takes place within national borders and in formal labour markets. To do justice to the transnational lives of Somalis—as illustrated by those who are involved in Somali organizations that span different contexts—and also to acknowledge the contribution to socio-economic participation that may potentially move across borders, it would make a difference if such manifestations of participation were valued for refugees in the future. Recognizing and accepting that transnationalism is a feature through which Somali refugees' daily lives and commitments—and thus also their socio-economic participation—takes place is important, as it also plays a crucial role in the way they belong to society. When livelihoods are transnational, commitments are more fluid and various boundaries need to be spanned.

Both forms of socio-economic participation we explored in this article show the important role of boundary spanners and their specific features: These are people who are able to cross boundaries through their personal mobilities and assets. These assets could be framed as capital, resources that can be used to improve their economic position (Moret, 2016). In the words of Williams (2007), Somalis access 'external knowledge, interpret it and refine it, adapting it to their specific context.' It

should be noted that the role of the Dutch passport in this case is crucial, as it plays an essential role in giving Somalis access to both the Somali and the EU labour market, and in expanding their opportunities. Being more open to less formal and unpaid types of economic activities will be important in gaining recognition of the participation of Somali boundary spanners.

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**Conflict of Interests**

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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Article

# "Home Is Where I Spend My Money": Testing the Remittance Decay Hypothesis with Ethnographic Data from an Austrian-Turkish Community

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**Abstract**
Remittances—money sent back by migrants to their place of origin—are considered to be both economic and social practices mapping out a transnational space of migration. By sending and receiving money, objects, ideas, and social norms, migrants and non-migrants strengthen their social ties and express their multiple belongings. Remittances can thus be read as a practice of multi-local participation and inclusion. When remittance develops a negative trend, the remittance decay hypothesis thus concludes a shift in belonging: The longer migrants stay in their host country and build a life there, the less they remit. In this article, the remittance decay hypothesis is tested with ethnographic data from interviews and participant observation in the migration nexus between Uşak, Turkey, and Fulpmes, Austria. Remittance to Turkey has declined markedly in the last two decades from a record high of 574 USD million in September 1998 to a record low of 11 USD million in August 2019. Ethnographic data with members of three generations of Turkish-Austrians in Fulpmes can help to explain this process from a diachronic perspective: for changing remittance practices and a transformation in remittance scripts, e.g., as investment, compensation, help, gift or charity donation, demonstrate that there is more to the story than a fading sense of belonging.

**Keywords**
Austrian-Turkish labor migration; remittance decay; remittances; social script; transnationalism

**Issue**
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## 1. Introduction

Remittances—money sent back by migrants to their place of origin—are considered to be economic and social practices indicating transnational networks between senders and recipients. By sending and receiving money, objects, ideas, and social norms, migrants and non-migrants strengthen their social ties and express their multiple belongings in a transnational social field. The remittance money is earmarked as multi-sited acts of solidarity, expressions of nostalgia, social glue, or powerful tools of controlling a network one has left behind. As such, they reflect individual commitments, priorities, and difficult decisions in transnational biographies (for the transnational perspective see Basch, Glick Schiller, & Szanton Blanc, 1994; Faist, 2010; Vertovec, 2009; Waldinger, 2015).

The decision to become mobile is in most cases connected to the hope of financial advancement, access to work, prosperity, and security: a decision not always made individually, but by families and villages. It is not only the mobile who—despite the hardship and personal sacrifices—eventually profit from advancement through migration, but also those who stay behind. The gains of mobility are shared between the place of destination, the place of origin, and beyond, for transnational lives not only bridge host and home countries, but spread out to other family locations and workplaces.

Remittances thus map out a dynamic network with changing stakes, and the changes in amount, rhythm,

and practices draw attention from remittance agents as well as from remittance researchers. Theories of economic development and of social inclusion are applied to explain why, where, and when the money flows or runs dry. In this article, I aim to contribute to these explanations with a focus on the remittance development in the migration nexus between Austria and Turkey. Remittances to Turkey show a marked decline for the last two decades. According to the Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey, remittance to Turkey showed a steady increase up to a record high of 574 USD million in September of 1998 and then dropped to an all-time low of 11 USD million in August of 2019. In October 2019, they increased slightly to 17 USD million (Trading Economics, n.d.). Interestingly, Turkey has also become a remittance sending country due to the growing number of return migrants and the even bigger number of Syrian refugees sending money to their home country. From an economic point of view, reasons for the changing remittance behavior can be found in the recession in Turkey's economy, inflation, and politics of exchange rate in the late 1990s. With a weak Turkish Lira, the sending of money became less profitable. Negative developments have led to the remittance decay hypothesis, which states that, over time, migrants send less money to their place of origin (Lucas & Stark, 1985). The longer migrants live abroad and the more they enjoy social participation and inclusion in the place of residence, the less they remit (Carling, 2008; Vargas-Silva, 2006). This change is often interpreted as a shift of belonging: While migrants still feel closely connected to their homeland during the first years abroad, this connection loosens over time and with social advancement (Mahmud, 2017). Generations differ in their perception of remittance obligation and integration (Cingolani & Vietti, 2019). The transformation of transnational engagement thus indicates varying stages of social inclusion, meaning that migrants follow and "fulfill a normatively prescribed social role" (Silver, 2015, p. 3) in different ways.[1]

Fresh perspectives on the relation between remittances and social inclusion can be found through an ethnographic approach and with qualitative data from interviews and participant observation. The objective of this article is to complement and explain the remittance decline in a more nuanced way by, first, contextualizing remittance practices in a diachronic perspective, and second by applying the analytical tool of the remittance script (Carling, 2014) and interpreting the social positions associated with remitting. Introducing the perspective of remittance agents, it becomes evident that there is more to the story than a shift of belonging between 'here' and 'there.' Remittance motivation is dynamic and not without ambivalence. The interpretation of social inclusion needs to be conceptualized accordingly as intersectional with multiple belongings taking geographic origin as well as social, ethnic, and religious membership into account.

The relation between remittances and integration needs to consider both the economic capacity and the desire to remit. Carling and Hoelscher (2013) show that remittances are determined by the resources migrants have and by the strength of ties to their country of origin. Socio-cultural integration plays a marginal role; the sense of belonging to Norway has no effect on remittance sending (Carling & Hoelscher, 2013, p. 954).

Bivand Erdal and Oeppen (2013) relate the transnational perspective and integration into three patterns. The first one is an antagonistic relationship in which transnational lives and integration hinder each other. Much in line with the remittance decay hypothesis, the motivation for money transfers is seen as a consequence of lacking the feeling of social inclusion in the host country, a change in remitting therefore as a shift in integration. Marini (2014, p. 309) states that transnational involvement can constitute "a kind of 'refuge"' when migrants feel marginalized in their host country. Remitting becomes a way of dealing with social exclusion by expressing closeness to one's home community. Second, transnational lives and integration can be seen in a complementary way in which they happen in parallel without influencing each other. Third, transnational lives and integration can reinforce each other, create synergies, and thereby produce a sum that is bigger than its parts. I have described this outcome as transnational capital (Meyer, 2019), which enables individuals to draw on their (family's) past mobility and to weigh in transnational experiences and knowledge to their benefit. In this sense, remittance agents fulfill their social role with a pay-off in recognition and acceptance in the transnational field.

## 2. Theoretical Framework: Remitting as Social Script and the Remittance Decay Hypothesis

Remittances figures are impressive. Worldwide, the sum of private money transfers is more than three times as high as official development assistance. According to the World Bank, global remittance in 2018 amounted to over 689 billion US dollars, and 714 billion US dollars are predicted for 2019 (World Bank Group, 2019, p. 3). The unofficial sum of informal remittances surpasses this figure considerably. Accordingly, developmental and financial agencies pay close attention to remittances as a means of policymaking. The significance of these transfers for the countries of origin is undisputed: Successfully established remittance transfers enable households and communities to support themselves in the long term and pro-

[1] In migration research, the terms of integration and inclusion are not interchangeable. Integration means equal access to economic, social and cultural resources of society for a minority group. In the last decade, the term has been criticized because it does not take structural inequality into account and polarizes between 'us' and 'them.' Non-integration has been judged as individual failure on behalf of migrants. The term 'inclusion' has replaced 'integration' because it focuses on society as a whole and aims to create structures of equality and participation. An inclusive society understands itself as a migrant society in a historical and contemporary perspective: Migration is the norm and not a state that has to be remedied by integration. I use the term inclusion in this article with the exception of those passages referring to other authors using integration in the related texts and passages.

mote social and economic development. International health and education policies are also attuned to the level of private financing, with an often corresponding range of criticisms being directed towards the neoliberal impact of remittances. For, as the sum of private transfers from abroad rises, state investors see less incentive to promote public hospitals, schools, and other educational institutions (Orozco, 2013). Remittances have thus positive as well as negative effects: They enable development, education, health care and independence from state institution and economic volatility, but, at the same time, keep individuals depending on family and relatives and cause the state to withdraw from providing infrastructure for people in need.

From an anthropological point of view, however, remittances are more than just instruments of developmental support. They are the trajectories of social relationships and networks, expressions of solidarity and sentiments of nostalgia as well as measures of support and control. They also are accompanied by conflict and cognitive dissonances over the question of where to spend money, in the place of origin or in the place of residence (Carling, 2008). Remittances should not be understood just as a money transfer and are not limited—despite the 're-'—to a one-directional economy of gifting. Peggy Levitt uses the term social remittances to point out that sending money goes hand in hand with the transfer of objects, values, norms, narratives, practices, identities, and social relationships (Boccagni & Decimo, 2013; Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004; Levitt & Lamba-Nieves, 2011; Levitt & Sørensen Nyberg, 2004; Nowicka & Šerbedžija, 2016). Remittances thus encompass money, foodstuffs, clothing, home furnishings, furniture, carpets, and tools, but also notions of masculine and feminine roles, of family and childhood, of sustainability, climate protection and recycling, health and care, democracy and freedom, and many other issues. The exchange is accompanied by visits to and from the beneficiary countries and by communications like emails, letters, and telephone, Skype, and FaceTime contacts. The practices of transfers especially show a great variety: People carry remittance money while visiting their place of origin and, despite the risk of being caught at the border or airport, deliver it in person to family members, relatives, and administrators of associations. Money is also sent to formal or informal intermediaries who then distribute it to recipients. Money is wired to bank accounts through banks or financial institutions like Western Union. High fees and risk considerations play an important role in the choice of transfer. Sometimes a purpose of use is communicated along with the money transfers. The transfers can be regular or irregular and they vary in the amount of money sent.

Motivations to remit interchange from investment to charity, and the attributions ascribed to the monies sent and received are manifold: For the senders, remittance practices represent nostalgic ties as well as the generosity and a willingness to help. Simultaneously, expectations that migrants will share their ostensibly better life with those they left behind are high and result in social pressure (Lindley, 2010). From the point of view of the beneficiaries, the money is earmarked with attributions of subsistence aid, gratitude, but also interference from outside, even blackmail in cases where the transfers arrive with explicit instructions on how the money is to be spent. Simultaneously, remittances do not just form a bond between the senders and the beneficiaries; they also impact their social environments and contribute to the social and symbolic capital of remittance agents. Money transferred abroad can represent a sense of community but can also be critically viewed as a form of social freeloading in cases where no money is invested into the host country. The possibilities of consumption enabled by money sent from abroad are status symbols. However, they also lead to criticisms of materialism and superficiality. Money transfers enable education, allowing children of migrant families to attend school and university. Nevertheless, these better-educated young people are particularly more likely to then leave their communities to earn money elsewhere. Brain drain and remittances stand in a direct causal relationship to one another, yet are viewed very differently (Özden & Schiff, 2006). Depending on the country, money transfers may support political activity or even fall under suspicion of financing anything from political resistance through to terrorism (Mascarenhas & Sandler, 2014). The earmarking of remittance money turns remitting into a social practice (Page & Mercer, 2012) binding together sender and recipient in a collective process of meaning-making and socialization.

Carling (2014) described these earmarking processes as a social script. Having noticed a certain "remittance fatigue" (Carling, 2014, p. S219) in the economists' and policy circles, he makes a compelling case for ethnographic studies which use "extensive face-to-face interaction with remittance senders and recipients" and thereby "gain an in-depth understanding of issues that escape the standardized optic of surveys" (Carling, 2014, p. S219). As an analytical tool, he introduces the remittance script. Scripts summarize structures of expectations that facilitate social interaction in specific types of situations and allow for recognition and social acceptance in communication and practice. In the remittance context, "scripts make up a repertoire of generalized representations of remittance transactions that are recognized by a social group, but might not be explicitly expressed" (Carling, 2014, p. S221). They include "the transaction's constituent roles, actions, and statuses, and the relations between these elements" (Carling, 2014, p. S221). By engaging scripts, remittance agents succeed "in making sense of and directing specific and recurring remittance transactions" (Carling, 2014, p. S221). They also claim a social position for themselves which enables them to deal with conflict, multiple demands, and emotional challenges. Scripts like allowance, help, gift, and investment vary in their logic, but they all facilitate social positioning for the subjects involved.

The script tool becomes particularly helpful in making sense of changes in remitting. The decline in remittance money is theorized by the remittance decay hypothesis: According to this model, migrants send less money to their place of origin, the longer they live in their host country and the more money they earn. Lowering the rate for remittances is also explained by family dynamics. Close family members are likely to join the migrant and relations with more distant family members may weaken over time. The death of parents also often represents a cut in remittance relations (Carling, 2008, pp. 593–595; Holst & Schrooten, 2006; Lucas & Stark, 1985; Makina & Masenge, 2015; Rapoport & Docquier, 2006). Bettin and Lucchetti (2012) claim that each year migrants live in the country of residence, remittances decrease. Evidently, the dynamics of remittances depend on many factors like the length of the stay abroad, plans to return, recipients of remittances (immediate family, friends, and neighbors, collectives like villages or hometown associations) and motivation to remit (altruistic like charity or self-interested like investment). However, findings for the dynamics and development of remittances are mixed. De Wit, Merritt, and Khan (2015), for example, contradict the decay hypothesis and shows that immigrants in the Netherlands do not send less money home as long as they know people there and have plans to return.

A temporal pattern shows an increase in remitting in the first ten years after migration, a decrease in the following ten years, followed by an increase after twenty years. Makina and Masenge (2015) confirm this inverted U-pattern in their study of South African migrants. Family dynamics can explain this: In the first ten years, the immediate family is still in the place of origin and needs support from the migrant breadwinner. After a family reunion, there are more people to support in the place of residence and less money is available to remit. When immigrants have settled economically and their children are more or less financially independent, remittance is likely to increase again. Motivation to remit (again) could be elderly parents in need. Integration into the society of residence does not play a role in the findings of de Wit et al. (2015). Mahmud (2017) argues differently in his comparison of migrants' remittances in the USA and Japan. Taking into account the impact of the destination state such as immigration policies regarding entry, the period of stay and access to the labor market, as well as social mobility become factors in the decrease of remittances sent. The better immigrants are integrated, the less they send home (Mahmud, 2017).

## 3. Methods

The development of remittances sent to Turkey follows the negative trend of the remittance decay hypothesis. The mixed findings on the dynamics of remitting show that remittance research needs to be highly context-specific. Anthropology relies on an ethnographic approach in order to survey the motives and meaning behind remittance transfers on a micro-level. To this purpose, the research project 'Follow the Money: Remittances as Social Practice' (2016–2020, funded by the Austrian Science Fund) explored the changes in remitting and the relation between money transfers and social belonging in the transnational field of Uşak, Turkey, and Fulpmes, Austria, in an ethnographic study. The focus on remittance agents provides data on the purpose, meanings, and motives for sending money. Our findings are contextualized with an evaluation of remittance literature. The analysis with the focus on Uşak and Fulpmes is a case study in the larger context of Austrian-Turkish labor migration. In accordance with ethnographic analysis, our findings and readings presented here are not representative but significant for our case. Statements from interviews are chosen because they not only account for an individual opinion but also represent a shared opinion within the migration discourse.

In the project, we applied mixed methods of transnational participant observation in both places and furthermore studied the role of transnational objects like houses, interior design, food, and clothes (cf. Bivand Erdal, 2012; Bürkle, 2016; Hahn & Neumann, 2019; Lopez, 2015; van der Horst, 2010). During our fieldwork from 2015 to 2020, we have also conducted a series of qualitative interviews with 63 male and female migrants from the first, second, and third generation of the labor migration between Turkey and Austria, and with people in Fulpmes and Uşak who were affected by migration. First-generation migrants came to Fulpmes during the 1970s. Their children, the second generation, were generally born in Turkey and followed their parents in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The third generation was born and raised in Austria in the 1990s. We can thus introduce a historical perspective on changes in remitting from the 1970s to today. The interviews were conducted in Fulpmes and Uşak in German and Turkish, and address the transforming remittance practices and motives, the handling of money in Austria and Turkey, and the feeling of belonging in relation to transnational payments. Due to the heightened political tension in Austrian–Turkish relations since 2016 and the methodological sensitivity on investigating private money transfers, some interviews were not recorded but manually jotted. Often, statements in interviews stood in contradiction to actual practices in the field. Therefore, the participant observation, which was conducted over five years in countless remittance sites in Austria, Turkey, and beyond, adds important aspects. For the analysis, we used the software tool MAXQDA in order to identify relevant themes and their relation to one another.

## 4. The Remittance Nexus Uşak and Fulpmes

The context for our remittance study is the historical and present-day migration nexus between Turkey and Austria. Turkey has shown a negative trend in remittance

income for almost twenty years now with a drop from 574 USD million in September of 1998 to 11 USD million in August of 2019 (Trading Economics, n.d.). This decay has economic, legislative, administrative, and political as well as social and cultural reasons. From the 1960s to the 1990s, a favorable exchange rate, interest rate differential, differing income, and expense levels, low risk and financial regulations promoted remitting and savings in Turkish banks. Migrants took advantage of this opportunity and contributed to the large amounts of remittances sent to Turkey. Between 1999 and 2001, the Turkish economy dealt with recessions, and sending money to Turkey had become much less attractive. At the same time, families reunited and the number of dependents on the resident migrant increased. Accordingly, emigrants spent more money on their families in Austria and less money on relatives in Turkey (Koc & Onan, 2004).

Economic crunches between 1999 and 2001 are considered to be responsible for the remittance drop after 1998 (Karamelikli & Bayar, 2015). The Turkish economy no longer provided attractive investment opportunities and Turks abroad who sought to invest their savings in businesses, real estate projects and area development looked for other options. Furthermore, the black market, inflation, exchange rate politics, and the military administration in Turkey affected remittance flows (Tuncay Aydas, Kivilcim, & Bilin, 2005).

Elitok, Bettin, and Straubhaar (2012) summarize that the decision to reside in the host country, the fading attachment to the homeland, and the changes in socioeconomic status in the place of residence through prospering entrepreneurship were all reasons for migrants to remit less money. The authors also state that during and after the economic crisis in Turkey around 2000, migrants tended to remit through unofficial channels, which impacted the official remittance statistics without sending less money. After 2003, statistics showed a further decline, when the Central Bank of Turkey changed their classification of workers' remittances and excluded foreign exchange accounts and money spent during visits to Turkey (Mouhoud, Oudinet, & Unan, 2006). The drop in interest rates and the rise in tax on remittances lead to further decline. After 2008, the global financial crisis also affected remittances to Turkey and resulted in further downward development. Although Akkoyunlu (2012) shows that remittance from Germany to Turkey picked up again in 2009 and explains this trend with the relatively stable economic conditions in Germany and with the altruistic motive of supporting family and villages rather than investing money for self-interest, the decrease continued overall. Next to the financial development, Elitok (2013) gives two more reasons: the growing return migration to Turkey and the growth of the Turkish economy. Per capita income had almost tripled, from $3,500 in 2002 to $10,524 in 2011 (Elitok, 2013, p. 2). Both factors cause an inversion of remittance trends and a growing development of money sent from Turkey to countries like Germany and Austria. Elitok (2013) also comments on the turbulences of the Gezi Park protests and the impact of political instability on the economy. Since then, Turkish politics have changed dramatically. The failed *coup d'etat* in 2016 causes another economic crunch and a continuous downward trend in the economy with inflation and unemployment both rising to a rate of 10%. The Turkish Lira dropped in value, and the Central Bank had to raise the base rate in order to stabilize the currency. Nevertheless, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his government have managed to put a positive spin on political and economic developments. The narrative of the New Turkey as a strong state and market is omnipresent in the national discourse, both in Turkey and in the Austrian diaspora.

My aim is to shed more light on the finding of a negative trend in remitting to Turkey. For this purpose, I take a closer look at the practices as well as scripts and motives of remitting in the migration nexus between the province and city of Uşak in Turkey and the municipality of Fulpmes in Tyrol, Austria. Uşak lies in the west of Turkey, on the geographic and cultural border between the Aegean and central Anatolia. The city has 200,000 inhabitants, of whom many work in agriculture and the textile industry. Following the recruitment agreement between Austria and Turkey signed in 1964, the request by the federal state of Tyrol for male laborers was conveyed to Uşak, with the pioneering migrants arriving in Kufstein, Innsbruck, Hall and, of course, Fulpmes (on labor migration to Tyrol and Austria see Bischof & Rupnow, 2017; Hetfleisch, 2015; Tiroler Volkskunstmuseum, 2017). The rural market town of Fulpmes lies in the Stubaital, a valley in Tyrol about twenty kilometers away from Innsbruck. Fulpmes has about 4,000 inhabitants and is shaped by tourism both in winter and summer with numerous ski and leisure areas. Historically, Fulpmes was defined by the small-scale iron industry. The ironworking factories hired the first Turkish labor migrants and today employ their sons, nephews, and grandsons. One-fifth of the population in Fulpmes has a familial connection to Turkey, in particular, to the Uşak region. Of course, the nexus is a broader one with people from the Uşak region who also have migrated to Germany, Belgium, France, and the US. The relations between Uşak and Fulpmes are remarkably strong; they maintain business contacts and school partnerships, and official delegations visit each other regularly. Migration is a success story in Fulpmes. From 2002 to 2004, the Turkish community built a mosque that today also houses the Austrian-Turkish cultural association ATIB. Since 2005, Turkish-Austrians have sat in the municipal council with the political association 'Together for Fulpmes.' Turkish-Austrians keep in close contact with their country of origin (Guveli et al., 2016, pp. 46–48), and the Turkish community in Fulpmes is no exception: Our interviewees confirmed that they speak and write almost daily to family and friends in Turkey.

### *4.1. Changing Remittance Practices*

One of the main factors of change in remitting practices can be found on a practical level and with regard to the formal or informal character of the transactions. Formal remittances enter a state through banks and financial institutions, whereas informal remittances are introduced through private channels and remain unrecorded. Sending money through banks is expensive and paying the fees is "a waste," as our interview partners told us, hence the preference for informal channels in the Turkish community in Fulpmes. In the first two decades after their arrival in Austria, i.e., up to the 1990s, senders tended to use official channels more often because travels to Turkey were expensive, troublesome and not without risk. With better roads, traveling infrastructure and eventually cheap flights available, emigrants tend to visit Turkey more often and carry remittance money into the country with them. The private ways encompass money brought by friends, relatives or visiting migrants, and although it is riskier, it has become the established way, especially for our context of Fulpmes and Uşak, because the two places are connected so closely that there is always somebody traveling to Uşak and willing to take money there. This money does not appear in any remittance statistic. The amount of informal remittances to Turkey is virtually unknown and estimates differ immensely from 35% to 250% of formal remittances (Social Science Research Council, 2009). Interviewees tell us that it is a common practice nowadays that intermediaries carry smaller sums under 10.000 EUR (sums over 10.000 EUR must be declared to customs). Some draw an agreed-upon sum from ATMs in Turkey during their visits. Only larger amounts of money are transferred through banks or financial institutions (Kosse & Vermeulen, 2014). It is thus not the amount of money that changed but rather the mode of transfer. While the change in practice from formal to informal channels is not necessarily related to a feeling of belonging, it has a heavy impact on official remittance figures.

A common remittance practice is investments in Turkish businesses and development plans. During the 1990s, Turkish companies like Gürteks Holding, Kaldera Holding, and Kombassan Holding offered special deals to ex-pat investors to spend money on real estate and companies especially in less developed areas. The supposed aim was to strengthen the Turkish economy and to develop rural areas. Turkish migrants in Fulpmes were told that these companies would provide jobs for their relatives and for themselves upon return migration (Içduygu, 2006, p. 6). One interviewee said: "My plan was to work for a couple of years more in Europe and then return to work in this company until I retire, that is why I invested. And I gave them all I had." Some companies even sent out representatives to Tyrol to promote their investment plan and recruit more stakeholders. An important aspect of the interviews is the religious framing intersecting the economic one: by giving savings to the Turkish companies, the investment would not yield interest, as interest is forbidden in the Muslim faith. Rather, they promised shares in profit, often paid in coupons. Turks in Fulpmes saw a chance to invest their savings according to Islamic conventions and, at the same time, support their home region. Some invested all their money and gold into businesses in Uşak, even took out credit in order to pay in money. They were invited to visit the company sites during their summer holidays, shown around and, initially, given their first shares in profit. After the first payments, however, many companies closed down, entry to the site was forbidden, no jobs were provided, and people lost their savings. The government saw no need to interfere, the then president Mesut Yilmaz supposedly stating that when migrants decided to invest their savings in private businesses (and not in state programs), they should live with the consequences. Many Fulpmes Turks still have the coupons from the schemes and showed them to us. They are material leftovers of dreams of returning to Uşak as both an altruistic benefactor and a rich man.

Part and parcel of analyzing changes in remittance practices is looking at alternative spending. For the Turkish community in Fulpmes, a turning point in the history of remitting is the construction of a mosque in the small town. In the first two decades in Fulpmes, Muslims met at an old theatre to pray. In 2000, they bought the land for a mosque which opened in 2004. Mr. Tamer, who has lived in Fulpmes since 1981 and can be considered a driving force behind the plan, told us that the funds were raised mainly by the members and much of the construction was undertaken independently. The municipality of Fulpmes also contributed to the costs. Membership fees could be paid in advance and the names of those who did so were displayed on the wall of the association's common room. When asked about details of the process, Mr. Tamer started laughing and explained that there had at first been a lot of resistance on the part of his Turkish friends and neighbors to invest in a building in Austria. In his view, the funding of the mosque is the key to understanding Turkish migration because it represents a shift in remittance practices. The majority had at first been unwilling because, after all, they had always sent their money "back down," meaning to Turkey: "Until the 1990s, we did not invest a single cent in Austria. But the real issue is, home is where I spend my money," he says, "and look at this place now: a mosque in Fulpmes; that is quite something."

For years, spending money "at home" had meant supporting family and villages in Uşak. The decision to build a place of Muslim worship and a center for the Turkish community represents an act of commitment as well as an emotional investment in their place of residence, Fulpmes. In the process of building the mosque, it can be interpreted as an antagonistic relationship between a 'there' and a 'here' with financial support being withdrawn from 'there' and spent 'here.' Today, the mosque is an economic and symbolic statement of social inclusion in Austrian society.

### 4.2. Changing Remittance Scripts

Over time, not only remittance practices but also remittance motives and scripts have changed. Our interview partners sum up their history of remitting: In many families, the first generation had sent all their money down to Uşak in forms of allowances for wives and children. After the first years, the wives followed their husbands to Austria and the couples remitted their double income (if existing) to the grandparents and siblings in the form of compensations so that they could look after the children. When the children followed, support money folded considerably and families started to invest in houses, building plots, and businesses in Turkey. Remittance thus changed from compensation/allowance to investment. According to Carling (2014), compensation represents a balanced-exchange relationship. The money comes regularly, has a clear purpose and the recipient is conveyed an explicit assignment (Carling, 2014, p. S232). Investments are mainly singular transfers and strengthen the sender's position through expected economic and symbolic profit. The character of reciprocity, which was prevailing in the compensation script, is less prominent in the investment script. Investment indicates a future belonging, for example in return migration, rather than a present one. With their orientation towards the future, investments express a multi-dimensional sense of belonging. Investing in businesses and houses is also a form of symbolic participation while being physically absent. This may result in conflict as an inherent structure of remittance scripts. Transnational networks are not merely characterized by their connectivity (Waldinger, 2015) but need to be examined in their brisance, too. In Fulpmes, the Tamer family lived in cramped conditions until the mid-1990s—two rooms with a shared bathroom, the kitchen having been fitted with a shower later on. At the same time, the family invested in a second house in Uşak and had the first house in a village near Uşak renovated, fitted with heating, and expanded. The transnational transactions comprise various social roles: the loyal son, the cautious father, the grateful migrant, the good citizen, and the clever entrepreneur.

Perhaps as a solution to family conflict, another remittance script has become prominent in Fulpmes, which is the earmarking of remittance money as a charity donation. Bivand Erdal and Borchgrevink (2016; see also Borchgrevink & Bivand Erdal, 2017) intersect the influence of migrant development engagement and religion and show that remittances are framed differently in the context of transnational Islamic charity. Fulpmes Turks send charity payments to Turkey, usually according to the Islamic calendar, sometimes spontaneously to individuals in need. These transfers are not regarded as remittance per se but as a religious obligation, for example as *zekat* or *fidyah*. *Zekat* is a prescribed form of almsgiving and comprises 2.5% of individual annual assets; *fidyah* is used to compensate for fast-breaking for sick or old people during Ramadan. *Zekat* money is distributed according to financial needs, often to family members or neighbors. Some people send *zekat* to a local welfare office where they have lists of people in need. Again, the money is carried to Turkey by traveling family members and not sent via financial institutions.

Interviewees talk about *zekat* and *fidyah* in great detail and empathy. In fact, we realized that sometimes, it was much easier for some of our interview partners to talk about these monies than about remittance money. Analyzing interviews not only in terms of content but also in terms of conversational convention and social interaction, it is evident that the question about religious monies was answered with greater ease than inquiries after money transfers to brothers, sisters, or cousins. The uncomfortable silences can be explained by a shift in the remittance script. The 'help' script, though including a "moral virtue of both senders and recipients," is "deeply hierarchical and potentially humiliating" and creates "a structural relationship of dependence" (Carling, 2014, p. S240). For senders today, it does not seem fitting to reinforce this structural inequality. Here, the script of charity donation offers a way out of the dilemma. 'Donations' are characterized by a divine actor as part of the remittance motivation, and religious motivation and humanism overlap (Bivand Erdal & Borchgrevink, 2017, p. 141). The welfare officer acts as a broker and decides who needs the money the most. In the donation script, the sender-recipient duality is opened up which causes a shift in power and dependency. By remitting donations, senders contribute to a transnational Islamic charity, and their gain is a social as well as a spiritual one.

Among our interview partners, this change of script is most noticeable in the third generation, which was born and raised in Austria. Members of this generation have hardly any experience with remitting and cannot imagine sending money to cousins, uncles, and aunts. They do, however, send *zekat* to Turkey through informal ways. *Zekat* money, in their view, is a comfortable way of sending support, because it does not imply dependency, social hierarchy, and interference from outside. Andersson (2010) finds that a change in financial engagements outside the geographic diasporic homeland is characteristic for the second or third generation of migrants, whom she calls the "first-generation Muslim European." Young adults from Fulpmes state that they feel less obligated to support individuals in their families in Turkey. At the same time, they engage themselves for charitable causes outside their own family and beyond the geography of their homeland. Combined with Bivand Erdal and Oeppen's (2013) model, the remittance script of donation to Islamic charity creates synergies and offers a sense of belonging beyond the binary code of origin and residence, home and host. Transnational Islamic faith replaces nationality and ethnicity as a framework of identification.

To frame financial support in religious terms also helps to negotiate the current climate of nationalism in Turkey and in Austrian-Turkish communities. A popular

narrative related to us in the interviews was the prosperity and wealth of the Turkish nation under the current leadership of the AKP and Erdoğan's government. Especially during our fieldwork in Uşak, questions about remittance were answered negatively; that the transfers are no longer needed, that Turkey offers the same consumer wealth as Austria and that they would not even bring technical equipment and material anymore. "We have everything we need and we no longer depend upon Europe to bring us modern comfort and prosperity," said a respondent, and this statement is the bottom line in many interviews, emphasizing financial independence and, at the same time, responding to long-standing experiences of marginalization, social exclusion, and discrimination. However, donations to Uşak as an act of transnational Islamic charity are still given frequently and talked about. The migration discourse in Austria since the failed *coup d'etat* in 2016 in Turkey became considerably rough, increasing the pressure on Turkish-Austrians to openly display their loyalty to their place of residence. Religion plays a big role in the identity politics of many Turkish-Austrians. This imposed pressure causes backward motions, and by underlying the current strength and independence of Turkey, social integration and assimilation demanded in Fulpmes can switch towards Uşak. However, findings of the participant observation show that these statements are fragile. While one of the first-generation migrants showed us his brand new house in the village he was born in, he underlined that not a single thing was taken there from Europe, as "one can now find everything in Uşak, even with better quality." But, during the tour through the house, we spotted many items, like kitchen equipment and food, which had been brought from Europe.

## 5. Conclusion

Ethnographic studies show that when it comes to remittances, "economics is not the whole story" (Levitt & Lamba-Nieves, 2011, p. 2). In this article, I have tested the remittance decay hypothesis with ethnographic data on remittance practices, motives, and social scripts. For the development of remittances to Turkey, the decay hypothesis can be confirmed with regard to temporal patterns in increase and decrease. Migrants remit less when they are joined by their immediate family in the country of residence. However, it is important to consider the diachronic change in remittance practices. An increase in informal practices due to political and administrative reasons can lead to a decline in formal remittances, and thus, overall, towards the picture of a negative trend. This negative development, however, has no relation with a sense of belonging and social inclusion.

More information about social inclusion can be gained from looking at remittance scripts and the earmarking of monies therein. Especially in the trend towards religious donations, we can find the synergetic effects of integration described by Bivand Erdal and Oeppen (2013). Remitting as part of a transnational Islamic charity provides a kind of social inclusion that overcomes the binary code of 'here' and 'there' and offers social recognition and acceptance beyond geographical determinants. Transnational and local engagement do not compete with each other but constitute a process of social inclusion where 'home' can be in multiple places at the same time.

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**Conflict of Interests**

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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Article

# The Great Secession: Ethno-National Rebirth and the Politics of Turkish–German Belonging

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**Abstract**
Germany is facing a contemporary mainstreaming of the far right, which has a long tradition of wanting "Turks out!" Turkish immigrants have been the main strangers in Germany following the guest-worker treaty signed in 1961, physically close as friends, yet culturally distant as foes. From September 2015 onwards, German–Turkish politics of belonging, the Turkish issue, underwent a contentious period resulting in secessions between German and Turkish authorities in September 2017. Against this background, this article asks: How did mainstream political actors in Germany emplot the Turkish issue while a far-right challenger party sought to establish a far-right narrative of ethno-national rebirth? The temporal unfolding of the Turkish issue is explored by drawing on media analysis ($n = 1120$), interpretive process-tracing and narrative genre analysis of claims raised by political actors in German and Turkish newspapers. In order to visualize how the Turkish issue evolved between 2000 and 2017 in media discourse, 546 articles in the mainstream quality newspaper Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung were collected. The Great Secession period between 2015 and 2017 was selected for an in-depth case study. To conduct interpretive process-tracing and narrative genre analysis of this case, another 574 articles in the German *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and Turkish *Hürriyet* were analysed. In so doing, this article contributes to (1) the study of belonging and identity by adopting a novel approach to boundary studies, combining narrative genre analysis with Habermas' communicative action theory, and (2) the study of political strategies of adapting, ignoring or demarcating far-right contenders by, again, introducing a narrative approach to political communication and mobilization processes. The analysis shows that, in the first stage of the Great Secession period, inclusionary and exclusionary boundaries competed, while in later stages inclusionary boundaries were cast aside by exclusionary boundaries after reputable mainstream party-political actors adopted and thus legitimized far-right story elements.

**Keywords**
belonging; boundary studies; exclusion; far right; Germany; identity; immigrant integration; inclusion politics; narrative theory; Turkey

**Issue**
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## 1. Introduction

The Turkish minority in Germany serves as a well-fitting example of Simmel's concept of the stranger: physically close as friends, yet culturally distant as foes (Kaya, 2018). The German magazine *Der Spiegel* reported former top-secret British documents recording talks between then-Chancellor Helmut Kohl (Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands, hereafter CDU) and Margaret Thatcher which reveal his ambition in the 1980s to halve the size of Germany's Turkish population because of alleged "cultural incompatibilities." Indeed, his government introduced a return programme for Turkish guest-workers in 1983, which contained financial incentives to encourage them to return (Hecking, 2013). This alleged strangeness has affected millions of people, although there have been times when Turkey and Germany showed close connections at the turn of the previous cen-

tury (Neumann, 1999), and has endured since Germany and Turkey signed the guest-worker treaty in 1961. Today, roughly 3 million Turkish immigrants live in Germany and challenge regulations of membership and belonging (Mandel, 2008). In 2000, German citizenship laws were liberalized towards naturalisation and dual citizenship. Since 2008, claiming to help sustain the Turkish diaspora's Turkish cultural identity (e.g., "assimilation is a crime against humanity"), Turkish President Erdoğan regularly aimed to (re-)vitalize the Turkish issue in Germany. Interestingly, German politics remained unresponsive to Erdoğan's politicisation until 2015. Drawing on quantitative data, this article explores how German politics became responsive to such politicization and, drawing on media analysis, how the politics of Turkish–German belonging unfolded from September 2015 onwards, facilitating a secessionist outcome in September 2017, with formerly consensus-oriented German chancellor Merkel now breaking ties with Turkish politics.

The Turkish issue is defined as a political discourse that emerges in the realm of Turkish–German politics of belonging between Germany, Turkey and the Turkish diaspora. It is enacted by political actors who raise political claims embedded in wider narratives of people making sense of the world. In this respect, political actors in Germany and Turkey discursively construct the Turkish issue through conflicts in politics of belonging. Narratives serve a crucial social function to the politics of belonging. They interpellate subjectivities (social roles) by foregrounding certain events and backgrounding others in a meaningful storyline through which social boundaries of "us" and "them" emerge. In (Western) literature theory, such narratives are typically organized in four genres: romance, comedy, tragedy and irony (Frye, 1957). Comedies and romances are characterized by happy endings for a self-sufficient and pure "us." Communication flows remain within the self-centred conclusive boundaries of "us," the stranger is excluded from open and egalitarian communication processes (i.e., democratic debate). Tragedy and irony, in contrast, facilitate open communication processes that foster the inclusion of "new" or dissimilar perspectives (i.e., the stranger's perspective) on the basis of self-decentred and inconclusive social boundaries (Forchtner, Engelken Jorge, & Eder, 2018).

Against this background, this article asks: How do German mainstream parties emplot their stories in politics of Turkish–German belonging vis-à-vis a rising far-right contender? Germany is alleged to face a contemporary "normalisation" of the far right (Quent, 2019), and the rise of populist far-right actors also accounts for a wider continental Europe (van Kessel, 2015). The German far right has a long tradition of wanting "Turks out!" This was a famous campaign slogan of the German Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (hereafter NPD) party in the early 1990s when Turkish immigrants were victims of several racist terrorist attacks, and its ethno-religious blending with Islam was recently loudly voiced by the Alternative für Deutschland (hereafter AfD) party (Özvatan & Forchtner, 2019). Research finds there are contagious (Akkerman, de Lange, & Rooduijn, 2016; van Spanje, 2010) or modest (Dancygier & Margalit, 2019) effects of radical-right anti-immigration positions on the mainstream, while these studies of party positions fall short of exploring the deeper-level effects on the political centre. That is, do far-right challengers succeed in pushing for the adaptation of "their" narratives by the political centre? Thus, this article more precisely asks: How do mainstream political actors emplot (i.e. sustain or modify) their stories in politics of Turkish–German belonging while an uprising far-right challenger party seeks to establish a far-right narrative of ethno-national rebirth?

The two-year period from September 2015 to September 2017, which I call *the Great Secession*, was selected for an in-depth case study of the Turkish issue, for which 574 articles in the cross-nationally comparable centrist quality newspaper German *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and Turkish *Hürriyet* were amassed. To understand how the Turkish issue arrived at a secessionist outcome, the temporal unfolding of stories is explored by drawing on interpretive process tracing and narrative genre analysis of political actors' statements in these newspapers. This case selection is backed by three empirical findings: (1) The media analysis of 546 articles in *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (FAZ) between 2000 and 2017 points to the increasing salience of the Turkish issue between September 2015 and September 2017, (2) immigration-related political concerns prevail in the German public sphere from late 2014 onwards (Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, 2019), and (3) the electoral successes of the German AfD party. The Great Secession period was subdivided into three stages to trace how stories, story elements and boundaries transformed during that period. In so doing, this article shows that, in the first stage of the Turkish issue, stories fostering inclusionary and exclusionary social boundaries competed for hegemony, while in later stages exclusionary ethno-cultural boundaries prevailed after reputable mainstream actors had adopted and thus legitimized self-centring and definite stories of "us" and "them."

By adopting a novel approach to boundary dynamics, a revised Habermas-inspired storytelling framework, this article contributes to the study of politics of belonging, social boundaries and collective identity. The inclusion of "new" political subjects is more than the argumentative bridging of perspectives under the condition of mutual recognition as legitimate speakers (*Verständigung*; see Habermas, 1981, 1998). As Forchtner et al. (2018) have convincingly argued, argumentation alone does not cover the richness of social life, and thus the narratively structured lifeworld context has to play a conceptually more central role. Consequently, the focus needs to be shifted from argumentation to storytelling in order to examine boundary dynamics in greater depth, i.e., to make sense of how social boundaries span and close. Following the argumentation line that some story

genres (comedy and romance) instil self-centred and definite boundaries, and others self-decentred provisional boundaries (irony and tragedy), I argue that this Habermasian-inspired storytelling approach marks a key site for assessing inclusionary and exclusionary politics of Turkish–German belonging.

In the next section, key theoretical concepts in studies on national belonging and social boundaries are introduced. In Section 3, I propose the narrative boundary model as an extension to the literature on boundary studies. In Section 4, the within-case selection of the Great Secession period is justified, and narrative boundary analysis is applied to its three stages. A discussion of and conclusion to the narrative boundary analysis of the Turkish issue are presented in Section 5.

## 2. Barriers to the National Homeland: Contestations over Belonging and Its Boundaries

Recent developments in the research on nationalism move beyond hard facts, they include rather soft, yet just as influential parameters such as symbolic structures and feelings to make sense of national belonging and its boundaries. In her seminal work, Nira Yuval-Davis (2011, p. 35) defines belonging thus: "[It] is about feeling "at home," feeling "safe," and if not necessarily feeling in control, at least feeling able enough generally to predict expectations and rules of behaviour." Although this definition stresses the role of a "safe home," it embraces inclusionary and exclusionary stories of national belonging, thus covering political subjectivities which participate in a constant process of (re-)production of cultural identity and belonging (Hall, 1996).

Immanent to the analysis of symbolic social boundaries is an exploration of who is defined as inside and outside a given society or community (Lamont & Molnár, 2002). The imaginary of a national homeland constitutes such a community of us (Anderson, 1983), a national social order built on the ideals of purity and clarity which seeks to eradicate ambivalence, danger and pollution (Bauman, 1991; Douglas, 1966). It seems essential to clarify at this point that symbolic boundaries do not imply or refer to actual (i.e., material) social boundaries or actual strategies of action more generally. As Hall and Lamont (2013, p. 56) note, one can describe symbolic boundaries through the concept of cultural repertoires, which "are the sets of ideas, stories, discourses, frames, and beliefs that people draw on to create a line of action in the first place." A social order materializes its structures following meaningful symbols embedded in the stories people tell to make sense of the world. For instance, "free body culture" (*Freikörperkultur*) serves a cultural repertoire of "liberal" German ethno-national traditions embedded in the (Western) rational Enlightenment narrative, which may serve as a mobilising element according to which "true" Germans oppose the Muslim headscarf (as a sign of female oppression) in order to sustain "our" free ethno-national way of living.

Research shows that the constitution of ethnic group boundaries is a reciprocal process between social groups (e.g., Barth, 1969). Barth argues that, in this process, social groups develop a collective consciousness of forming a socially connected group based on sameness including a boundary drawn to demarcate dissimilar "others." Others have theorized the making of these ethnic boundaries by distinguishing between thick/hard and thin/soft boundaries (e.g., Wimmer, 2013; for a related intersectional account see Choo & Ferree, 2010). However, the mechanisms of ethnic boundary transformation from "static being" to "fluid becoming" remain under-researched in the literature. For example, Alba (2005) explores the static production of blurry or bright boundaries, yet there is rare theorisation of fluid becoming of boundaries, i.e., how a bright ethnic boundary blurs over time or vice versa. Korteweg and Yurdakul (2014) fill this niche when identifying one such mechanism of boundary-blurring in their comparative analysis of the headscarf debate: Established host-society political actors must politicize established boundaries of (ethno-)national belonging in order for marginalized immigrant political actors to blur those boundaries in the public discourse. In the next section, I propose a theoretical model to systematically analyse the fluid becoming of boundaries over time, that is, their brightening and blurring.

## 3. The Narrative Boundary Model: Stories, Genres and Belonging

In western societies, political parties engage in tamed communication processes characterized by argumentative debate, though this evolves within a narratively structured world. This means that beneath argumentation lies a narrative (genre) which stories actors, events and boundaries (Forchtner, 2016; Forchtner et al., 2018). Because of the storytelling foundation of political communication, I define the politics of belonging as a political drama that includes cultural performances, such as crafting stories that create meaningful events, subjectivities and boundaries. Political parties' performativity lies in crafting stories; they enact political dramas through which they seek to amplify popular resonances with the masses. As such, political dramas may or may not resonate with the (cultural) stories of the masses ("fusion" or "de-fusion" respectively; see Alexander, 2004). If an in-group story fuses, affected members of the group experience emotions associated with a given narrative genre: They recognize a plot, identify with "our" hero(ine) and live the "feelings" provided by the plotline and the story resolution (Forchtner, 2016; Wagner-Pacifici, 1986).

Adding narrative theory to Habermas' theory of communicative action, the narrative boundary model defines the story genre as a key mechanism of explaining the (un-)certainty of the resulting boundary type disseminated in political dramas. I shall argue that tragic and ironic stories facilitate spanning social boundaries, while

comic and romantic stories draw rigid and conclusive social boundaries.

A well-established definition for narrative from Toolan (1988, p. 6) postulates that "narrative is a perceived sequence of non-randomly connected events." His definition emphasizes the role of temporality and meaning-making for the non-randomized connection of events. Meaning arises through creating a line of action by back—and foregrounding certain events. Thus, narratives lend meaning to human experiences over time (see also Bruner, 2004). The narrating human species stories its experiences in an event-based, sequential order. Collective identities built on that narrative scheme. They link storied projections of the past, present and future in a narratively meaningful way to create a sense of commonality and belonging (Somers, 1994).

The prevailing four narrative genres in Western literature are romance, comedy, tragedy and irony (Frye, 1957; White, 1973). Genres have unique plot lines that connect events in a narratively meaningful order (Figure 1). As Figure 1 illustrates, plot lines are shaped by the combination of two dimensions: the moral evaluation of an event as positive (+) or negative (−) and time ($t$).

To illustrate the former, Romeo and Juliet fall in love at the beginning of the drama before the audience gets to know the problematic background information. The moral evaluation at that specific temporal point of the story is heart-warming. Frye (1957, p. 162) argues that the positive (+) and negative (−) spheres reflect two-level imaginaries of the world, the ideal and the actual, respectively. Plots in the lower half reflect the unidealized actual world (−), which is an analogy of realism and experience, i.e., the complexity, conflict and ambivalence of the world, while plots in the upper half, the world of idealized existence, represent romance and innocence (+), i.e., storied phantasies of homogeneity, unity and purity in the world.

The second dimension, time, covers the sequential organisation of events through narrative. Usually, stories are emplotted in three stages: the introduction of the protagonists in the beginning, the middle stage in which a problem emerges, and the ending in which the problem is resolved or not, which is commonly defined as the story resolution. Wagner-Pacifici (1986, p. 282) argues that in order to control the cultural meaning of a given story, one has to control its ending, i.e., its resolution. In fact, comedy and romance share a problem for the social order being resolved with a happy ending, which renders feelings of unity and self-sufficiency. Romantic plot lines steadily climb to a heart-warming happy ending, while comic plotlines sharply ascend from a downturn sequence to a joyful happy ending (see Figure 1). Their plotlines slightly differ though: Romantic downturns are less tragic, they remain in the sphere of idealized existence, whereas comic deep downturns descend into the intricacies of the unidelized actual world, which makes the hero(ine) face a catastrophe before a sharp ascent to the ideal world results in a "new-born society rising in triumph" (Frye, 1957, p. 192). Because the sharp ascent releases accumulated tensions, festive celebrations (e.g., fireworks, wedding, etc.) commonly feature comedy's happy ending.

Tragic and ironic stories lack joyful, reassuring story resolutions. In a tragedy, the tragic hero(ine) fails, in a series of events (e.g., rescuing attempts), to hinder an inescapable cathartic ending. The hero(ine) torturously

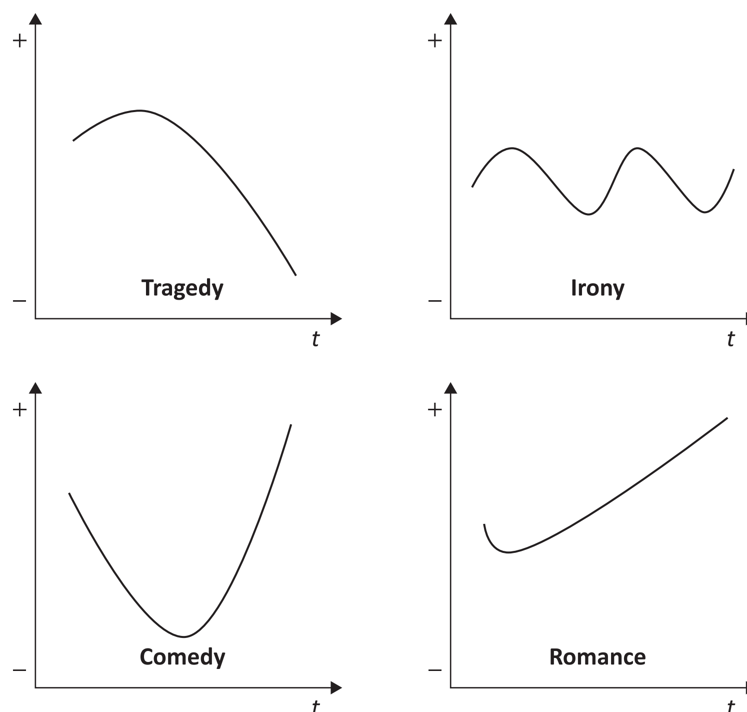


**Figure 1.** Schematic representation of narrative genre plot lines (own visualisation).

learns that s(he) is not self-sufficient, unable to solve the intruding problems. In the literature, irony is not assigned a specific storyline; Frye (1957, p. 223) defines irony as "the parody of romance." He understands an idealized form of irony, militant irony, as just another form of comedy or romance that generates idealized self-reassuring romanticism by parodying others. One way of interpreting Frye's definition of irony is to speak of self-irony. Self-irony attempts "to give form to the shifting ambiguities and complexities of unidealized existences" (Frye, 1957, p. 223). That is, by means of continuous self-reflexive distancing from previously held sets of beliefs, self-irony is marked by "the sense that heroism and effective action are absent, disorganized or foredoomed to defeat, and that confusion and anarchy reign over the world" (Frye, 1957, p. 192). Since the distancing from an idealized existence marks the nature of (self-)irony, the plot line travels continuously between the idealized world and the unidealized actual world. The hero(ine) is never self-sufficient but constantly in need of debate and renegotiation, i.e., inclusive democratic deliberation.

Political parties are mobilizing storytellers likely to narrate comic plots. They claim that, with their help, society will overcome an imminent challenge and celebrate "the new-born society rising in triumph" (Frye, 1957, p. 192); Trump's campaign slogan "Make America Great Again!" is a case in point. However, in the empirical world, narrative genres rarely occur in pure form. Storytellers instil story elements of other genres into their plots (Engelken Jorge, Forchtner, Eder, & Özvatan, 2019; Özvatan & Forchtner, 2019). Indeed, Özvatan and Forchtner (2019) illustrate that the German AfD party increasingly implements romance into its comedy, which is the evermore radicalising promise of an ethno-national rebirth for "true" Germans defined by ethno-racial ancestry/destiny.

Figure 2 represents the link between narrative genres and social boundaries. This model contains two dimensions: the purity/impurity of the hero(ine) and the restrictiveness/expansion of the discursive space. Jointly, both dimensions explain the certainty-uncertainty continuum of the imaginary of social boundaries (dotted diagonal line). The (im-)purity dimension refers to projected positive/negative images of the story's hero(ine). If the hero(ine) is portrayed as self-sufficient, s(he) is pure and vice versa. The (im-)purity of the hero(ine) relates to the discursive space too: If the story resolution's projected hero(ine) is self-sufficient/pure, the discursive space for debating further steps shrinks. Thus, it appears redundant to debate further steps when the hero(ine) is capable of resolving an emerging problem satisfactorily. In turn, the discursive space expands if the hero(ine) is impure and not self-sufficient. The unsolved (or unsolvable) problem triggers a need to foster communication processes, that is, debate further steps to be taken.

The interaction of both dimensions determines the (un-)certainty of imagined social boundaries: (1) If the hero(ine) is pure and the discursive space shrinks, the certainty of the social boundary is high; in turn, (2) if the hero(ine) is impure and the discursive space ex-

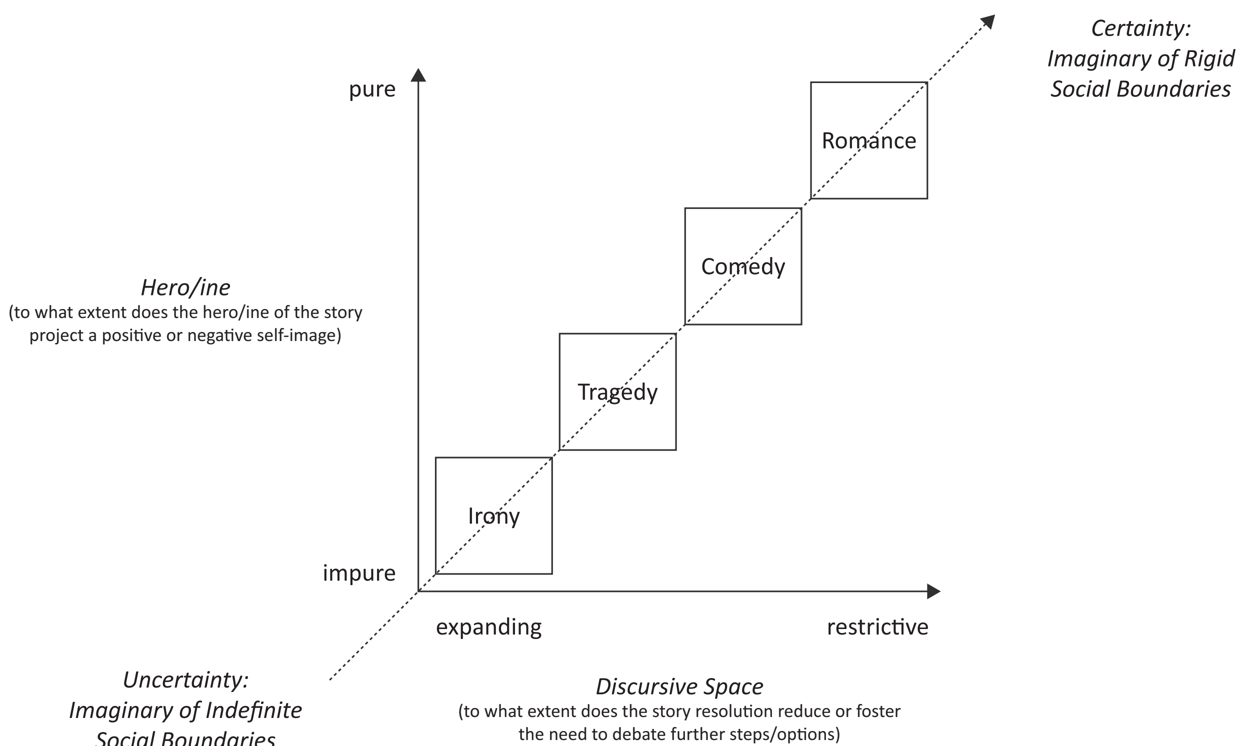


**Figure 2.** Schematic representation of the link between narrative genres and social boundaries (a modified version of the model proposed by Forchtner et al., 2018, p. 12).

pands, the uncertainty of the social boundary is high. The self-sufficiency of pure hero(in)es renders conclusiveness and certainty to social boundaries. Social boundaries become uncertain through the inconclusiveness of a story. The potential for including "new" or dissimilar perspectives rises as the story resolution's lesson tells us that our hero(ine) is not capable of solving the problem without including the perspectives of others into communication processes.

Put together, rigid social boundaries are fostered by romance and comedy, while tragedy and irony allow for indefinite/blurry social boundaries (Figure 2). In a romance, "the good guys are clearly good from the outset: they wear the white hats while the bad guys wear the black hats" (Wagner-Pacifici, 1986, p. 282). The unquestioned purity and self-sufficiency of "the good guys with the white hats" prove that they are the only legitimate interlocutors in a democratic debate. Jacobs and Smith (1997, p. 68), for instance, argue that "nationalist ideology is built upon the Romantic narrative of a ´national´ community with a distinct and ascending destiny." Comic stories are less restrictive than romances, the composition of the "good guys" may expand or shrink after the reunification or reconciliation process. However, the certainty of social boundaries rises following a unifying happy ending. The "national" community is put back on the right track, including a redefinition of who is part of the common "ascending destiny." In the absence of ironic elements, it seems unlikely that the membership criteria of the "national" community are extended to "others." In a tragedy, the hero(ine) is snared in a no-way-out dilemma. To protect *us* from future tragedies, communication processes may transcend social boundaries and include "new" or dissimilar perspectives. Irony is the only genre that lacks a genuine plot line. This genre is characterized by the hero(ine)'s distancing from established commonalities such as, for instance, a common ethno-racial destiny. Such distancing from notions of an essentialized and self-reassuring community fosters open communication processes, which is a condition for boundary-spanning and the inclusion of others.

In order to operationalize the linkage of narrative genres and social boundaries for the empirical analysis, I draw on three social boundary types postulated by Yuval-Davis (2011, p. 21). The first is the racialized boundary, which fabricates impenetrable boundaries through ascriptive markers, i.e., ethnic origin, "race" and place of birth. The second is the cultural boundary, building on language, culture and sometimes religion, which may depend on "the other's" assimilatory efforts to acquire a host society culture (language, culture or religion) and, generally, involves a tedious process. The third is the civic boundary, which understands belonging on the basis of civic values such as "human rights" or "democracy," e.g., Habermas' prominent notion of *Verfassungspatriotismus*, which marks normative ideals formulated in the constitution as nodal points for membership and boundaries.

Figure 3 is a schematic representation of where the three social boundary types are located in the narrative boundary model. Given that political parties narrate comic plots combined with elements of other genres, here I will describe the embeddedness of the three boundary types in primarily comic stories. That is, I shall

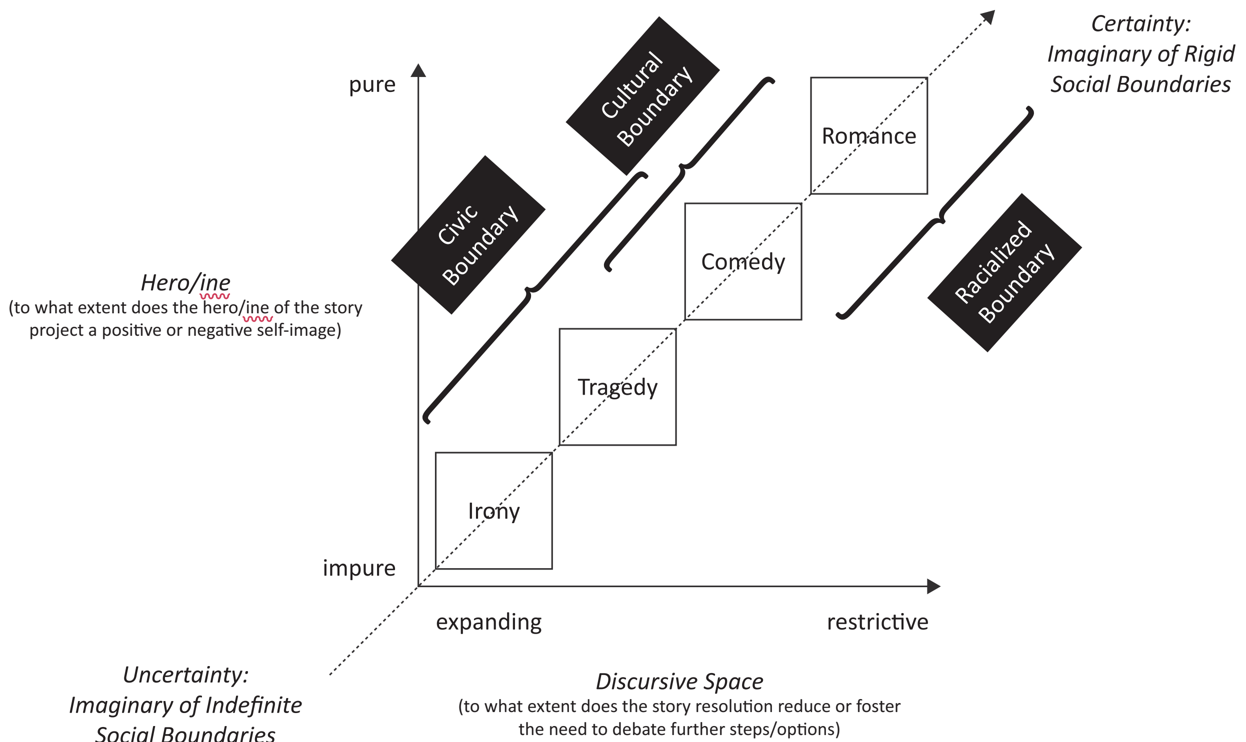


**Figure 3.** Schematic representation of the link between narrative genres and social boundary types (own visualisation).

illustrate in which directions the storied comedies move on the uncertainty-certainty continuum. The more idealized ancestral elements (i.e., romantic elements) are instilled into a comedy, the more the plot tends to move towards the racialized boundary. If the moral evaluation of ancestral elements (e.g., race, ethnicity, nationality etc.) is not positive, that story is no longer a comedy, which is why the racialized boundary tends to occupy no more than the space from comedy to the upper end of romance (Figure 3).

The cultural boundary is ambivalent as regards inclusive or exclusive boundaries of belonging; there is, though, a strong tendency towards exclusionary (i.e., rigid) social boundaries. Hence, this boundary type tends to cover only small portions of tragedy, which facilitates indefinite social boundaries, and covers a considerable share of definite boundaries (comedy and a considerable share of romance). If a cultural boundary draws its legitimacy from a community's romantically remembered cultural imaginary, it intersects with the *racialized boundary*. Such boundaries may enable individual boundary crossing (see the taxonomy of Wimmer, 2008, p. 1044) for "newcomers" performing a racialised majority culture, yet there is hardly room for blurring the boundary on the collective level.

Civic boundaries extend from comedy to irony. Historical events, such as the selective remembrance of the Enlightenment, impeccably represent the overlapping space of cultural and civic boundaries. If the Enlightenment past is storied as a(n) (ethno-)cultural achievement, the derived civic values are hardly separable from its healed "achievers." Ironic elements disturb such idealized/romantic portrayals of "achievers" by pinpointing "our" past failures, ambivalences, and impurities. The more ironic elements are installed into a comedy, the more the self-reflexivity and indefiniteness of the social boundary is facilitated.

## 4. Method, Data and Analysis: Exploring the Turkish Issue

Erdoğan prominently politicized matters of Turkish–German identity and belonging on German grounds four times from 2000 onwards. These four symbolically charged events included rhetoric attacks on German authorities for their alleged mistreatment of Turkish immigrants (i.e., devaluation of their Turkish origin/culture). The Turkish President performed an ethno-national leader standing up for Turks on a global scale. Figure 4 illustrates his four attempts to trigger debates over cultural identity in Germany and the reactions shown by German mainstream politics (Figure 4). Hintz (2018) postulated that Erdoğan's attempts stem from his party's need to sustain identity politics, including his aim to disseminate the AKP party's core neo-Ottoman national identity narrative against secular Kemalist elites. She contends that once domestic national identity contestation was entrenched in Turkey, the AKP party extended it to the domestic-foreign policy nexus to appeal to both the domestic and the diaspora vote. Considering its population size, the Turkish diaspora in Germany was a welcome target for the Turkish President (and former Prime Minister). Turkish immigrants were granted voting rights from the 2014 Presidential Election onwards through a new policy reform. However, the puzzle is to learn when German politics was vulnerable to his conflictual politicisation attempts and to ask how the politicisation in the Great Secession period actually relates to the secessions in September 2017. These questions stream into the broader research question which explores how mainstream political actors emplot (i.e. sustain or modify) their stories in politics of Turkish–German belonging while an uprising far-right challenger party seeks to establish a far-right narrative of ethno-national rebirth.

### *4.1. Case Selection: Political Context of the Turkish Issue in German Politics (2000–2017)*

Three contextual factors seemed to trigger the politicisation of the Turkish issue in Germany from September 2015 onwards: (1) German politics became vulnerable to Erdoğan's advances when, as of late-2014, the German public was prevailingly concerned with cultural identity issues (Forschungsgruppe Wahlen, 2019), (2) the German AfD party started a series of electoral successes from May 2014 onwards and transformed the core theme of its comic story from neoliberal Euroscepticism to ethno-nationalism (Özvatan & Forchtner, 2019), and (3) media debates of the Turkish issue increased to unprecedented high scores after 2015 (Figure 5). These con-

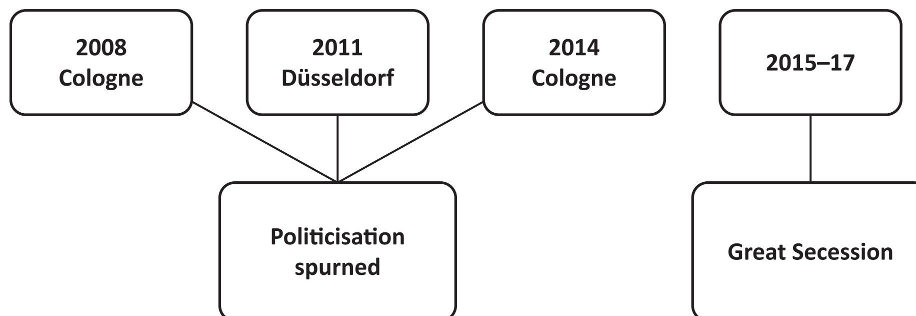


**Figure 4.** Four attempts at vitalising the Turkish issue (own visualisation).

textual factors indicate that German politics became vulnerable to the politicisation of the Turkish issue after 2015. A close look at the FAZ data shows (German media discourse on the Turkish issue, see below) that the number of media articles increased from September 2015, too. Consequently, the Great Secession period from September 2015 to September 2017 is selected for an in-depth case study to explore how narratives of German politics evolved over time and eventually arrived at the secessionist outcome. In September 2017, after a series of Germany-blaming by Erdoğan, consensus-oriented Angela Merkel finally broke ties with him and promised she would bring the potential of bringing EU–Turkey accession talks to a standstill to the agenda (Usta, 2017); the standstill was declared by the EU Commission in June 2018.

The media analysis of FAZ data provides a general overview of how the media discourse on the Turkish issue evolved in Germany between 2000 and 2017 (Figure 5). As salience of political issues and claims raised by political actors vary only marginally across quality newspapers in Western Europe (Koopmans, Statham, Giugni, & Florence, 2005), data collection for the general media discourse was restricted to one mainstream quality newspaper. To reflect trends in the media discourse of the Turkish issue across time, FAZ data were inductively coded into seven macro-topics: EU–Turkey relations, foreign civic dialogue, foreign policy, foreign trade, immigrant integration party politics, immigrant integration and Turkish party politics. Macro-topics are discursive knowledge structures via which consumers of media data understand and summarise texts, i.e. media articles (van Dijk, 1991). Macro-topics which scored below an annual average of three articles or less than ten articles in a single year were excluded. Excluded macro-topics are foreign trade (n = 26), immigrant integration party politics (n = 38) and party competition in Turkey (n = 47).

Figure 5 illustrates that lively debates on the Turkish issue crystallized around two macro-topics between 2000 and 2008 (34 articles on annual average): acceptance of Turkey as a candidate country to the EU (EU–Turkey relations) and liberalisation of the German citizenship law (immigrant integration politics). After the general debate flattened between 2009 and 2015 (15 articles on annual average), contention between Germany and Turkey (foreign policy) peaked to a record high of 36 articles in 2016 which even almost doubled to 62 articles in 2017 (Figure 5). These numbers point to the contentious period that surrounded Erdoğan's fourth attempt at vitalising the Turkish issue in July 2016 (Figure 2).

### *4.2. Research Strategy: The Processual Nature of Narrative*

Two research techniques were combined for the case study of the Great Secession period: process tracing and narrative genre analysis. Process tracing is a methodological technique for within-case analysis. Interpretivist process tracing, as a counterpart to the more established positivist process tracing, relies first and foremost on the (thick) description of events (and their interpretation) over time (Guzzini, 2012; for a general discussion of interpretivist and positivist process tracing see Bennett & Checkel, 2014). This criterion makes it particularly suitable with narrative genre analysis of political claims because of narrative's processual character, "narrative involves movement from one structure to another" (Frye, 1957, p. 158). However, events mark an ambivalent phenomenon in narrative theory: On the one hand there is a "real" discursive event, e.g., the EU-Turkey declaration, while on the other there is the narrative backgrounding or foregrounding of that discursive event. Interpretivist process tracing is included into the analysis to account for the unfolding of "real" discursive events, which then facilitates the exploration of how narrative genres unfold in the course of these discursive events.

The combination of process tracing and narrative genre analysis thus enables a comparative analysis of three identified subsequent stages of the Great Secession with a focus on tracing how narratives (and story elements) travelled across stages in this process to secessions between Germany, the EU, Turkey and Turkish–Germans. To do so, another 574 articles were gathered from quality newspapers in Germany (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 368 articles) and Turkey (*Hürriyet*, 206 articles) which were selected because they take comparable main-

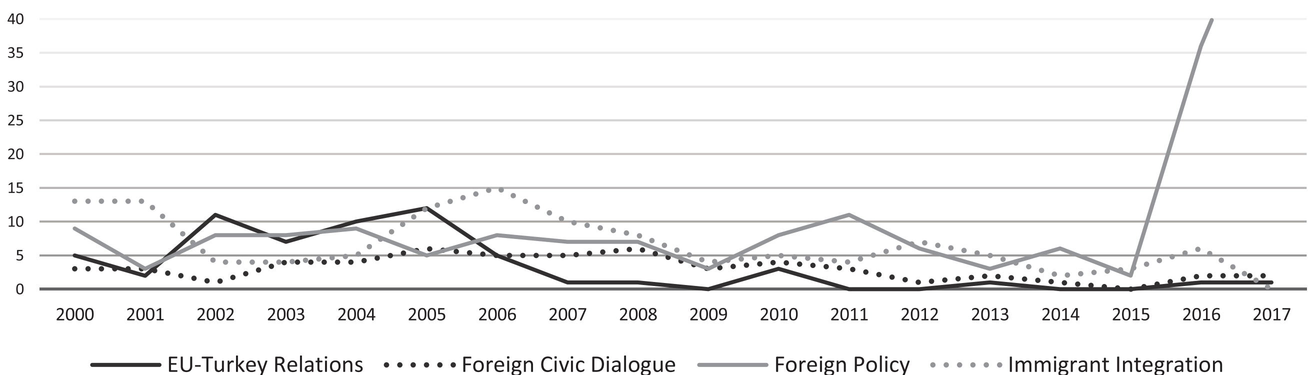


**Figure 5.** The Turkish issue in the German media discourse (own data collection).

stream positions in both countries. Hence, the whole media data analysis relies on a total of 1120 quality newspaper articles in which political claims raised by political actors formed the data for narrative genre analysis.

*4.3. The Great Secession of 2015–2017*

During the *Great Secession* period the AfD party conveyed stories which combine far-right authoritarian and ethno-nationalist tropes with a populist style (Moffitt, 2016; Mudde, 2007): Only "the people," their supposedly homogeneous will being represented by the AfD, can guarantee cultural/racial purity, an ethno-national rebirth against self-serving and deluded elites (Özvatan & Forchtner, 2019). Romantic racialized story elements, e.g., the *Long Durée* of German ethnic community, render moral authority and exigency to the idea of "saving" the German people from a "Muslim pollution threat" or, in the words of the AfD co-leader Alexander Gauland, a "creeping land grab" by Islam (Bender, 2017). This racialized comedy-romance story of the AfD crafts an ancestral pure and self-sufficient hero(ine). The high certainty of the ethno-nationally defined social boundary excludes "the other" from discourse, paving the way for communication processes to remain among "true" Germans after a promised ethno-national rebirth.

In the following, three stages of the Great Secession period are comparatively analysed with a focus on "actual" discursive events and the narrative ordering of events by political parties (i.e., mobilizing storytellers). It is described how mainstream political parties (1) (re-)tell stories of "us and them" and (2) thereby demarcate or accommodate the racialized comedy-romance story of the AfD.

4.3.1. Stage I: Road to the EU–Turkey Migration Deal (September 2015–March 2016)

The civic boundary competed with the cultural boundary in this stage. The trope of a European Solution to social grievance associated with the 2015 refugee crisis implemented ironic elements (civic boundary; see Figure 6), which facilitated detachment from an idealized ethno-national sovereign thus facilitating debate over the inclusion of Turkish identity by pulling the comic story towards inconclusive social boundaries. The cultural boundary emerged through the implementation of romanticized cultural superiority elements. The CSU emphasized "our" cultural achievements (i.e., press freedom, freedom of speech), in response to demands by the Turkish leader Erdoğan, while the Greens and the Left party narrated similar stories (Figure 6). Other than the latter two parties, the CSU also gave particular space to ancestral elements of the national sovereign which demarcated national and European boundaries along the romanticized lines of religion, i.e., the EU as a non-Muslim club. Gerda Hasselfeldt (CSU) followed Seehofer's attempt to impede visa waivers for Turkish citizens when she added that the migration deal with Turkey must include a clause that guarantees Turkey will not become a full member of the European Union (Rossmann, 2016), which underscored the story of Europe as a non-Muslim club (Figure 6). These tropes show a proclivity to the AfD's narrative which warns "the German people" to act against a Muslim pollution threat, while the AfD's comedy-romance story is, frankly, much more *racialized* than the CSU story at that stage.

In October 2015, German Chancellor Merkel reiterated her call for a European solution to the European "refugee crisis" when visiting President Erdoğan. Merkel's call for a European solution reverberated with the civic boundary (Figure 6). The solution to a current humanitarian refugee crisis is not predefined along the lines of an ancestral community in her story; its solution is up for debate between political actors from within and beyond the EU willing to solve it. In this respect, Merkel's comic European Solution story blurs established social boundaries and counters an ironic irritation of the supposed self-sufficiency of the national sovereign (highlighted in grey in Figure 6).

Later, in light of the approaching EU–Turkey migration deal (which was declared on 18 March 2016), then

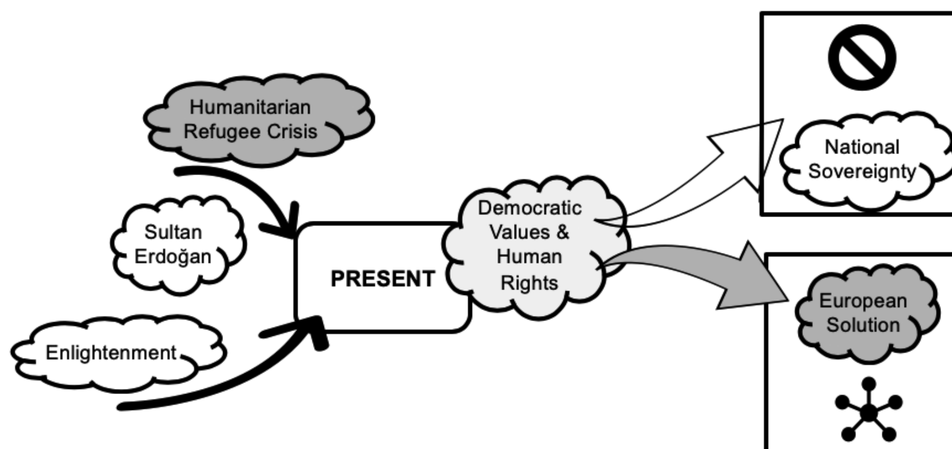


**Figure 6.** Comedy-romance (cultural boundary, white clouds) and comedy-irony (civic boundary, grey clouds) in Stage I.

SPD leader Sigmar Gabriel criticized Seehofer (CSU) for stabbing Merkel in the back when demanding renewed requirements for visa liberalisation for Turkish citizens ("Gabriel: Seehofer fällt," 2016). During that period the Left and the Green party called for humanitarianism ("Drama in Idomeni, Appell an Merkel," 2016) and the CSU voiced critical stances against this deal with the Turkish leader being blamed for authoritarianism and ignoring democratic rights (Rossmann, 2016; see Figure 6). It is characteristic that the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* released an article entitled "Merkel's Dependence on Sultan Erdoğan" (Schlötzer, 2016). Orientalist tropes portraying Turkey as led by a "Sultan" were prominent and reverberated with cultural boundaries (Figure 6). The externalisation of anti-democratic performances and its blending with orientalism give rise to a comic story about German national sovereignty's indispensable Enlightenment past. The German hero(ine) will always stand for firm protection of ("our") domestic culture of liberal democratic values and human rights, an element which serves both endings (highlighted in lighter grey in Figure 6).

4.3.2. Stage II: Mainstream Party Zigzag in the Post-deal Period (April–December 2016)

In all five 2016 Federal State elections, the AfD celebrated an electoral breakthrough: the party ranked second in the Eastern and third in the Western German states (fifth in Berlin, though taking 15% of the vote share). In this stage, the cultural boundary gained momentum and the civic one diminished continuously. The cultural boundary revolved around Turkish Germans' "conflict of loyalties" between fixed notions of an "enlightened German culture" and a "non-enlightened Turkish culture." This story's cultural superiority based on "our" ancestral Enlightenment culture resembles the AfD story but is less racialized, thus less conclusive social boundaries are fostered (see Figure 7).

Once the EU–Turkey migration deal was announced, Germany-Turkey relations notably deteriorated. A satirical poem by German comedian Jan Böhmermann, which mocked Turkish President Erdoğan, developed into a diplomatic drama. Erdoğan invited Turkey's German ambassador to question why Böhmermann had not been reproached, despite Merkel describing the poem as "deliberately harmful" ("Merkel nennt Böhmermanns Erdoğan-Gedicht," 2016). Then-president of the European Parliament, Martin Schulz (SPD), responded harshly: "[We] must make it clear to Erdoğan: In our country, there is democracy" ("Schulz: 'Lieber Herr Erdoğan,"' 2016). His statement perpetuated the as simplistic as dichotomising cultural boundary invoked by parts of the German mainstream already in Stage I: the Orientalist story of our legitimate democratic culture here, and their non-democratic culture there (Figure 7).

The Turkish issue heated up further in June 2016 when the German Bundestag held a non-binding vote on a resolution to formally accept the term "Armenian Genocide." The Turkish President came forward with a hard-hitting speech accusing Germany of Islamophobia and question its legitimacy, "the first country that comes to one's mind when asked about 'genocide."' (Purtul, 2016). In the same speech, he questioned Cem Özdemir's (Green party) Turkish identity, stating that his, and the other 11 Turkish German MPs' blood was "defective" (*kanı bozuk*), which he combined with a(n) (ethnonationalist) populist message, he alleged that they were Germany-based sleepers for anti-Turkish terror organisations directed by a global "mastermind" (*üst akıl*) which seeks to undermine Turkey's ethno-national resurrection. The attacked Turkish German MPs complained of receiving death threats from ultranationalist Turkish movements and individuals in Germany. Zekeriya Altuğ, a board member of the Germany-based immigrant organisation DITIB (Turkish Islamic Union for Religious Affairs), institutionally affiliated with Turkey's State Department for Religious Affairs, criticized that the attacked MPs no longer represent the Turkish German community, while other (then) board members such as Murat Kayman and Bekir Alboğa condemned the threats against the 11 attacked MPs ("Islamverband Ditib kritisiert türkeistämmige Abgeordnete," 2016). Norbert Lammert (CDU), then President of the Bundestag, reprimanded Erdoğan for attacking members of the Bundestag and thanked

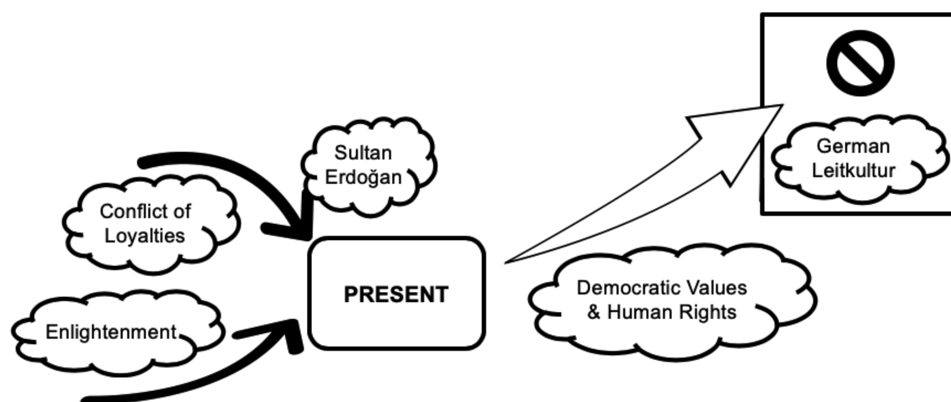


**Figure 7.** Comedy-romance story (cultural boundary) in Stage II.

the Turkish Association in Berlin-Brandenburg (TBB) and the Turkish Community in Germany (TGD) for their immediate and unambiguous distancing from Erdoğan's attacks (Fried, 2016). The cultural boundary unfolded remarkably in this event: the German state authorities performed "their" Enlightenment-based German democratic culture by protecting immigrant political actors and included only those immigrant organisations into communication processes that performed their "learning" of German "Leitkultur" when distancing themselves from the Turkish Leader, "Sultan Erdoğan" (Figure 7).

After the failed coup attempt in Turkey in July 2016, the AKP party and the Union of European Turkish Democrats (hereafter UETD) organized a "democracy rally" against the coup attempt in Cologne, where Erdoğan supporters wore German and Turkish symbols and sang both national anthems. Jens Spahn (CDU) reproached Turkish–Germans' alleged disloyalty and lamented their "conflict of loyalties" ("Warnungen vor Einflussnahme der Türkei bei Demonstration in Deutschland," 2016). The discourse on "conflicts of loyalties" amplified the question: "Loyalty to which community?" On the surface level, the variation of discursive elements gave final shape to the narrative of a romantically remembered ethno-national community while the cultural and racialized boundaries shared a comedy-romance storyline (see Figure 8 in Stage III). The emerging cultural boundary showed a supposed and conditional openness towards Turkish–Germans which were expected to ostensibly perform German "Leitkultur" to remove their "inner conflict" (Figure 7) or the host society will withdraw the right to belong once recognised and granted to them. The "inner conflict" discourse implemented the racialized boundary too, this being the story of a culture of ethno-national incompatibility with "our" democratic values because of "their" Ottoman ancestry. This story unfolded in the next stage and made the German political mainstream approach the ancestral ethno-national rebirth story circulated by the AfD.

#### 4.3.3. Stage III: The Final Curtain ahead of General Election 2017

The final curtain showed the racialized boundary eventually enter mainstream politics, though still sharing some elements with the cultural boundary. Their nodal point crystallized around an ancestral, romanticising Enlightenment story element, which facilitates feelings of self-sufficiency and reassures the hero(ine) of "our" eminent particularity, if not greatness (Figure 8). Idealized racialized expressions of the Turkish "other" were increasingly having a heyday, alleging that the supposed anti-democratic, ancestral Ottoman culture causes "conflicts of loyalties" in Enlightenment Germany (Figure 8). A story, once initially and exclusively espoused by the far-right AfD, occupied substantial shares of mainstream narratives in the third stage.

The political context was driven by election periods both in Germany and Turkey. Besides the fast-approaching general election in September 2017, the German party system was ahead of three federal state elections. The Turkish government, itself approaching a constitutional referendum in April 2017, which would effectively concentrate more power in the hands of the president, perpetuated its demands for "the Turkish people" vis-à-vis Germany and the EU. Both party systems were thus in electoral competition mode.

After then-Prime Minister Binali Yıldırım (AKP) held a campaign event in Oberhausen, German opposition parties called for a ban on the Germany-based campaign events of the AKP which were alleged to be in support of authoritarianism and reiterated their criticism of Angela Merkel's (alleged) concessions to the Turkish president ("Yıldırım," 2017). This story perpetuated the cultural boundary proposing that Germans must eventually stand up for "their" democratic values against Turkey's (supposedly) authoritarian leader who seeks to mobilize and instil anti-democratic views in our German society: We, the enlightened German people, must oppose the import of

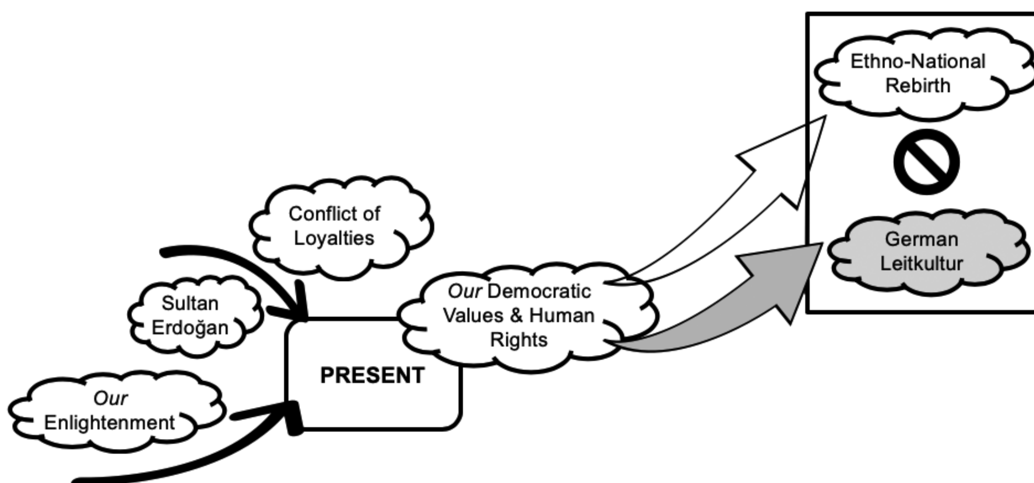


**Figure 8.** Stage III comedy-romance story with two happy endings, racial (white) and cultural (grey) boundaries.

anti-democratic views and remain true to our ideals. By defining such ideals as "ours," mainstream actors mobilized claims of ancestral ownership of these values by mere Germanness, which increasingly racialized boundary elements to the comic cultural boundary story.

That became apparent in March 2017 when German municipalities blocked AKP campaign events, which made Erdoğan contend that "if I want to, I will come to Germany" and blame the German authorities for "Nazi practices" (Bielicki, Hickmann, & Szymanski, 2017). In mid-August, Erdoğan invited Turkish Germans to protest against the Green, CDU and SPD parties in the upcoming general election because they were "hostile to Turkey" ("Bundestagswahl," 2017; Usta, 2017). In turn, Merkel questioned whether, under these impairing circumstances, the EU should extend the Customs Union with Turkey after twenty years of its existence (Fried, 2017). Eventually, in the pre-election TV debate (3 September 2017), Merkel and Schulz engaged in competitive zeal to demonstrate who could adopt a stricter stance against Erdoğan, once (re-)elected, in the name of our democracy; and they both resolutely called for a cancellation of EU–Turkey accession talks (Brössler, 2017). Even Merkel, who invoked a comedy-irony story (civic boundary) in Stage I, now resorted to a comedy-romance (cultural boundary) which circulated a vision of "us" as the enlightened people who own democratic values and, ultimately, resulted in ethno-nationally secessionist politics in German politics' Turkish issue (Figure 8).

## 5. Conclusion

How did the German mainstream parties emplot their stories in the Great Secession period vis-à-vis a rising far-right contender? Substantial shares of mainstream political parties adapted the AfD's racialized comedy-romance story, which suggests that the story and the AfD party as a mobilizing storyteller have been legitimized in the political centre. In the first stage of the Great Secession, the inclusionary civic boundary competed with the rather exclusionary cultural boundary. As such, story elements of "our" cultural superiority based on "our" ethno-national community's Enlightenment past spread within the mainstream and increasingly instilled elements of the AfD's ancestral romanticism (i.e., ethno-national destiny) in subsequent stages. In this context, comedies with ironic elements which disseminate inconclusive social boundaries, such as Merkel's European Solution story, phased out. It is unsurprising then that the discursive space for accommodating the complexity and diversity of Turkish–German belonging happened to shrink, and a secessionist outcome to appear, when narratives of an ancestral neo-Ottoman revival in Turkey and of ethno-national rebirth in German politics made up leeway.

Building on a revised storytelling approach to Habermasian communicative action theory, this article has sought to explore the opening and blocking of communication processes (of social boundaries) in the politics of Turkish–German belonging. The analysis indicates that the political centre took steps towards rigid ethno-cultural boundaries between "Germans" and "Turks." However, even if mainstream political parties merely intended to adapt far-right positions as a short-term strategy to regain disenchanted voters, the unintended effect is that the powerful unfolding of a narrative genre is triggered. If the comic story conveys an idealized ethno-nationally pure hero(ine) and audiences have associated feelings, popular mobilisation gains a hardly stoppable momentum. That is, once the audience "buys" the comedy-romance story, it is hard to escape those feelings because reversed rational arguments suggest so. Incentives to include "the other's" perspective in reflection and argumentation are hampered; communication is restricted to flow within our taken-for-granted echo chambers. In fact, with the ascent of racialized comedy-romances, both the communication of inconclusive boundaries (e.g., Merkel's European Solution story in Stage I) and the presence of diversities and complexities of Turkish–German belonging (e.g., reactions to Armenian Genocide resolution in Stage II) disappear over time. Inclusion of Turkish–German perspectives emerged only after ostentatious performances of German "Leitkultur," which was welcomed as a clear-cut decision for loyalty to Germany instead of Turkey by German authorities.

Further, it became apparent in the analysis that the Enlightenment past embodies a seminal cultural repertoire in German political culture. The romanticized transmission and ancestral roots restrict this cultural repertoire to a world of "idealized existence" of a German ethno-national community. Tragic and ironic extensions to comedy are blocked, pure comedies or comedies pushing for romanticism are facilitated. Hence, this cultural repertoire feeds into cultural boundaries and racialized boundaries due to its ancestral purification of the ethno-national German hero(ine). The community mobilising around such a hero(ine) derives its cultural and/or ethno-racial commonality from an idealized remembrance of a past achievement which is hard to affirm by "newcomers": They may perform it on the individual level, yet have no legitimate right of shared ownership or membership on the collective level. Not only is ethno-cultural and ethno-racial difference created through the Enlightenment cultural repertoire, but feelings of cultural or racial superiority are also fostered through that idealized and particularizing remembrance of the Enlightenment past.

Given the identified adaptation of far-right narratives of "ethno-national rebirth" story, what are the avenues for future research? To begin with, comparative research may explore whether the identified adaptation is able to travel globally across cases in time and space. Secondly, this article's transnational agenda is open to extension. That is, to historically, and more systematically, assess the possible effects of Turkey's nostalgic return to neo-Ottoman identity on stories of Turkish–German be-

longing. A case in point is marked by an October 2015 image of the meeting between Merkel and Erdoğan in Turkey's then newly-built presidential palace. Its iconography made western European media immediately signify a "Sultan." Beyond orientalist demarcation by "the West," such images may be associated with authority and strength by some members of the in-group, while others may fear a turn to ancestral backwardness (e.g., autocracy). In this context, a fine-grained focus (ethnographic) research of the narrative (genre) organisation of belonging among the diverse strings of Turkish immigrant associations and movements in Germany poses an interesting avenue for future research in this field. Finally, yet another puzzle deserving of further study is "gendered storytelling." For instance, the theorising of the prevalent gendered romantic trope, "a fairy-tale princess kisses a frog prince for a happy ending" into the analysis of politics of belonging seems essential. A gendered storytelling approach might certainly ameliorate our understanding of the politics of Turkish–German belonging by asking: Who was the frog prince(ss) in the Great Secession drama? What were the gendered cultural repertoires that were disseminated?

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**Conflict of Interests**

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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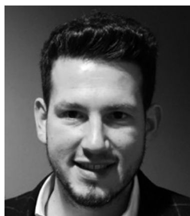

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Article

# Transnationalism and Belonging: The Case of Moroccan Entrepreneurs in Amsterdam and Milan

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**Abstract**
Research on migrant transnationalism has mostly focused on particular transnational activities, their salience in various contexts and populations, and their relationship with migrant incorporation. Less attention has been paid to the interplay between the different domains of transnationalism (economic, political, and socio-relational) and to the way in which they affect migrants' identity. This study investigates whether and how one domain of migrant transnationalism—transnational entrepreneurship—influences migrants' (1) transnational involvement in other domains and (2) sense of belonging to different social groups and places. Focusing on the case of Moroccan entrepreneurs in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, and Milan, Italy, we compare transnational migrant entrepreneurs, whose business is based on cross-border relationships and exchanges, with domestic migrant entrepreneurs, who are active exclusively in the destination country. Combining quantitative and qualitative data, we find that transnational entrepreneurs differ from domestic entrepreneurs mostly in terms of socio-relational transnational involvement. On the other hand, transnational entrepreneurship does not substantially change transnational practices in other domains or sense of belonging among Moroccan migrants.

**Keywords**
belonging; migrant entrepreneurship; Moroccan migrants; transnational entrepreneurship; transnationalism

**Issue**
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## 1. Introduction

This article examines transnationalism and sense of belonging among Moroccan migrant entrepreneurs in two increasingly central immigrant destinations in Europe, namely Amsterdam, in the Netherlands, and Milan, in Italy. Taking in consideration transnational involvement in both entrepreneurial activities and other domains, we compare transnational migrant entrepreneurs, whose businesses are based on cross-border exchanges (e.g., regular import/export of goods and services with other countries), with domestic migrant entrepreneurs, who are mostly active in the domestic market of the destination country.

Transnational migrant entrepreneurship has been the subject of one of the most promising research areas on migrant transnationalism in recent years (Ambrosini, 2012). However, little research has been conducted on the ways in which transnational entrepreneurship affects migrants' transnational activities in other domains

and their sense of belonging (Rath, Solano, & Schutjens, 2020). In the broader field of transnationalism studies, research on migrant transnationalism has mostly focused on specific transnational practices, their salience in various contexts and populations, and their relationship with migrant incorporation. We know less about the interplay between transnational practices in different domains (e.g., the economic, socio-cultural, and political domain), and their relationship with migrants' sense of belonging (Diaz-Chorne, Suárez-Lledó, & Rodriguez, 2019; Portes, Guarnizo, & Haller, 2002; Snel, 't Hart, & van Bochove, 2016; Tsuda, 2012). Furthermore, the large majority of studies on transnational entrepreneurship have focused on transnational relationships between migrants and their origin countries, while links with third countries (other than origin and destination) have been mostly ignored (Rath et al., 2020; Solano, 2016a, 2019).

The mixed-methods research presented in this article aims to address these gaps by investigating how transnational entrepreneurship influences migrants' sense of belonging and transnational practices in various domains, involving both the origin country and third countries. Our contribution is threefold. First, we provide new insights on the interplay between transnational behaviours in different domains and between migrants' transnationalism and sense of belonging. Second, while existing literature on migrant entrepreneurship often focuses on economic and business-related transnational practices among migrant entrepreneurs, we examine non-economic transnational behaviours and sense of belonging in this population. Third, unlike most existing studies of migrant transnationalism, we extend the analysis to transnational practices involving both migrants' countries of origin and third countries.

After presenting our theoretical framework and previous research on the topic, we introduce the methodological approach of this research, report the findings, and conclude with a discussion of the main results.

## 2. Background: Migrant Transnationalism

In the last three decades, researchers of migrant transnationalism have extensively analysed the varied and continuing relationships between migrants and their origin societies in the cultural, social, economic, and political domains (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007). Today, international migrants are known to preserve and cultivate networks of relatives, friends and other acquaintances in sending countries, and to often maintain active roles in the economies, politics, and cultures of their origin societies (Levitt & Jaworsky, 2007; Vacca, Solano, Lubbers, Molina, & McCarty, 2018). These "here and there" relationships and interactions also shape migrants' identities (Boccagni, 2012), leading certain migrants to develop multiple and multisite forms of belonging that cut across national borders (Ehrkamp, 2005). Consistently, previous literature on migrant transnationalism has studied both the ways of being (transnational practices and activities) and the ways of belonging (attitudes and identities) of transnational immigrants (Andreotti & Solano, 2019; Boccagni, 2012; Erdal & Oeppen, 2013).

### *2.1. Transnational Practices*

Migrants' transnational practices have different degrees of frequency and involve different domains. Existing literature identifies three main domains of transnational involvement (Guarnizo, Portes, & Haller, 2003; Portes et al., 2002; Snel, Engbersen, & Leerkes, 2006):

- The economic domain refers to migrants' economic activities involving their origin country and/or third countries, including economic exchanges and mobilisation of resources and contacts across national borders. Examples of economic transnationalism are financial remittances to communities of origin, cross-border investments in sending countries, and transnational businesses;
- The political domain refers to migrants' participation in the politics of their origin country, with practices such as voting in elections or establishing political organisations linked to political parties in the origin country;
- The socio-relational domain (sometimes labelled as "sociocultural") refers to the maintenance of social ties between migrants and contacts in the origin country or in third countries, and to migrants' participation in cultural initiatives (such as sports events or religious festivals) which take place in, or are otherwise strongly connected to, the origin country.

Intersecting with this three-way categorisation of transnational activities, González-Rábago and Blanco (2016) describe two additional, cross-cutting dimensions of migrant transnationalism: the degree of transnational involvement, which can take the form of a broad interest or specific and concrete actions; and the sphere where transnational practices take place, which can be the personal or the social sphere. Based on these two dimensions, four types of transnational practices can be identified: personal interest (e.g., interactions with family members in the origin country); social interest (e.g., seeking information on the origin country's political situation in the media); personal action (e.g., visiting relatives and friends, sending financial remittances); social action (e.g., voting at national elections, participating in political associations in the origin country).

Different degrees and types of migrant transnationalism are also described by Engbersen, Leerkes, Grabowska-Lusinska, Snel, and Burgers (2013) in their study of labour migration and transnational practices of Central and Eastern European migrants. They identify four different types of migrants, including two which are particularly relevant to our analysis: "bi-nationals,"

with strong links and attachments to both the origin and the destination country; and "settlers," with weak links and attachments to the origin country. In our study, transnational Moroccan entrepreneurs are analogous to bi-national immigrants in this classification, while domestic Moroccan entrepreneurs are comparable to the settlers.

Migrants may be involved in transnational activities in one or more domains (Levitt, 2001). Some literature suggests that the different domains of transnational practices tend to be linked, with the involvement in one domain increasing activity in another (Engbersen et al., 2013; Guarnizo et al., 2003; Portes et al., 2002; Snel et al., 2006, 2016; van Bochove, Rusinovic, & Engbersen, 2010). For example, in their study of migrants in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, van Bochove et al. (2010) show that transnational economic activities (sending remittances or owning a house in the origin country) influenced transnational practices in other, non-economic domains. Yet very few studies have considered the question of whether and how conducting a transnational business, in particular, influences migrants' transnational practices in spheres other than entrepreneurial or economic activities. In one of these studies, Ren and Liu (2015) show that Chinese transnational entrepreneurs in Singapore are engaged in transnational political organisation and socio-cultural practices in China, as part of a strategy to accumulate economic and social resources.

### *2.2. Sense of Belonging*

In addition to actions and behaviours in different domains, migrant transnationalism may also entail the redefinition of traditional identities and sense of belonging in multiple, multi-sited, and multi-scalar forms (Ehrkamp, 2005; Rouvoet, Eijberts, & Ghorashi, 2017; Wotherspoon, 2018). Migrants establish attachments and affiliations with multiple social groups, linking to different sites (e.g., destination and origin countries), and involving different spatial scales (e.g., the national and the local scale). These identifications are not mutually exclusive (Phalet & Swyngedouw, 2002). The identification with the origin country remains strong for most migrants, but it may coexist with identification with the destination country (Ehrkamp, 2005; Snel et al., 2016). Furthermore, in the destination country, migrants may develop forms of attachment at both the national and the local scale, such as the city or the neighbourhood (Jacobs, Phalet, & Swyngedouw, 2006). Migrants may also strongly identify with different social groups which are not necessarily related to their national origin, such as migrants from other nationalities or particular groups of native-born people (e.g., professional or interest-based) in the destination country.

The potentially simultaneous attachments to different groups, places and scales, and the interplay between these and actual transnational behaviours have rarely been investigated (Tsuda, 2012). However, a substantial body of literature suggests that migrants' identities and sense of belonging are strictly linked to transnational activities (Ehrkamp, 2005; Groenewold & de Valk, 2017; Ley, 2013; Louie, 2006; Snel et al., 2006, 2016). For example, research in the Netherlands shows that higher involvement in transnational activities is associated with stronger attachment of migrants to people in their origin country (Snel et al., 2016). Similarly, Louie (2006) demonstrates that frequent back-and-forth movements of Dominican immigrants in the US are associated with feelings of attachment to the Dominican Republic.

## **3. Research Questions, Data and Methodology**

### *3.1. Research Questions*

We study Moroccan entrepreneurs in Amsterdam and Milan to address two central research questions:

> RQ1. How does transnational entrepreneurship influence transnational practices in other domains?
>
> RQ2. How does transnational entrepreneurship shape migrants' sense of belonging?

We conceptualise migrant transnationalism as encompassing cross-border activities in the economic, political, or socio-relational domain, involving either the migrant's origin country (Morocco) or third countries (e.g., Belgium, France, United Arab Emirates, etc.). We expect that transnational entrepreneurs conduct more transnational activities in all domains compared to domestic entrepreneurs, as suggested by existing literature (Engbersen et al., 2013; Guarnizo et al., 2003; Portes et al., 2002; Ren & Liu, 2015; van Bochove et al., 2010).

Furthermore, we hypothesise that transnational entrepreneurs develop a different sense of belonging compared to domestic entrepreneurs, consistent with existing research on transnationalism (Ehrkamp, 2005; Groenewold & de Valk, 2017; Ley, 2013; Snel et al., 2006, 2016). In particular, we expect Moroccan transnational entrepreneurs to feel a stronger sense of identification with their origin country and co-nationals, compared to domestic entrepreneurs.

### *3.2. Moroccan Migrant Entrepreneurs in Amsterdam and Milan: Sample and Descriptive Statistics*

We analyse data on first-generation Moroccan entrepreneurs in Amsterdam and Milan, including transnational and domestic entrepreneurs. Amsterdam and Milan are two particularly interesting contexts to study and compare, because their differences in migration history and migrant population may influence the activities and identities of migrant entrepreneurs in the two cities (Solano, 2016b). Amsterdam and the Netherlands have a longer, 60-year-old history as a migrant destination, with the pioneer Moroccan immigrants hav-

ing arrived there in the 1960s. By contrast, the first Moroccan immigrants did not arrive in Milan and Italy until the late 1980s (Bijwaard, 2010; Colombo & Sciortino, 2004). As a result, the migrant populations in the two cities are in part different. Both cities have a substantial number of migrant residents, but the number of people of Moroccan background is significantly higher in Amsterdam than in Milan. About 19,000 Moroccan immigrants lived in the Milan area in 2019 (0.7% of the total population; Istat, 2019), compared to 77,000 Moroccan residents in the Amsterdam area (9% of the total population; Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2019). The relative numbers of migrant entrepreneurs slightly differ in the two cities, with migrant entrepreneurs being 33% of the whole immigrant population in Amsterdam (Rath & Eurofound, 2011), and 29% in Milan (Chamber of Commerce of Milan, 2019). There were about 3,100 Moroccan entrepreneurs in the Milan area in 2018 (Chamber of Commerce of Milan, 2019), representing 2.5% of all entrepreneurs in the city. While data on the national origin of migrant entrepreneurs are not available for Amsterdam, we know that there were about 8,400 Moroccan entrepreneurs in the Netherlands in 2009 (0.6% of all entrepreneurs; Chamber of Commerce of Amsterdam, 2009).

The data for this study were collected from individual entrepreneurs and include information on individual experiences, strategies, practices, business relations, and resources and narratives of research participants. We employ a mixed-methods approach, analysing both individual survey data (e.g., about transnational practices) and in-depth qualitative interviews with migrant entrepreneurs.

Following qualitative typologies (Silverman, 2013), research participants were recruited to capture different types of business among Moroccan entrepreneurs. To obtain a comprehensive picture of Moroccan entrepreneurial activities in each city, four sources of participant contacts were used: (1) a list of entrepreneurs provided by the Milan Chamber of Commerce, with the indication of the business sector (e.g., import/export) and a short business description (no list was available for Amsterdam); (2) contacts from Moroccan associations with a significant role in the Moroccan communities of Amsterdam and Milan (e.g., Moroccan business networks and Islamic cultural associations); (3) entrepreneurs' business cards and advertisement materials left in shops and stores; and (4) Moroccan shops and stores that were visible in ethnic and central neighbourhoods of Amsterdam and Milan.

Seventy interviews were conducted in 2013–2014, with participants including transnational (N = 35) and domestic (N = 35) entrepreneurs living in Amsterdam (N = 30) and Milan (N = 40). Most research participants were male (N = 54), middle-aged (about 40 years old), with a medium-high level of education. This is in line with the sex, age, and education distributions in the most recent data from OECD (2010) about migrant entrepreneurs in Italy and the Netherlands. Following suggestions from previous research on migrant entrepreneurship (Rath & Schutjens, 2016), we recruited entrepreneurs in both the goods (N = 45) and services (N = 25) sectors, and with both ethnic (N = 27) and non-ethnic or mainstream (N = 43) businesses. Participants usually owned small businesses, with only a minority of them (less than 20%) having more than four employees.

### *3.3. Measures and Analyses*

The main goal of our analysis is to compare transnational and domestic Moroccan entrepreneurs in terms of transnational involvement and sense of belonging. Thus, our first set of dependent variables consists of measures of transnational involvement. We measure transnational practices in three different domains: economic, political, and socio-relational. In addition, we distinguish between transnational practices related to the origin country and those involving a third country. First, we collected information on different types of economic transnational practices (not directly related to the migrant's business), such as sending financial remittances, making financial investments, or owning property in the origin country or third countries. Second, we use measures of political transnational practices that capture political participation and interest in the origin country, such as reading newspapers about origin country politics, participating in social and political actions and associations linked to the origin country, or voting in origin country elections. Third, we employ measures of socio-relational transnational activities such as travels abroad (both in origin and third countries) not related to business, and regular contacts with friends and family abroad (a list of all survey items about transnational practices is in Table A1 in the Supplementary File).

We cross-classify transnational practices by domain (economic, political, or socio-relational) and by target country (Morocco or third country), resulting in five transnationalism indexes. For the political domain, we only consider practices related to Morocco, since there was no substantial level of transnational political activity involving a third country. Following a similar procedure to other transnationalism studies (e.g., Groenewold & de Valk, 2017), the five indexes are sums of dummy items, each indicating whether the migrant conducts (1) or not (0) a certain transnational activity (see the Supplementary File for more details). Thus, the five indexes can be interpreted as a count of the number of different activities the migrant conducts for each transnationalism domain and target country (e.g., economic transnationalism involving Morocco for Index 1, socio-relational transnationalism involving third countries for Index 5).

Our second set of dependent variables consists of measures for the migrant's sense of belonging to different groups and places (see Table A2 in the Supplementary File for details). In line with existing mea-

sures of attachment and belonging (e.g., Snel et al., 2006), we asked respondents to indicate to what extent they felt close to a given group or place on a scale from 0 to 10. We considered the following four groups: natives of the destination country (i.e., Dutch people in the Amsterdam survey, Italian people in the Milan survey); Moroccan people in general; Moroccan people in the same destination country; and non-Moroccan immigrants in the same destination country. We also considered the following five places: the neighbourhood where the respondent lives; the city of destination; the city of origin; the country of immigration; and the origin country. Therefore, we have nine scales for sense of belonging, all treated as dependent variables.

Our main independent variable is whether or not the migrant entrepreneur conducts a transnational business, that is, one fundamentally based on cross-border exchanges and relationships. Following previous literature on transnational entrepreneurship (Portes et al., 2002; Rusinovic, 2008), our survey asked respondents whether a significant component of their business was based on relationships with Morocco or with countries other than the migrant's destination country (the Netherlands or Italy). To assess the validity of responses, answers to this key survey question were further probed in the subsequent in-depth, semi-structured interviews. Furthermore, the survey collected additional information on the type and degree of transnational business practices, for example with questions about business-related investments in Morocco, trade relationships with other countries, or the number of business-related travels abroad. Confirming the validity of the question we used to distinguish transnational and domestic entrepreneurs, our data show that, on average, entrepreneurs we classified as transnational are involved in four types of business-related transnational activities, while entrepreneurs we classified as domestic are involved in no business-related transnational activity (this difference is statistically significant; Wilcoxon rank-sum test $Z = -6.753$, p-value $= 0.00$).

Our indexes of transnational involvement and sense of belonging are non-normally distributed count variables. Therefore, we first use nonparametric bivariate tests (the Wilcoxon rank-sum test and the Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed-ranks test) to compare these indexes between transnational and domestic migrant entrepreneurs. Differences between transnational and domestic entrepreneurs, however, could be linked to intervening variables unrelated to transnational entrepreneurial activity, such as other business or personal characteristics (Brzozowski, Cucculelli, & Surdej, 2017; Snel et al., 2016). To assess if this is the case, in addition to the bivariate analysis, we also present results from Poisson regression models for count dependent variables. These allow us to control for the potentially confounding effects of the following characteristics: business type (ethnic or mainstream business); business age (years since business initiation); city (Amsterdam or Milan); sex of migrant (female or male); marital status of migrant (non-married or married); educational level of migrant (low-medium or high-medium); age at migration; number of years since migration; and number of close relatives the migrant has in the destination country. Additional results from negative binomial regression (not reported, available from the authors) show no overdispersion, indicating that Poisson regression is an appropriate modelling strategy for our dependent variables.

The quantitative analysis is integrated with an examination of the in-depth, qualitative interviews with migrant entrepreneurs, which shed more light on the reasons behind the differences between transnational and domestic entrepreneurs observed in the quantitative data. Throughout the interviews, respondents discussed a variety of reasons for their transnational practices. Respondents were also explicitly asked whether there had been any change in their transnational contacts and activities, or in their identification with specific groups and places, since they had started the business; what type of changes there had been; and whether they believed those changes to be related with their entrepreneurial activity.

## 4. Findings: Transnationalism and Belonging among Transnational and Domestic Moroccan Entrepreneurs

### *4.1. How Does Transnational Entrepreneurship Influence Other Transnational Practices?*

Contrary to our expectations, transnational entrepreneurs exhibit significantly higher levels of transnational involvement than domestic entrepreneurs only in the socio-relational domain (with both the origin country and third countries), but not in the economic and political domains (Table 1). In particular, in comparison to domestic entrepreneurs, Moroccan transnational entrepreneurs spend more days in Morocco in a year and travel more frequently to their origin country. However, in the socio-relational domain, transnational entrepreneurs do not report more frequent contacts with either relatives or friends in Morocco.

However, while transnational and domestic entrepreneurs seem not to differ in terms of contacts with relatives (in Morocco or other countries) they are significantly different in terms of contacts with friends abroad (both Moroccan and of other nationalities), with transnational entrepreneurs reporting more frequent contacts. Furthermore, transnational entrepreneurs report to more frequently participate in development projects in Morocco compared to domestic entrepreneurs.

These differences hold when other business or individual characteristics are controlled for in Poisson regression models (Table 2). Being a transnational entrepreneur is significantly and positively associated with the degree of socio-relational transnational involvement with both Morocco and other countries. Figure 1 compares the index of socio-relational transnational involve-

**Table 1.** Number of transnational practices by domains: transnational and domestic entrepreneurs.

| Transnational Practices | Median | Mean | Z | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Index of economic transnationalism—Morocco (0–4)** | | | | |
| Domestic entrepreneurs | 1 | 1 | −1.369 | 0.17 |
| Transnational entrepreneurs | 1 | 1.34 | | |
| **Index of economic transnationalism—Other countries (0–4)** | | | | |
| Domestic entrepreneurs | 0 | 0.09 | −0.835 | 0.40 |
| Transnational entrepreneurs | 0 | 0.17 | | |
| **Index of political transnationalism (0–5)** | | | | |
| Domestic entrepreneurs | 1 | 1.08 | −1.472 | 0.14 |
| Transnational entrepreneurs | 1 | 1.23 | | |
| **Index of socio-relational transnationalism—Morocco (0–6)** | | | | |
| Domestic entrepreneurs | 3 | 2.89 | −2.427 | **0.02** |
| Transnational entrepreneurs | 4 | 3.83 | | |
| *Participation in development projects in Morocco (0–1)* | | | | |
| Domestic entrepreneurs | 0 | 0.09 | −2.373 | **0.02** |
| Transnational entrepreneurs | 0 | 0.32 | | |
| *Frequency of provision of support to people living in Morocco (0–3)* | | | | |
| Domestic entrepreneurs | 1 | 0.86 | −1.957 | **0.05** |
| Transnational entrepreneurs | 1 | 1.29 | | |
| *Number of trips to Morocco* | | | | |
| Domestic entrepreneurs | 1 | 1.03 | −3.637 | **0.00** |
| Transnational entrepreneurs | 2 | 2.34 | | |
| *Time spent in Morocco (days in a year)* | | | | |
| Domestic entrepreneurs | 7 | 8.83 | −3.289 | **0.01** |
| Transnational entrepreneurs | 30 | 27.37 | | |
| **Index of socio-relational transnationalism—Other countries (0–5)** | | | | |
| Domestic entrepreneurs | 1 | 1.14 | −2.234 | **0.03** |
| Transnational entrepreneurs | 2 | 1.91 | | |
| *Frequency of contacts with Moroccan friends in other countries* | | | | |
| Domestic entrepreneurs | 0 | 0.54 | −2.290 | **0.02** |
| Transnational entrepreneurs | 1 | 1.17 | | |
| *Frequency of contacts with non-Moroccan friends in other countries* | | | | |
| Domestic entrepreneurs | 0 | 0.2 | −3.387 | **0.00** |
| Transnational entrepreneurs | 1 | 0.94 | | |

Notes: Specific transnational practices within each index are reported when the difference between transnational and domestic entrepreneurs is significant. See Table A3 in the Supplementary File for the complete results. Z and p are the test statistic and p-value, respectively, from Wilcoxon rank-sum tests. Bold p-value indicates test significance at 5% level.

ment that the model predicts for transnational versus domestic Moroccan entrepreneurs. With all other business and individual characteristics being equal, transnational entrepreneurs engage, on average, in one more type of socio-relational transnational activity with Morocco (about four activities) compared to domestic entrepreneurs (about three activities). Similarly, the average transnational entrepreneur engages in two types of socio-relational transnational activities with third countries, while the average domestic entrepreneur engages in one. Interestingly, the context of reception does not seem to make any difference, with Moroccan transnational entrepreneurs in Amsterdam and Milan showing the same average levels of socio-relational transnationalism. Poisson regression models for the degree of transnational involvement in the economic and political domain show no significant differences between transnational and domestic entrepreneurs (results not shown), similar to the bivariate analysis.

The qualitative interviews reveal some of the reasons and processes behind the higher level of socio-relational transnational involvement among transnational entrepreneurs. Such involvement seems mainly linked to business relations, including relations with customers, suppliers, and other business partners abroad. Some of the contacts that Moroccan transnational entrepreneurs establish for business reasons, in Morocco or in third countries, later become friends. This is reported by several entrepreneurs among our research participants:

> For the business, I developed relationships that I can define as friendships. For example, when I go to China, they are happy to meet me, we go out, to have dinner, visit places, etc. (M07)

**Table 2.** Poisson regressions.

| Variables | Model 1 | | Model 2 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | B | SE | B | SE |
| Transnational entrepreneur | 0.29 * | 0.15 | 0.47 ** | 0.22 |
| Type of business (0—ethnic; 1—mainstream) | 0.18 | 0.14 | 0.17 | 0.21 |
| Business age (years since business initiation) | 0.22 | 0.15 | 0.60 *** | 0.24 |
| City (0—Milan; 1—Amsterdam) | −0.14 | 0.15 | −0.03 | 0.23 |
| Sex (0—female; 1—male;) | 0.02 | 0.16 | −0.11 | 0.24 |
| Marital status (0—non-married; 1—married) | −0.09 | 0.20 | −0.33 | 0.30 |
| Medium–high education level | 0.07 | 0.16 | 0.69 ** | 0.29 |
| Age at migration | −0.02 * | 0.01 | −0.01 | 0.01 |
| Number of years since migration | 0.02 | 0.02 | 0.04 | 0.03 |
| Number of close relatives in the destination country | −0.01 | 0.01 | −0.01 | 0.01 |
| *Constant* | 1.08 * | 0.49 | −1.05 | 0.75 |
| *N* | 70 | 70 | | |
| *R2* | 0.0471 | 0.1066 | | |

Notes: Dependent variable is the degree of socio-relational transnational practices with Morocco (Model 1) or other countries (Model 2). Age is not included because it is highly correlated with age at migration ($r = 0.7$, $p = 0.00$) and number of years since migration ($r = 0.6$, $p = 0.00$). * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.03$; *** $p < 0.01$.

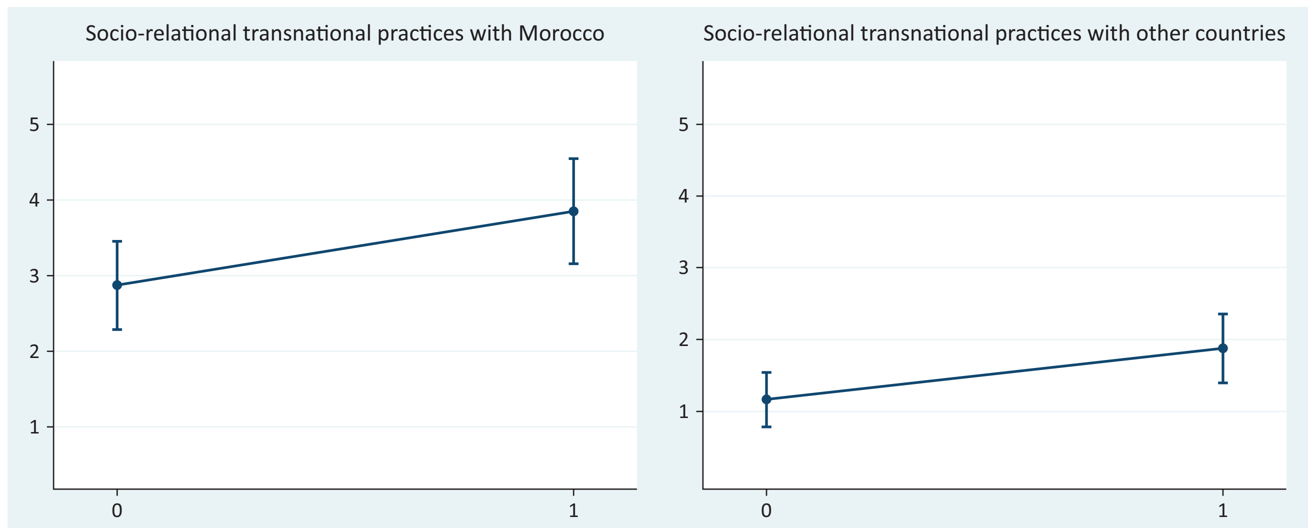


**Figure 1.** Predicted counts of socio-relational transnational practices with Morocco and third countries (Y-axis) for domestic (0) and transnational (1) entrepreneurs (X-axis) from models in Table 2.

> After working with a person for a while, you establish a friendship. I have become friends with one of my clients. I have a very dear Indian friend who works in the Emirates for a client. We established a friendship that goes beyond the work. (M09)

> It is clear that having to deal with people abroad for work you cannot help but also develop personal relationships with the people you deal with. So, I developed relations as a friend with some business contacts. We chat beyond work. (M40)

> I do think it has led me to develop more contacts abroad. If you have business contacts abroad, especially for a longer period of time, non-business contacts tend to form around those. For example, you are going to dinner with a business contact, and that person invites more people, then you create contacts with other people. (A11)

> I think my contacts have been slightly increased because many of the people I met for the business are now almost friends for me. And sometimes I keep in contact with them also not for business issues. (A13)

> I meet new people [living abroad] every day for the business, and sometimes they become friends. (A26)

Transnational entrepreneurs' more frequent and longer trips to Morocco seem due to the fact that when entrepreneurs travel abroad for work, they also take more time to enjoy Morocco and spend leisure time there.

This combination of work and leisure time in the origin country emerges in multiple interviews with Moroccan transnational entrepreneurs. M11, who imports and retails Arab clothes for women, is a case in point. When she goes to Morocco to buy clothes and other products, she often spends "time with people there, visit[s] several places….It's a combination of work and leisure though." The same goes for M12, a courier between Italy and Morocco: "[I] started the business to maintain links with Morocco and my city of origin. When I go there to bring the stuff, I always stay there more than I would need to stay for the business." Interestingly, M12 is the only case in which the entrepreneur deliberately chose the transnational business to keep contacts with people in Morocco. In M12's story, a pre-existing high involvement in transnational social networks leads the migrant to start a transnational business. In most other cases, however, the opposite causal direction is at work, with the migrants' transnational businesses leading them to travel more and establish more social ties with Morocco and other countries.

In contrast, interviews with domestic entrepreneurs describe a business that more firmly ties the migrant entrepreneur to the destination country (the Netherlands or Italy) and does not facilitate social contacts abroad or other transnational activities. When asked if there had been any change in their contacts and activities abroad related to their business, research participants with domestic businesses reported no change or even a decrease in transnational involvement:

> No, I have my business here….Everything is here now. I have less contact with Morocco than before. (M22)

> No, not at all. It stayed the same as I have no business connection abroad. (A10)

*4.2. How Does Transnational Entrepreneurship Influence Migrants' Sense of Belonging?*

No significant differences emerged between transnational and domestic entrepreneurs in terms of the sense of belonging, either in the bivariate analysis (Table A3 in the Supplementary File) or in the regression analyses (results not reported). During the interviews, participants suggested some of the reasons behind these results. They made clear that their sense of belonging is by and large not related to the business, whose establishment and development did not change the extent to which they feel close to any given place or group. In particular, almost every transnational entrepreneur we interviewed indicated that their business had not changed their feelings towards particular groups or places. The entrepreneurial activity, be it transnational or domestic, is perceived by migrant entrepreneurs as mostly related to "work" and "money," with little bearing on deeper feelings and identities. According to M04, the owner of an import/export business in Milan, "my feelings haven't changed….They are not really influenced by my business. The business is a way to earn money, that's it." Comments by other participants who own a transnational business reveal a similar view:

> The business is just work, it doesn't change you….I don't think that my feelings have changed since or due to the business start-up. (M06)

> I have my feelings, for example, I consider myself really close to Italy and Italians…but this is linked to the fact that I have been in Italy for 25 years. If I had conducted another kind of business, I would have had the same feelings. (M07)

> My feelings are not changed due to business activity, they stayed the same. I don't think that conducting the business changes your feelings. (A20)

The same goes for domestic entrepreneurs, who affirmed that the business has not considerably changed the way they feel towards different places and groups. For example, M34, who owns a bakery in Milan, explained that she feels "close to Italy, but this is linked to my husband and my daughter." A19, a greengrocer in Amsterdam, expressed a similar idea: "I really feel like an Amsterdammer [a person living in Amsterdam]. I really like the country but especially the city. But the business hasn't changed much. I already loved it here. And I still do."

Therefore, overall, conducting a transnational business does not seem to have an impact on migrants' sense of belonging. However, interesting differences emerge when more closely examining the sense of attachment to different groups and places among transnational and domestic entrepreneurs. For example, we tested whether transnational entrepreneurs tend to report higher closeness scores to native-born people than they do to Moroccan migrants. We then conducted the same analysis for domestic entrepreneurs. We found three main results (Table 3). First, Moroccan entrepreneurs generally tend to feel closer to native-born individuals in destination countries, than to other Moroccan immigrants. This holds for both domestic and transnational entrepreneurs. Second, Moroccan entrepreneurs feel closer to Moroccan migrants than they do to immigrants in general. This pattern is also similar among both domestic and transnational entrepreneurs.

Third, Moroccan domestic entrepreneurs feel closer to both natives and Moroccans in general than they do to Moroccan migrants. This result does not hold for transnational entrepreneurs, who report similar levels of closeness to Moroccan migrants, natives, and Moroccans in general. Interviews with Moroccan domestic entrepreneurs suggest some of the reasons behind this difference. Domestic entrepreneurs often recount business-related problems they had with other Moroccan migrants in the Netherlands or Italy:

**Table 3.** Comparison between the sense of belonging towards different groups.

| Sense of belonging to (0–10) | Median | Mean | Z | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Natives vs. non-Moroccan migrants** | | | | |
| *Domestic entrepreneurs* | | | | |
| Natives | 8 | 7.63 | 4.34 | **0.00** |
| Non-Moroccan migrants | 6 | 5.71 | | |
| *Transnational entrepreneurs* | | | | |
| Natives | 8 | 7.22 | 3.74 | **0.00** |
| Non-Moroccan migrants | 6 | 5.83 | | |
| **Natives vs. Moroccan migrants** | | | | |
| *Domestic entrepreneurs* | | | | |
| Natives | 8 | 7.63 | 2.72 | **0.01** |
| Moroccan migrants | 7 | 6.26 | | |
| *Transnational entrepreneurs* | | | | |
| Natives | 8 | 7.22 | 0.50 | **0.62** |
| Moroccan migrants | 8 | 6.63 | | |
| **Moroccan group in general vs. Moroccan migrants** | | | | |
| *Domestic entrepreneurs* | | | | |
| Moroccan group in general | 8 | 7.63 | 2.86 | **0.01** |
| Moroccan migrants | 8 | 7.51 | | |
| *Transnational entrepreneurs* | | | | |
| Moroccan group in general | 8 | 7.22 | 1.19 | **0.23** |
| Moroccan migrants | 8 | 7.26 | | |
| **Non-Moroccan migrants vs. Moroccan migrants** | | | | |
| *Domestic entrepreneurs* | | | | |
| Non-Moroccan migrants | 6 | 5.71 | −1.81 | 0.07 |
| Moroccan migrants | 8 | 7.51 | | |
| *Transnational entrepreneurs* | | | | |
| Non-Moroccan migrants | 6 | 5.83 | −2.43 | **0.02** |
| Moroccan migrants | 8 | 7.26 | | |

Notes: Z and p are the test statistic and p-value, respectively, from Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed-ranks tests. Bold p-value indicates test significance at 5% level.

> It changed my attitude towards Moroccans here. As soon as I started earning some money, they started to ask for favours. They approached me for interest. So, now I don't feel very close to them. (M19)

> I saw many co-nationals misbehaving…especially for my business. So I don't like when they do it. (M36)

> When I opened the business, I got more in touch with more and more Dutch people so my feelings towards Holland became more and more positive. People are so nice and open. Moroccan people talk behind each other back and Dutch people just say what they think. (A21)

These interviews suggest that excessive expectations and claims made by co-national social networks to successful migrant entrepreneurs ("they started to ask for favours"), as well as business-related competition and conflicts with other Moroccan migrants, may lead to lower attachment of domestic entrepreneurs to co-national migrants. On the other hand, negative experiences with co-national migrants are not common in the narratives of transnational entrepreneurs. Only M15, who owns a translation business, mentioned that "through the business, I also saw the bad side of my co-nationals and this made me change my attitude towards Moroccans here." This is not casual, however, as M15 is the research participant whose transnational business is the most similar to a domestic one: While she maintains professional connections with embassies around Europe, her clientele is mostly local.

As for feelings towards different places, we found that transnational entrepreneurs are less attached to their destination neighbourhood than they are to the destination city and country, while this difference does not hold for domestic entrepreneurs. This is confirmed by the qualitative interviews. Domestic entrepreneurs in the sample frequently stress that they feel close to their destination neighbourhood and explain how this is in part linked to their business. For example, M30 owns a café in Milan. Her shop is now "a meeting point for the neighbours…especially the elders. They come inside the café to chat, ask for some help or a favour. For example, I keep the keys of their apartments when they are on holiday…just in case." She explains that "thanks to that, I really feel at home here in the area." Similar dynamics were found in other stories, such as M37's, who is a hair-

**Table 4.** Comparison between the sense of belonging towards different places.

| Sense of belonging to (0–10) | Median | Mean | Z | p |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Destination neighbourhood vs. destination country** | | | | |
| *Domestic entrepreneurs* | | | | |
| Destination neighbourhood | 8 | 7.14 | −0.74 | 0.46 |
| Destination country | 8 | 7.7 | | |
| *Transnational entrepreneurs* | | | | |
| Destination neighbourhood | 7 | 6.3 | −2.75 | **0.01** |
| Destination country | 8 | 7.5 | | |
| **Destination neighbourhood vs. destination city** | | | | |
| *Domestic entrepreneurs* | | | | |
| Destination neighbourhood | 8 | 7.14 | −1.19 | 0.24 |
| Destination city | 8 | 7.77 | | |
| *Transnational entrepreneurs* | | | | |
| Destination neighbourhood | 7 | 6.3 | −2.86 | **0.01** |
| Destination city | 8 | 7.57 | | |

Notes: Z and p are the test statistic and p-value, respectively, from Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed-ranks tests. Bold p-value indicates test significance at 5% level.

dresser, and A01's, who owns a fish shop. By contrast, the neighbourhood dimension does not appear in the narratives of the transnational entrepreneurs we interviewed.

In conclusion, running a domestic business seems to play a significant role in shaping migrants' local identifications—e.g., toward the destination neighbourhood or co-national immigrants. By contrast, this link is less pronounced when it comes to transnational entrepreneurs.

Our data collection took place in 2013–2014, immediately after the Arab Spring events (2010–2012) produced historical political and social changes in North African and Middle Eastern countries, including Morocco. While one may suspect that these historical events may have substantially changed Moroccan entrepreneurs' feelings and attitudes towards Morocco, our respondents clarified at multiple points in the interviews that the Arab Spring and the evolving Moroccan political situation did not influence their (concrete and emotional) links with the country.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

This article compared Moroccan migrant entrepreneurs with domestic and transnational businesses to answer the question of whether transnational entrepreneurship fundamentally changes migrants' transnational practices in other domains, as well as their sense of belonging to different places and social groups. We used data from mixed-methods research with Moroccan entrepreneurs in two European cities that have become major destinations of immigration to Europe—Amsterdam and Milan.

We found that transnational entrepreneurship has a significant influence on migrants' transnational practices and sense of belonging, but one that is mostly limited to the socio-relational domain. Our starting hypothesis, that transnational entrepreneurs conduct more transnational activities across different domains of social life, is only partially supported. Compared to their domestic counterparts, Moroccan transnational entrepreneurs show more transnational involvement in the socio-relational dimension, with more frequent or intense practices such as travelling abroad (to Morocco or third countries) and maintaining social ties with third countries. However, we found no systematic differences between transnational and domestic entrepreneurs concerning political and economic transnational practices not related to the business. Thus, while some previous research has suggested that transnational economic activities are positively associated with transnational practices in other domains (e.g., van Bochove et al., 2010), our results indicate that this does not extend to transnational business activities, at least in the case of Moroccan entrepreneurs.

Previous literature (e.g., Brzozowski et al., 2017; Portes et al., 2002) has mostly studied transnational entrepreneurship as a form of social and economic adaptation in receiving countries. Our findings show that transnational entrepreneurship also increases engagement in socio-relational practices with the origin of society and third countries. This increase seems strictly related to the business. Research participants who own transnational businesses explain that when they travel or establish contacts abroad for business reasons, new opportunities arise for visiting and staying in Morocco, as well as for developing friendships that go beyond business and market transactions. We also find that the longer a business has been in place, the higher the socio-relational transnational involvement of migrant entrepreneurs is with third countries, while there is no similar effect on socio-relational transnationalism with the origin country. This suggests that (transnational) business activities lead migrants to develop increasingly heterogeneous and extensive cross-border ties, involving

multiple countries other than the destination country (Solano, 2019). Furthermore, the transnational involvement of Moroccan entrepreneurs does not vary by business industry or sector.

Adopting González-Rábago and Blanco's (2016) classification of transnationalism spheres, our results suggest that the social spheres of transnationalism (interest in Morocco, voting, and associative behaviours) are not particularly influenced by transnational entrepreneurship. By contrast, transnational businesses have a substantial influence on the personal spheres of action, with transnational entrepreneurs spending more time visiting relatives and friends and supporting people in Morocco more frequently than domestic entrepreneurs. The business seems to have an impact on the personal interest sphere too, but to a lesser extent as transnational entrepreneurs' cross-border social contacts are more frequent only with people living in third countries. On the other hand, transnational entrepreneurs in our sample do not report more frequent contacts with family and friends in the origin country. This is consistent with Engbersen and colleagues' (2013) findings that, in the Netherlands, "bi-national" migrants (similar to transnational entrepreneurs in our study) have as many contacts as "settlers" (analogous to domestic entrepreneurs) with family and friends in the origin country.

We consistently find the same association between transnational entrepreneurship and socio-relational transnationalism among Moroccan immigrants in both Amsterdam and Milan. Thus, this relationship does not seem to be fundamentally altered by differences between migrants' reception contexts (e.g., different size of the Moroccan population in Amsterdam versus Milan).

Conducting a transnational business, on the other hand, does not appear to affect migrants' sense of belonging. Participants in our research explain that the business does not essentially change their perceptions of different groups and places, because "it is just work." Thus, our expectation that transnational entrepreneurs develop a different sense of belonging compared to domestic entrepreneurs is not supported. These results are in partial contrast with Snel et al.'s (2016) finding that transnational economic activities are associated with greater identification with co-nationals in the origin country. The question of whether and how transnational economic activities, including entrepreneurship, influence migrants' identities and sense of belonging has important policy implications and merits further research. A recurrent, sometimes implicit idea in public and political discourse about migrant transnationalism is that transnational involvement facilitates identification with origin communities and co-ethnic groups at the expense of receiving countries and societies. This would allegedly promote mixed loyalties that are in contrast with the principles of citizenship in destination countries (Bloemraad, Korteweg, & Yurdakul, 2008). Our findings do not support this idea, showing that Moroccan transnational entrepreneurs maintain similar types of identities and sense of belonging as domestic entrepreneurs. In policymaking, this suggests that transnational entrepreneurship could be supported as a viable migrant adaptation strategy that would not be in conflict with migrants' "loyalty" to destination countries.

Our results are also in line with previous literature showing that transnational entrepreneurs generally start their business for reasons of economic and financial opportunity, and as a vehicle of empowerment, rather than to remain connected with or do something for their origin communities (Rusinovic, 2008; Solano, 2019; Vershinina, Rodgers, Mcadam, & Clinton, 2019). The increased transnational contacts with Morocco or third countries are a by-product, rather than an intended goal, of transnational entrepreneurship. This seems to contradict, at least in part, the argument made by recent literature on Moroccan migration (de Haas, 2009; de Haas & Fokkema, 2011) that economic integration and transnational ties are often a way to maintain links with and return to the homeland.

On a final note, this study's limitations, including the use of a non-probability sample, the focus on a single national group, and the cross-sectional data, suggest multiple avenues for future research. Further quantitative research based on larger probability samples and including either multiple national groups or multiple time points would provide more robust and generalisable results. A longitudinal approach would also help to disentangle the direction of causality between transnational entrepreneurship, on the one hand, and overall transnational involvement and sense of belonging, on the other.

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**Conflict of Interests**

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

**Supplementary Material**

Supplementary material for this article is available online in the format provided by the authors (unedited).

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Article

# Managing Multiplicity: Adult Children of Post-Independence Nigerians and Belonging in Britain

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**Abstract**

Migration remains a contentious and divisive topic, particularly with the rise of xenophobia and far right ideologies, which seek to demonize migrants as neither belonging nor welcome in the host society. This reduction leaves the realities of postcolonial migrants as misunderstood and misrepresented. Particularly misunderstood are the children of post-colonial migrants, who were born and raised in the UK by families seeking to better themselves in the 'Mother land,' while also aiming to maintain connectivity to traditions and practices from homelands. For some children born in the UK to Nigerian émigrés, family crises precipitated the need for alternative care arrangements, entailing recourse to fostering, boarding schools, or institutional care for periods of time during childhood. Conflicts between British society's and parents' cultural values, overt racism and hostility from host society, and differential experiences of extra-family care have impressed upon these children, now adults, both their multiple exclusions and potential belongings. As a result of their traumatic experiences, these adults, now in their 50s and 60s, embody multiculturalism in their abilities to embrace, navigate, and endure in a host country that expresses unwillingness at best and outright hostility at worst toward their presence as UK nationals and progeny of the project of Empire. While continuing to be framed by harsh micro- and macro-conditions, these adult children reveal that belonging can be self-determined through choices on how and with whom they choose to live and grow.

**Keywords**

belonging; children; decolonization; family; fostering; migration; Nigerians; post-colonialism; racism

**Issue**

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## 1. Introduction

This article concerns a small sample of second-generation children born to mid-20th century Nigerian émigrés to the UK and aims to understand their experiences of belonging and identity in British society, amid the occurrence of extra-family care within the UK. This article focuses on three individuals who, in addition to being born to Nigerian émigrés, also spent some or all of their childhoods outside of their natal households and in an institutionalized form of care—in a foster home, in a care home, or in boarding school—in the UK. The article recounts some of their challenges for belonging in relation to their parents' cultures, while also coping with the hostilities of being both 'other' and British. Not aiming to represent the experience of all children born in the UK to Nigerian parents in the independence period, this article nevertheless suggests that their experiences are not anomalous but are part of a historical phenomenon attending decolonization and the crises visited upon post-colonial migrants at Empire's end. As Bailkin (2009, p. 96) comments, 'the "problem" of African children in Britain constitutes an important field for reevaluating the impact of decolonization on metropolitan family life.' Yet, the origin of this 'problem' was not then and is not now these (adult) children, who have palpably understood the impacts of post-colonialism and Britain's resistance to becoming 'dispersed' and 'plural' (Modood, 2010,

p. 124). Rather, the problem remains with the hostile and racist society that perceives people of color with alternative origins and practices as threats to the myths and narratives of Britishness. Although the UK has been in its post-colonial era since the 1960s, and with a multicultural stance since the 1980s, the rhetoric of British subjects not belonging in Britain persists.

**2. Context and Conceptual Framework**

Post-colonial migration, political discourse, and the end of Empire went hand in hand. Britain welcomed migration from former colonies, both to buoy its economy in the aftermath of WWII and to support the transition to native rule of the newly independent nations. As Nigeria had been run successfully via indirect rule (Harris, 2006; Imoagene, 2012), many Nigerians came to Britain to gain educational qualifications to become civil servants upon their return. Bailkin (2009, p. 88) reveals that there were 11,000 African students on scholarships in the UK in 1960, plus 10,000s of privately funded students. However, 'what was for Nigeria the dawn of independence was for Britain the end of Empire' (Harris, 2006, p. 38), and as the 1960s progressed, Britain descended into economic decline, recession, and structural unemployment.

The initial welcome of the post-independence period was by the mid-1960s transformed into barriers, through legislation in the UK and in Nigeria that tightened measures to enter or leave, respectively (Bailkin, 2009, p. 90). This was not simply economic, but ideological. As Ellis (2001, p. 230) contends, 'Britain was shifting its national identity from an external, global plane in 1948, to an internal, local plane' a decade later and that those emigrating from the reaches of Empire were perceived as a 'source of…anxiety.' Gilroy sees these two as intrinsically connected: Britain's inability to 'mourn its loss of Empire and to accommodate the Empire's consequences' (Gilroy, 2004, p. 111), and its perception of immigration as 'akin to war and invasion' (Gilroy, 2004, p. 102). Post-Empire migrants moving from periphery to center were subjected to 'an ontological transformation' of identity from being 'British subject to foreign immigrant' (Ellis, 2001, p. 215), leaving former members of Empire estranged within Britain itself.

While contending with these difficulties, immigrating Nigerians were also concerned with their personal and traditional ambitions to have children (Oyetade, 1993, p. 84). Onus for childbearing was with women, yet, the 'conflict between their productive and reproductive roles affected both partners' (Harris, 2006, p. 33). Without extended family, child rearing had to be negotiated. In 1968, up to 5000 African children were privately fostered in the UK (Bailkin, 2009, p. 88) to assist in the stresses of achieving productive and reproductive goals. Fostering or other care pathways were viable options, as for some cultures, child circulation is normative and not viewed as a form of neglect (Wells, 2019, p. 275). While there is a practice of children in Nigeria being raised by other than birth parents, in which parents may seek 'social advantages for their children' (Goody, 1978, as cited in Bailkin, 2009, p. 105) or to 'sediment and mobilize networks' (Wells, 2017, p. 218), it can be argued that fostering/care in post-colonial Britain was different in kind. Considering recent transnational fostering situations in the UK, Wells (2017, 2019) argues that a crisis, such as family breakdown, is more often the catalyst for seeking care from outside natal family. Bailkin (2009, p. 106) similarly argues for 'exigency' rather than 'culture' to understand extra-family child-care among first-generation West Africans as an outcome of 'economic necessity and the pressures of migration.' As she laments, if upon the student were pinned the hopes for a newly independent Africa, upon the child was 'the damage inflicted by the former Mother country at Empire's end' (Bailkin, 2009, p. 118).

Balibar argues that a 'new racism' was experienced in Britain in the latter part of the 20th century (as cited in Modood, 1997, pp. 154–155). This she says was linked to the negative reception of reverse movements from the peripheries to the center, raising questions about who could be or become British. As Yuval-Davis (2004, p. 220) argues, this denial is based on the myth of a 'fixed, immutable, ahistorical and homogenous construction of the collectivity's culture.' These ideologies of exclusion spread beyond the first generations to encompass their UK born children, deterministically perceived as 'other' in their birth land. As Yuval-Davis (1997, p. 193) comments, 'otherness serves as a basis for legitimizing the exclusion and/or subordination and/or exploitation of members of the collectivity thus labelled.' For children born in the UK, contending with othering has become a life-long project; one whose origin can be traced to the myths of British nationality and, as Gilroy (2004) notes above, Britain's inability to accommodate the consequences of Empire. In particular, the difficulty in reconciling its national identity as pluri-ethnic and pluri-cultural, rather than one of 'solidaristic monism' (Modood, 1997, p. 170).

In Powell's infamous *Rivers of Blood* speech from 1968, he contended that those from the former colonies could not become English, even if born in England. As he states, 'the West Indian or Asian does not, by being born in England, become an Englishman. In law he becomes a United Kingdom citizen by birth; in fact, he is a West Indian or an Asian still' (Powell, 1991, p. 393). This duality reflects the manifestation of exteriorized hostility underpinning the ontological turn of transforming British subjects, regardless of where they are from, into unwelcome foreigners, though such dualisms underestimate the multiplicity of exclusion or belonging. Further, such cultural determinism raised 'doubts about the possibility of assimilating cohesive "alien" minorities into the nation' (Modood, 1997, p. 169). This attitude within the seat of Empire was not just rhetoric; it was enshrined in doctrine and practice. Yuval-Davis (2004, p. 219) notes

that since the beginning of the 20th century, innumerable immigration regulations, often with racial biases, have been set up and continue to effect migrants today (Yuval-Davis, Wemys, & Cassidy, 2018).

The practice also took place in a less overt way, where 'indifference' (Bell, 2018), by not making legislation, equally contrived to exclude and alienate. Bailkin (2009, p. 107) states that 'the demands of peaceful decolonization were explicitly at odds with child protection.' She argues that Britain attended to African parents—enabling their entry as workers or students who would be returning to run their independent nations—and took an indifferent approach to their children, as Britain did not wish to appear paternalistic or interfering. In this case, both the 'Home Office and the Colonial Office…championed a doctrine of non-intervention' (Bailkin, 2009, p. 109) toward children being raised in private fostering arrangements. Yuval-Davis (1997, p. 195) notes how family is a site for the reproduction of the collectivity. According to British postcolonial policy, Nigerian parents were reproducing children in the UK not for the collectivity of a multi-ethnic Britain, even when being raised in British institutions (i.e., foster homes, care homes, boarding schools), but for reabsorption into a conveniently assumed congruent (Yuval-Davis, 2004, p. 218) and homogenous land, Nigeria, of little concern to the center.

While this article does not directly engage with those first-generation Nigerians who emigrated to the UK at independence, it does reveal, through discussions with their children, the difficulties their parents faced at Empire's end. The increasingly unwelcoming and hostile circumstances encountered from the mid-20th century beleaguered parents' processes of return, and their protracted stays transformed both themselves and their children into something other than temporary visitors.

## 3. Methodology

This work is part of a larger project undertaken for my doctoral study over the period 2004–2009, augmented with supplementary research undertaken in 2019. For the earlier work, I conducted ethnographic and participant observation research in street markets, in faith communities, and at personal or national celebratory events with a focus on first generation Yoruba Nigerians, predominantly based in South London. This was supplemented by a site visit in 2007 to Nigeria, including Ile-Ife, the heart of Yorubaland, and Lagos, to understand better why contemporary Nigerians wished to leave and what they hoped to gain by coming to the UK. In addition to the participatory fieldwork, I conducted semi-structured interviews in the UK and in Nigeria with 20 research participants, holding up to five interviews each with core participants, each ranging from 45 to 90 minutes in duration.

The communal work was aimed at understanding groupings of solidarity within a cosmopolitan setting (Botticello, 2012), while also attending to individual self-realization within groups (Botticello, 2009). For the first generations, my research found that migration meant potential fulfillment of aspirations for social recognition and material gain, invoked through the Yoruba Nigerian tenet of the good life—*owo*/money, *omo*/children, and *alaafia*/health or peace (Hallgren, 1991). The doctoral research followed a precedent set in anthropological literature about African societies and the purpose of migration, in which the frontier (Kopytoff, 1986) remains essentially a conservative space where societies reproduce themselves, albeit under new conditions. In the process of migration, additional social, material and economic resources could be assimilated within a conceptual framework of expansion and binding, in which incorporation as well as repetition functioned to reproduce oneself in the world. This notion of expansion and binding regarding children relates more to their parents' conception of what children will do for them, in the form of extending parents' networks of possibility, as noted by Goody (1978, as cited in Bailkin, 2009) and Wells (2017) above. In the thesis, I argued that from children's perspectives, especially for those who were raised for some periods outside their Nigerian households, expansion led to alienation as there were not enough social, historical, and experiential connections to be successfully rebound within their parents' culture. Rather, the children gained expansive, though not necessarily positive, lives and experiences, and became something further. In this process, it could be argued that they became multicultural, able to navigate multiple environments, but at the same time, due to the generic notions of culture as fixed, unchanging and homogenous (Yuval-Davis, 2004), they also became marginal to the fixed communities of belonging on offer—English, British, or Nigerian.

When I began my fieldwork in 2005, I personally knew no Nigerians. As I had been living in South London since the late 1980s, I was very aware of the presence of Nigerians, but this awareness had not moved beyond a shared physical geography. I began to connect through recommendations of people I knew—my daughter's math teacher at school, a friend's upstairs neighbor, another friend's friend who was a market trader, a Nigerian academic's connection to a local Yoruba church. More and deeper connections grew from these initial introductions, in particular the church and market. In the earliest phase of my research, I met and interviewed six-second generation adults. Three of these participants were very open and revealed much about their childhoods and the impact these continue to have on their senses of self and belonging. Each was raised for a period outside their parental home. At the time, I noted this co-incidence though I had not sought it. In the early period, I met with one person four times, another twice and the last, once, all face-to-face, in their homes. These early interviews were structured around personal experiences of upbringing, home life, family, heritage, identity, ethnicity, and nationality. When meeting again, two were face-to-face interviews, again in their homes, and

one was by telephone, though we latterly met for coffee outside the context of formal research. The more recent interviews revisited the earlier topics and included questions addressing wider political perspectives, such as the Windrush scandal, Brexit, and the increasingly hostile environment growing in the sociopolitical realm. All interviews throughout the two research periods were conducted in English, audio recorded, and transcribed and coded by me.

Their accounts made me realize that their personal histories were neither isolated nor accidental. It is toward a more complex understanding of how these adults reconcile their multiple heritages as children of Empire, of being raised partly or wholly outside their natal homes, and of their unwitting immersion into an intolerant, racist, and hostile post-colonial environment while still realizing some sense of community and belonging, that this article proceeds.

**4. Rupture and Family Life**

The three participants are Toyin, Louis, and Remi (all names have been changed to preserve anonymity). Both Toyin and Louis were born in London in the late 1960s. Each was 39 when we first met in 2005 and 2006, and 52 at our most recent meetings in 2019. Remi was born in Kent. She was 52 when we first met in 2005, and 65 in 2019. In this section, I detail their earlier memories of childhood and the impact family rupture had on their senses of belonging.

Toyin is one of seven children and works in social care. The third born in her family, her parents came to the UK to gain skills for an envisaged return. They used foster care to support competing demands on their time and energy. Toyin's parents left their eldest child behind in Nigeria, and the first two born in the UK were fostered to a white English family in Kent. Toyin's mother could not manage to work to support her husband's study and look after two young children, with another soon on the way. Toyin was six weeks old when she went to live with her foster family and four years old when she returned. She shares how much she loved living in the countryside with 'an English woman and her family' (2006) whom she refers to as her nan. She enthused that she 'really loved it there because there was the sense of freedom, the countryside…and sitting on [her nan's] lap in front of a massive fire' (2006). She reveals that when she returned to her natal home, once her parents had bought a house, she found it:

> Quite disturbing. 'Cause obviously moving from a settled environment and all that I knew to coming back and having to be part of a family again with other siblings and the discipline that was there and stuff like that, I really hated. [I felt like I was being] forced to eat food, being shouted at, and had to do things in a certain way because my dad was quite a strict guy. (2006)

Her parents followed the tradition of eating separately from the children. For Toyin, because she struggled with her father's disciplinary focus, this was a welcome respite from the demands of tradition, albeit one granted by attending to tradition. As she says: 'I don't really have a strong relationship with my father…so I was quite happy not to be in that space, because it would be more criticism basically' (2006). She recognizes now that times were hard for her parents and their need to seek support; she also recognizes that her father was trying to teach his children to think for themselves. Yet, she found the change from what she perceived as an idyllic life of freedom to a harsh life of tradition too much to broker:

> Being born here and seeing how things were in England and then going home, I always used to feel like that when I was at school, I used to feel free, I was in England….It was kind of like, this thing called *Mr. Ben*….It's this children's [television] programme and every week he'd be in different costumes and he'd go through this door and he'd step into this different world. And it felt like basically that. You opened the door and it's like "Ok, I'm in Africa." (2006)

The challenges of migrating, working, studying, bearing and raising children not only took their toll on Toyin; these also impacted upon her parents. Her mother and father eventually separated, and while her father returned to Nigeria for a period of time, he has since remarried and now moves between the two countries. Her mother continues to live in the family home in London. Her own dreams to return and retire have been shattered, because, as Toyin comments, the country has changed so much, 'she doesn't feel like it's home anymore' (2006).

Louis is the eldest of three boys and works in the performing arts. Although childhood sweethearts, his parents came to Britain separately in the late 1950s, his mother to study nursing and his father to study accounting. They met again in London and married. Louis feels that his mother disappointed her family back home by marrying, as she was sent to England to better her circumstances and upon her return to Nigeria, her family's. Louis's early years were spent together with his family in a Yoruba household, but with practices he didn't quite understand, such as his father always eating first and alone. He also acknowledges that family life was difficult, with a 'quite violent minded, utterly controlling' (2019) father and a distant mother. When he was 11, the family underwent a three-way split. His mother and father separated, each returning individually to Nigeria, and he and his brothers were sent to English boarding schools. This became an identity crisis moment for him, as before he had used his Yoruba name, but in boarding school, he adopted an English one, to help him adjust. His father eventually returned to London with a Sierra Leonese woman, and the family reconstituted anew. He left boarding school and went to a local state school, which he found a more nourishing experience.

His mother remained in Nigeria and continues to live there still.

As a young adult, Louis started running with the 'wrong crowd' and served time in prison, which he said was 'devastating' (2006). At 21 and at a turning point, he found a connection between himself and his Nigerian heritage, which he had struggled to understand when his father practiced elements of it:

> That was one of the great epiphanies for me when I was 21, when I was in that trouble. "What am I doing, expressing myself in this way?" All those people who have come before me, given so much, what are you offering back? Is this what you'll go down as, one of the ancestors, "Oh yeah he got into a bit of trouble."...You know what I mean? (2006)

While not quite sure of his Nigerian culture, he was able to conceptually emplace himself within its lineage, which helped him to change his behavior and do things differently. He understood that his father, as head of the family, was aiming to connect with the ancestors and protect the family by eating first and by himself. Yet, Louis felt that his father had lost sight of why he was enacting this ritual and was just eating alone. Louis's ability both to see this rupture in his father and to see beyond this to the lineage of ancestors striving for positive change helped him to change his path and work toward leaving a positive legacy.

Remi was born to a Yoruba father, whom she has never met, and an English mother. Now retired, she worked in the third sector as a diversity and inclusion trainer, with personal interest in the creative industries. Not only was she born into a mixed relationship, her mother did not raise her. Remi was raised in the Barnado's system of institutionalized and foster care (Barnardo's is a British charity founded by Thomas John Barnardo in 1866 to support vulnerable children). She did not meet her mother until she was in her 30s. Remi realizes that she has had a 'strange background' as she terms it, in that she was 'badly abused in my childhood...[living with all the] deprivations you could imagine as a child' (2005). She said this experience 'instilled in her a sense of not belonging anywhere on the planet and seeking that out' (2005). Remi's fostering experience, unlike Toyin's, was one of not belonging, where Remi recollects that she did not know who her parents were or have anyone around her who looked like her:

> My life's work has been understanding myself as a human being. What it means to be a nigger?...The interesting thing is just how, in my explanations to [this question], cause me to understand what my heritage is and what my sense of belonging is and therefore who I am. (2005)

She comments that there wasn't anyone growing up in the '50s and '60s who had a 'darker shade of pale as a complexion' that wasn't a victim of racism, and offered that you either addressed it and became a better person or you didn't and became a bitter one (2005). She did not know her natal family growing up and questioned her physical features in relation to those of her white foster family. Her sense of belonging to her mother's family did not come until she was in her 30s. Remi's mother had kept the birth of her mixed-race daughter concealed from her family, which the institutionalization to Barnado's facilitated. However, upon visiting her maternal grandmother, who was gravely ill, the grandmother recognized that she was her daughter's child and conveyed this to Remi, in gestures and unspoken language:

> She pointed to the photograph on the cupboard and told me to bring the photograph. She didn't speak to me; it was all nonverbal communication. And so, I brought the photograph and I put it in front of her and she pointed to all the women. It was a photograph of a series of women, northern women, with their pinnies on and their arms folded....And she pointed to them all and she pointed to me, and her, and to the picture. So, she made it very clear that I was part of her family. (2019)

Remi said that this was a 'life-changing' (2005) event, to have that sense of belonging, and a place in the family line. It helped her to make sense of herself and where she fitted within a biological family. While she has not been able to connect with members of her paternal family, Remi's experiences of being othered from Englishness prompted her to seek her Nigerian ancestral belongings outside the UK, travelling to West Africa and being given a Yoruba name by a priest, which she uses as her given name.

The end of Empire has visited upon each of these children extremely harsh circumstances. For Toyin, her early years in foster care remained a comparison her family home could never live up to with a disciplinary structure that left her feeling trapped in an alternative reality. Louis's family migration and subsequent three-way rupture created alienation among each of his parents and himself, where a tumultuous childhood led to personal crisis. This he resolved through a purposeful connection to his ancestors as an imagined heritage holding him to account. In a similar vein, Remi also has striven to transcend some of her childhood traumas and her lack of belonging anywhere, by seeking out and finding connections beyond her immediate kin, and more generally among the wider Nigerian and African diaspora.

**5. Exclusion in Micro and Macro Spheres**

In addition to having to adjust to living in between different conceptual worlds, of being born in Britain, of having a family heritage from elsewhere, of living away from natal family and undergoing different levels of trauma re-

lated to childhood experiences, these three members of the second generation also had to contend with racism and the general hostility that attended the decolonial era and after. Intolerance and outright abuse are not new, as Balibar (as cited in Modood, 1997) contends, but is something that has been consistently present, though variable in its vocality. Toyin affirms this by stating that:

> Even though we live in a multicultural society, there has always been this underlying [sense of unwelcome]….Obviously with Brexit and the focus on trying to control immigration and stuff like that, this has given rise to people who have always been silent to find a platform to air their concerns or views about having immigrants in their country. (2019)

She shares her incredulity about this belief, stating that whatever made anyone think that people of color were lesser, they should have outgrown that by now, 'because you have seen us, you [have] lived with us, you know what we are about' (2019). In reflecting on the past 20 years in the UK, Remi offers personal experiences that countervail Toyin's expectation of advancement in thinking. Due to lack of affordability of housing in more cosmopolitan areas, Remi bought a house in a part of London that was white working class and right wing. Her reception was far from pleasant:

> When I first moved [here] in 2000, I was called "WOG," "nigger," all of those things, which I had not heard for many years….On a bus [I was] told, "Don't sit there, nigger, next to my child, move"….I had shit thrown on my windows. I came home to find dog shit all over my door and my windows. (2019)

She continues by saying that in the intervening period, when more people from Africa and Brazil moved in, the abuse died down. However, with the election of Trump and the Brexit vote, she noted that these defamations began anew. 'Suddenly you heard these words again. "Oh, we've got so many niggers in this neighborhood." I heard that on the street, I was really shocked' (2019). The relative quiet was not necessarily to do with acceptance of multiculturalism after the dawn of the 21st century but reflected a period of dormancy until reinvigoration in the return of a polarized macro-political climate.

Louis has had similar experiences throughout his life, with what he terms 'tragic,' 'relaxed' racism on the one hand and a sense of toleration, that people were not being truly honest about how they felt, on the other (2019). He recounted examples of being feared as a 'six-foot black guy' (2019) with people clutching their bags as he walked past; even now as one who walks with a crutch due to a semi paralyzing illness he is recovering from. As he says, 'I have this distinct feeling that sometimes they think I am just pulling one off. I am just going to drop [the crutch and] grab something' (2019). Yet he acknowledges that intolerance and fear are complicated. In speaking about Brexit and the challenges presented about Ireland, he says:

> If you are looking at Ireland…people who have the same pigmentation….Seeing this kind of way the Irish have been treated….They have had massive issues, historically…of being treated by the upper classes and the higher classes like shit. And in a sense, I conclude, how are we going to deal with racism when you don't even like your own kind? (2019)

Louis complicates the notion of not belonging as being beyond color and beyond heritage, by bringing in class and the differentials in power enacted at different scales. Remi raised power in our first meetings, stating that in matters of racism or other structural inequalities 'it's always a matter of power….Who has the power?' (2005). The narratives and experiences above raise core issues about the complexities surrounding not belonging. Not-belonging is shaped by several factors and include, but is not limited to, intersections of class, gender, and race, as well as relative power within existing structures and identity politics. These factors are subject to permutation and change, depending on differentials being played out at any given time in micro and macro spheres.

## 6. Recognition and Belonging

Given that not-belonging is a fragmented and constructed process, so too is belonging. When thinking about this topic, of where each belongs and feels safe, Louis, Toyin, and Remi each share their thoughts on its complexity, as not being based only on biological or cultural inheritances, but also on connections in which their experiences or imaginings are aligned with others.

Family remains a point of comparison and contention when thinking about belonging. Louis draws a parallel between the divisions within his family to that of the nation, underlining how senses of belonging may be made tenuously, that is, with limited opportunity to assess alternatives:

> Ask people a simple question, yes or no. It is quite a simple question. Like my dad said, "Do you want to stay here with me, or do you want to go with your mum?" Even at 11, I said, "Well, I want to stay here." I didn't know anything about Nigeria. I had some notion of it. If you ask a simple question, you can answer it simply, but surely the aftermath, you have to realize, is extremely complex. And this is what's happened with Brexit. It is a very complex answer to give! You want to break a whole family up? "I'm leaving" or "I'm staying." "Let's split the family up!" How is that all going to affect people? (2019)

Louis's family situation, of a three-way split, has given him a deep understanding about declarations of belonging made with limited opportunity to understand their

consequences. Even though he acknowledged earlier that his father was 'not an easy man' (2019), he made the choice to remain with him, when offered the alternative of a relative unknown. When speaking of a visit he made to Nigeria as a young boy, he noted that:

> You realize when you go back to [what] home was for your parents, you realize who you are, because they tell you who you are. They go, "Hey English boy, English, you think you're Yoruba?" …They can tell, from the way you walk. So, culturally, I'm English. Genetically, I'm not. What is English, genetically? (2005)

Louis adds that it can feel uncomfortable to state that one is English. In our most recent meeting, he revised his identification to be 'more British than English' (2019). Both markers have negative associations, given England's and Britain's historical mistreatment toward those of his ancestry. Nevertheless, he argues that one must resolve such identity crises and find composure: 'My journey has been one of discovery, and I know people in Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, people that I have visited. And that is a really healthy thing to do' (2019). He further offers that resilience, forged by surviving difficult situations, is another way. He reflects on the trouble he got into as a young man, and although he regrets the negative impact it continues to bear on his life, in having a criminal record, the resilience it has helped him develop enables him to be content with himself amid life's difficulties. Drawing on his actor training, Louis says it is important to 'never be desperate' but to come back to one's own 'grounding' (2019). For Louis, grounding affirms a neutral space to begin again.

Toyin suggests that being able to 'feel like yourself, really comfortable, loved, secure, with people around you that you can trust' (2006) is not a condition of biological families, but can be found outside that. She sees herself as 'British by birth, but ethnically Nigerian' (2019), a by-product of her experiential duality. While her father insisted she have a Nigerian passport in addition to her birth passport from the UK, Toyin's sense of belonging is not limited to these alternatives. Complicating that notion, Toyin noted that as a child she had felt belittled by her Caribbean peers, who had made fun of her Yoruba name and the elaborate hairstyles her mother constructed (2006). Yet, Toyin equally acknowledged that many Caribbean children shared 'a lot of what happened to me as a child' (2006) around harsh discipline and having to eat foods they did not like at home. While she did visit Nigeria and picked up some Yoruba language, she feels deprived for not being able to participate more fully in this aspect. She derives recognition from her name, a point of contention in the past, but a point of pride in who she is now. Whereas Toyin did not change her name, she uses a shortened version of the original, Oluwatoyin. Even abbreviated, she is very sensitive to its mispronunciation, which feels like her identity is 'being stripped away' (2006). She notes how a Nigerian man she worked with made her 'shake' when he said her name, hitting her core with its force in being said correctly.

She feels now that communities of practice, 'with people who share the same interests as me' (2019), enable her to belong and be herself. When asked, she offers a life philosophy that transcends differences:

> You would have thought by now we would have grown out of trying to define people by different things: your race, gender, religious beliefs, sexual preference. At the end of the day, we are human beings. We…want the same things in life. (2019)

Although still struggling to find herself, Toyin acknowledges that simplistic identity markers are insufficient for her or others to find community.

Remi has developed strengths amid persecution and has turned exclusions to her advantage. Remi sees herself as part of a diaspora who has been 'displaced from a point of historical upheaval' (2005). She identifies with the African diaspora as a heritage that moves toward a collective of belonging, transcending national boundaries and temporal constraints. At the same time, she also acknowledges that belonging comes through personal choices, stating that people tend to create who they are. For her, this is through 'who we've had in our family history, in our family tree, in our communities, in our countries where we grow, who we identify with' (2005). Even though her various families have not treated her well, Remi nevertheless refers to connectivity and belonging through the idiom of family. This was not just the recognition she received from her grandmother which placed Remi in her line of descent, but also the recognition Remi had, for herself, as part of that line. When speaking of the photograph her grandmother pointed to, she says, she could see 'myself and my daughters in those women' (2005). Remi extends these recognitions of belonging beyond biological inheritances to others she incorporates as new families:

> One of the things [my partner] always says about me is that I have created many families. And I think that is possibly because of not having one, per se. My communities are communities that I feel some kind of bond with, in some way. (2019)

Remi's sense of connection is multiple. Despite a fragmented and abused early life and having suffered further abuse as racially other in the society where she was born and of which, biologically, she is a part, Remi creatively engages with imagined and experienced pasts toward making families anew in the present.

While each has had to navigate biological, cultural, and political inheritances and exclusions, each has come to find that while these circumstances have set a frame around their lives, these do not fully determine where and how they belong.

## 7. Discussion

Children who were born in the UK to emigrating Nigerians at the dawn of independence have had to struggle with multiple exclusions from home culture and host society. Complex upbringings, arising in part from the difficult circumstances their parents faced upon arrival in the UK, have profoundly impinged on their children's senses of identification and belonging when young. The implications of these circumstances have continued to reverberate throughout their lives into middle age. As a result of individual family difficulties—whether around management of productive and reproductive resources, marital breakdown, or concealed inter-racial pregnancy—from early ages, these children have had to navigate the difficulties of difference, discord and disconnect, amid variable constructions of home and family. Further, the impact of racism and non-acceptance of those born in the UK from the former colonies have compounded senses of alienation and not-belonging. For those children who suffered family breakdown and ended up in some form of institutionalized care, the alienation and searching has taken them an additional step further into confusion and disorientation. As Wells (2017, p. 230) states, no matter how old they are, a child is a 'living person with a complex subjectivity' and family crises leading to separation have significant impacts on how they understand themselves.

The now adult children in this study have explored their subjectivities in detail and have made understanding themselves and their circumstances of youth a lifelong process. Although far from a representative sample, and with each seemingly having had exceptional circumstances in their families, with Louis' family experiencing a three-way split, Toyin's using the fostering route to facilitate family settlement in the UK, and Remi's family being a mix of multiple estrangements and fostering, their stories coalesce around the difficulties of being accepted and achieving recognition, in their ancestral cultures and in British society. As a point of departure, Ahmed (2017, p. 133) contends that 'so much political work begins with moments of disorientation'; where lack of fit can give rise to reflection on the politics of belonging, for oneself and in relation to wider society. Collectively, these adults have suffered much, in confusion, disorientation, trauma, rupture, imprisonment, overt racism, violence, isolation, and alienation.

While recent events have brought to public attention the mistreatment of the Windrush generations and other immigrants, with focus on a government imposed 'hostile environment,' not being welcome in Britain has a much longer trajectory. The myths of belonging in Britain, being based on an unchanging homogeneity (Yuval-Davis, 2004, p. 220) persist, and in the case of these three, particularly reflect the inability to include 'extra-European/non-white' (Modood, 2007) ethnicities, even when born in the UK. This calls into question the resistance to multiculturalism in British society and the long-standing intolerance and outright antagonism toward those not phenotypically or culturally 'British.' In defining multiculturalism, Modood (2010, p. 124) offers that what is needed is:

> A vision of citizenship that is not confined to the state, but dispersed across the society, compatible with the multiple forms of contemporary groupness, and sustained through dialogue; plural forms of representation that do not take one group as the model to which all others have to conform; and new, reformed national identities.

I would argue that amid the struggles endured by this small representation of the 'consequences of Empire' (Gilroy, 2004), these adults have embraced and embody multiculturalism in its plurality as a life project. While Imoagene (2012, p. 2171) argues that Britain needs to adopt 'national myths that are powerful enough to unite and inspire an increasingly diverse population,' the cases presented here suggest that it is not the 'diverse population' that remains uninspired to be part of Britain, but it is the reluctance of Britain to include them in its national myths. Louis embraces his Englishness, while Remi opts for a more transnational identification, and Toyin maintains nostalgia for her English childhood, erstwhile accepting and embracing being a British Nigerian. To this end, each has sought, or created, communities of belonging that are outside singular identity markers, whether this be related to race, place, nation, family, or heritage. As May, Modood, and Squires (2004, p. 9) note, the 'origin, content and form of ethnicity are all open to negotiation, reflecting the creative choices of individuals and groups as they define themselves and others.' As seen here, these children of Nigerian émigrés have been forced to confront and refute immutable markers, and by making sense of their upbringings and subsequent experiences, of inclusion and exclusion, have demanded that they move into plural realms and more complex understandings of their identities and that of others.

While not claiming representation of all second generation Nigerians in the UK, nor also of those who underwent periods of time being raised outside of their natal homes, this article suggests that attention to the 'intersecting histories of family and decolonization' (Bailkin, 2009, p. 121), of discord in the former and hostility in the latter, offers insight into how situations faced in early years continue to impact across the life course. It also suggests that a longitudinal perspective, combined with micro and macro contexts, opens the space for revealing how people continue to come to terms with complex situations, and from within these, also draw on resilience forged in the process to transform these intricacies into a richer, plural sense of identity and belonging.

## 8. Conclusion

This research found that children of post-colonial migrants from Nigeria endured much suffering as a conse-

quence of family breakdown and hostile environments attending the end of Empire. The difficulties for parents in fulfilling their aspirations had long term devastating impacts on themselves and their children, which continue to reverberate decades after into adulthood. Indifferent and shortsighted post-colonial policy did not adequately facilitate or embrace those who moved from former colonies into the center of Empire. Initial welcomes quickly transformed into indifference and hostility once in England. Nor did exclusive national myths on who can be or become British make space to include a multiplicity of identity and belonging. Rather, reductive exclusions left vulnerable young people to find their own solutions. A small sample of second-generation Nigerians have found that embracing multiplicity, both in spite of and in response to these challenges, has helped them to arrive at multiple identifications and within various communities of belonging. Their disorientations have enabled them to reflect on their specific lives and situate these within wider macro-political contexts, as part of the larger issue attending the ongoing period of post-colonialism.

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