Transnational migrant politics in the Netherlands: historical structures and current events
Mügge, L.M.

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3. **The Individual Level. Transnational Ties and Activities**

This chapter provides a general overview of the transnational ties and activities of individual Surinamese, Turkish and Kurdish migrants in the Netherlands. Most statistical information on migrants in the Netherlands is collected to measure their social, cultural and economic position in the country and, in one way or another, to examine their integration. One of the largest surveys is the Social Position and Use of Facilities of Migrants (SPVA), carried out every three to four years since 1988 by the Institute for Sociological and Economic Research (ISEO) of the Erasmus University Rotterdam (see Groeneveld & Weijers-Martens 2003). Only the 2002 survey included two sub-questions referring to migrants’ homeland. One referred to individual remittances and the other to broad collective transnational activities, but the answers were not subsequently analysed. It appeared that 34 per cent of Surinamese and 42 per cent of Turks contributed to the living conditions of persons in Suriname and Turkey. Sixteen per cent of Turkish respondents were members of organisations focused on the Turkish community in the Netherlands, one per cent were members of organisations focused on Turkey, and one per cent were members of organisations focused on both. Seven per cent of Surinamese were members of organisations focused on the Surinamese community in the Netherlands, one per cent were members of organisations focused on Suriname, and two per cent were members of organisations focused on both.

Issues related to the country of origin are thus poorly reflected in official statistics and our knowledge of the transnational orientations of individual migrants remains limited. To address this gap I designed a survey, which was carried out in 2004 (see the next section). The results of this survey are presented and analysed in this chapter. The guiding question concerned the motivations of individual Turkish, Kurdish and Surinamese migrants in the Netherlands to maintain transnational ties and to participate in transnational activities. What forms did such involvement take? How did it affect participation and interest in Dutch politics? I first present some general background information about the interviewees. Subsequent sections then examine specific transnational political and social activities and ties, intergenerational...

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8 For example by Statistics Netherlands (CBS) or the Social and Cultural Planning Office (SCP).
9 Question D3a: Do you contribute to the living conditions of persons in Morocco by sending for example money and goods? 11e: Are activities [of an association the respondent is member of, LN] focused on the Moroccan community in the Netherlands or Morocco? Veldkamp, Onderzoek SPVA-02 Marokkaanse groep. Hoofdvragenlijst (Amsterdam: Veldkamp, 2002). The same questions were posed to Surinamese and Turks.
10 Results were received by email from the SEOR ‘Competition and Regulation Institute’ of Erasmus University – which took over the SPVA data when ISEO dissolved – on 12 June 2008.
11 For this reason RISBO conducted research on individual transnational social, economic and political commitment and its relation to integration. Surinamese, Turks and Kurds were not included in this study. Godfried Engbersen, Erik Snel, Arjen Leerkes and Marjon Van San, *Over landgrenzen. Transnationale betrokkenheid en integratie* (Rotterdam: Erasmus Universiteit / RISBO, 2003).
differences, and the relation between interest in homeland politics and feelings of inclusion or exclusion in the Dutch political arena.

**Sampling and general background characteristics**

All respondents were initially selected from an a-select sample used by ISEO in 2002; at that time they expressed no objections to further interviewing. Out of this sample we interviewed 28 Turks, 23 Surinamese and three Kurds. As one of our concerns was how transnational political involvement is reproduced in the second generation, we asked ‘SPVA’ respondents to name a relative of another generation. In four cases it was not possible to find a relative of another generation to be interviewed; we then interviewed relatives of the same generation (see table B.3, appendix B). Relatives did not necessarily belong to the same household, but to the same wider family – which I expected to be as influential (see also Bertraux & Thompson 1993). What mattered was that the two people were related by kinship and maintained regular contact. Through snowballing within families, we interviewed an additional seventeen Surinamese, twelve Turkish and one Kurdish respondent.

As these numbers indicate, there were few Kurdish respondents. This can be explained by the fact that Kurds in the Netherlands are not registered as Kurds, but as Turks. The Kurdish respondents in the SPVA sample had indicated in earlier interviews that they identified as Kurds. Such self-identification, however, is biased. One Turkish respondent did not indicate in the SPVA interview that he identified as Kurd, but did so with one of our fieldworkers. Likewise, one respondent who indicated in the SPVA interview that he identified as Kurd told us he had Kurdish roots but was not a ‘Kurd’. As in the SPVA study, these two persons were counted in our survey as ‘Turk’ and ‘Kurd’ respectively. Identifying as Kurd was seen by most of our respondents as a political statement (publicly stating one is ‘Kurdish’ has been heavily punished in Turkey). It is thus plausible that some Turkish respondents in the SPVA sample were ethnic Kurds.

To include more Kurdish respondents, the project team began snowballing in our own private and professional networks, within Kurdish organisations, and on Kurdish websites. Through a combination of these methods, we found an additional seventeen Kurds willing to be interviewed. The fact that all Kurdish respondents were selected through self-identification and/or snowballing means the sample is biased towards highly educated and politically engaged respondents. Other researchers who have studied Turkish-Kurdish migrants in the Netherlands have encountered similar problems (see Van Loon 1992; Latuheru, De Vries & De Jong 1994). The results for the Kurdish sample thus need to be interpreted carefully. But as will be seen below, the sample is diverse enough to give an impression of their transnational ties and activities.

The survey was designed not to paint a representative picture but to validate explanatory factors for the development of transnational ties and activities as
indicated in the previous chapter (figure 2.1). The factors that stood out in our questionnaire were: migration motives, political climate in the country of origin, political opportunities, migrant civil society, and length of stay in the Netherlands. To gain insight into individual transnational involvement, we conducted face-to-face interviews. The first part of the questionnaire consisted of closed questions whose answers were written down by the interviewers; the second part consisted of half-open questions that were taped.

We interviewed a total of 40 Turks, 40 Surinamese and 21 Kurds. The sample included seventeen Surinamese, twelve Turkish and two Kurdish ‘pairs’ (two persons of the same family, in most cases of a different generation). For detailed information on sampling, non-response, methodology, fieldwork and the original questionnaires, see appendix B.

As noted in chapter 1, migrants from Turkey and Suriname are ethnically and religiously diverse. Table 3.1 shows ethnic self-identification among Surinamese; table 3.2 shows their religious affiliation (whether practising or not). Among Surinamese, we tried to ensure representation of East Indians (fifteen) and Afro-Surinamese (nine) – the largest groups in both the Netherlands and Suriname. Maroons, the third largest group in Suriname, were not included in the sample. This can be explained by their small number in the Netherlands and the fact that they were not represented in the SPVA. Amer-Indians (one) and Chinese (three) were included in our sample but were not represented, or under-represented, in the SPVA, while Javanese were represented in the SPVA but not in our sample.12 We only contacted respondents who indicated in the SPVA that they would welcome further interviewing, and only addresses of those SPVA participants living in Amsterdam, Utrecht and The Hague were available. These factors may explain why Javanese were not represented in our sample (see appendix B). Finally, roughly a quarter of Surinamese did not identify with a specific ethnic group, but as ‘Surinamese’.

Table 3.1 Ethnic self-identification of Surinamese

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>East Indian</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afro-Surinamese</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amer-Indian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Surinamese’/unknown</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12 The 1,054 Surinamese respondents interviewed for SPVA identified themselves as: Afro-Surinamese 357, East Indians 345, Javanese 58 and Chinese 6.
Most Surinamese respondents were Hindu or Christian, while one-fifth stated they were non-practising. The majority of Turkish respondents were Muslim (Sunni or general Islam; some were Alevi). More than half of the Kurdish respondents stated they were non-practising.

Table 3.2 Religion by country of origin/ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Suriname</th>
<th>Turkey</th>
<th>Kurds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sunni Islam</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shiite Islam</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alevi</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Islam</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindu(^{13})</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian(^{14})</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No religion</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (N=101)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For all groups, more males were interviewed than females. Female representation was highest among Surinamese and lowest among Turkish respondents. The majority of Turkish and Kurdish respondents had kept Turkish nationality, while only two Surinamese had kept Surinamese nationality. Dual citizenship is not formally allowed for Surinamese (Haarmans 1987: 108-113) whereas Turks and Kurds are usually able to maintain their homeland passport alongside Dutch nationality (Fermin & Van der Hijden 2004). On average, Surinamese were older and settled in the Netherlands for longer than Turkish and Kurdish respondents (see table 3.3).

Over half (sixteen) of Turkish first generation respondents and a third of Kurdish respondents (seven) had arrived in the Netherlands to reunify with their parents before the age of eighteen.\(^{15}\) Among Surinamese, this ratio was much lower (six persons or fifteen per cent); they arrived in the Netherlands for reasons varying from family reunification to education. These respondents belong to what Rumbaut and Ima (1988) have called the ‘one and a half generation’ – what I will henceforth call the ‘intermediate generation’ in the text and the ‘1.5 generation’ in the tables. Individuals belonging to the intermediate generation are neither part of the first generation of their parents (adults who spent their formative years in the homeland and made a decision to migrate) nor the second generation (born in the Netherlands). Members of the intermediate generation were born in the homeland but were raised in

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\(^{13}\) General Hinduism, Sanatan Dharm Hinduism or Arya Samay Hinduism.

\(^{14}\) General Christian, Roman Catholic, Dutch Reformed, Evangelical Fraternity Community or Pentecost Community.

\(^{15}\) One of the Turkish respondents arrived at the age of seventeen to marry; two Kurdish respondents claimed they fled the country with their parents for political reasons.
the Netherlands during the formative years of adolescence and early adulthood (see Rumbaut & Ima 1988: 22). Intermediate generation respondents thus arrived in the Netherlands before they were (fully) socialized in the homeland; they were not expected to have clear homeland political identities expressed by, for example, party preference (Tonelli 2000: 63). In this respect they have more in common with the second generation, with whom they share a similar socialisation. Second and intermediate generations are thus viewed together for the purpose of this chapter’s analysis.

Table 3.3 Characteristics by country of origin/ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Suriname N=40</th>
<th>Turkey N=40</th>
<th>Kurds N=21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sex (male)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average age</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd and 1.5 generation</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of stay 1st and 1.5 generation (average years)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of stay parents 2nd generation (average years)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dual nationality</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationality of homeland</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher education ≥</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the general characteristics in table 3.3, respondents’ migration motives constitute important background information and are hypothesised in the existing literature to affect the intensity and form of transnational activities and ties. Table 3.4 shows the migration motives of the interviewees (or their parents).

Table 3.4 Migration motives by generation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Suriname N=40</th>
<th>Turkey N=40</th>
<th>Kurds N=21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour/economic</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family reunification/formation</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other/unknown</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most Surinamese migrated to the Netherlands to improve their economic situation and to pursue higher education. The majority of Turkish respondents migrated to join their (labour migrant) parents, or to reunify with or marry their new spouse in the Netherlands. Others left Turkey for economic reasons. A little less than
half of the Kurdish respondents left Turkey for political reasons; other motives were similar to the Turkish respondents.

**General interest in Dutch and homeland politics**

To what extent are Surinamese, Turks and Kurds living in the Netherlands interested in Dutch and homeland politics? Several forms of such ‘interests’ were examined. To measure general interest in Dutch and homeland news, we first examined consumption of mass media. We also looked for more active interest in politics: did respondents discuss Dutch or homeland politics with contacts in the country of origin, in third countries, and in the Netherlands? And finally, did Kurdish and Surinamese individuals maintain transnational ties on the basis of ethnicity? If so, did this facilitate transnational activity?

The consumption of mass media is one way to measure political interest (see Fennema & Tillie 1999). We studied the consumption of print media such as daily newspapers and magazines, television, and the Internet (surfing on homeland or ethnic websites). The category of ‘homeland’ newspapers differed for Surinamese, Turks and Kurds. For example, many large Turkish newspapers such as Hürriyet, but also smaller ones such as Evrensel, have editions for the Turkish community in Europe, and are often published in Germany. One of the larger Surinamese newspapers, De Ware Tijd, likewise has a Dutch edition. The largest Kurdish newspaper, Özgür Politika, is a diaspora newspaper *par excellence*: it is not published in Turkey at all. Despite these differences, these dailies were all placed under the label ‘homeland newspapers’. We witnessed similar variation for magazines; the difference with newspapers was that the majority of magazines read by Turks and Surinamese were printed in the Netherlands and were not extensions of homeland (or European) magazines. Kurdish magazines, like the newspaper Özgür Politika, were mainly diaspora publications published in Europe for Kurds living around the world.

There were several subdivisions under the category ‘television’. With dish antennas, Turkish migrants can watch broadcasts from Turkey; we asked Turkish and Kurdish respondents whether they watched TRT-INT – a daughter channel of the Turkish state channel TRT – aimed at Turks abroad. Surinamese do not have such an alternative.16 In addition, programmes of the multicultural channel MTNL, aimed at specific migrant groups including Surinamese and Turks, are available in the large Dutch cities. These outlets allow measurement of interest in one’s ethnic group in the Netherlands. The Kurdish case, however, is different. The leading Kurdish television station, MED-TV, broadcasts from the UK and is a diaspora medium *par excellence*.

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16 Channels in Suriname can be counted on one hand, and everyday at prime time, Surinamese television airs productions of the public Dutch channel BVN (*Het Best van Nederland* – The Best of the Netherlands) with news and opinion programmes for Dutch and Flemish people abroad. Other Dutch programs were also popular, especially that of the Surinamese comedian Jørgen Rayman who includes a regular feature on Paramaribo in his weekly programmes.
illegal in Turkey, it is watched by Kurds in Europe, and with dish antennas, by Kurds in eastern Turkey and elsewhere in the Middle East (see Hassanpour 1998).

Finally, websites can be hosted from anywhere, at least in theory. The focus here was on the national or ethnic audience of websites. As web discussion forums have become important means to exchange news and opinion, they too were included in the survey. The consumption of these different types of media is presented in table 3.5.

**Table 3.5 Transnational media usage**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th><strong>Suriname N=40</strong></th>
<th><strong>Turkey N=40</strong></th>
<th><strong>Kurds N=21</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 1.5/2</td>
<td>1 1.5/2</td>
<td>1 1.5/2</td>
<td>1 1.5/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Print media</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading homeland newspapers</td>
<td>3 1 6 6</td>
<td>5 4</td>
<td>3 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading ethnic magazines</td>
<td>3 1 2 6</td>
<td>6 4 1 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Dutch newspapers</td>
<td>12 15 2 14</td>
<td>9 6 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Television</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following news on TRT-INT</td>
<td>- - 9 8</td>
<td>10 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following news on MED-TV</td>
<td>- - - -</td>
<td>10 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following news on MTNL</td>
<td>- - 2 4</td>
<td>2 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following news on Dutch channels</td>
<td>19 21 9 23</td>
<td>10 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Internet</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surfing on homeland/ethnic websites</td>
<td>8 7 2 14</td>
<td>7 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All groups read Dutch newspapers more often than homeland newspapers. While first generation Turks (unlike their children) hardly read Dutch papers at all, generational differences were negligible for Kurds and Surinamese. Although one might expect first generation Turks to read homeland newspapers, their number was small. Less than a third of Turks read Turkish newspapers and even less read ethnic magazines; the mentioned magazines all targeted Turks living in the Netherlands and were often read for free in libraries, Turkish coffeehouses or while waiting for a haircut in a Turkish saloon. Almost none of the Surinamese respondents consumed Surinamese print media.

Half of the Kurdish interviewees read Kurdish or Turkish newspapers. Eight Kurds read the newspaper *Özgür Politika*; two maintained it was affiliated to the

\*17 The ‘+’ refers to respondents who did not consume Kurdish print media, but only Turkish newspapers or magazines.
Kurdish nationalist party KONGRA-GEL (formerly known as the PKK) and read it ‘because there is nothing else left’. Five Kurdish interviewees only read Turkish newspapers; around half consumed a broad variety of magazines (seventeen different ones), mostly published in Europe. Some magazines were affiliated with illegal parties or organisations in Turkey, such as the KONGRA-GEL or the Kurdish socialist party PSK. Interestingly, the majority of magazines focused on a specific regional or ethnic identity (for the relation between local identities and media usage see Nell 2007).

All Surinamese followed news only on Dutch channels, as was the case for the large majority of Turks. All Kurds but one followed the news on Dutch television while a large majority also watched the news on the Kurdish channel MED-TV. Roughly half the Kurds also watched TRT-INT – a similar proportion to Turkish respondents.

Although it remains debatable whether surfing on the Internet counts as consumption of mass media, for our purposes it can indicate the extent to which people search for or exchange information about the homeland. The websites named by respondents were not purely online entities; most were extensions of off-line organisations. Kurds surfed more on ethnic websites than Turks and Surinamese; Surinamese named only five different websites while Turks named eighteen and Kurds no less than 25. The website most mentioned by Surinamese was the Netherlands-based waterkant.net, a website with news on Suriname and Surinamese people. Almost no first generation Turks surfed online; over half of intermediate and second generation Turks did. They mainly visited the websites of big Turkish newspapers, while three respondents visited websites of their region of origin. The websites mentioned by Kurds were more diverse and often related to a specific Kurdish political, regional or ethnic group. Most were hosted in Europe or in the Netherlands, including online extensions of political magazines and political parties illegal in Turkey. Finally, Kurdish respondents mentioned ethnic websites for youths and news sites for all Kurds, including those from Iraq and Syria (for a complete analysis of Turkish Kurdish web surfing see Van den Bos & Nell 2006).

Kurds consumed more ethnic and homeland media and at the same time more Dutch media than Surinamese and Turks. The low Surinamese score on homeland media use can be explained by their having grown up with the Dutch language, and the greater choice offered by Dutch media. Among Turks, especially the first generation scored low on the use of Dutch media. This cannot be attributed to poor language skills alone since their consumption of Turkish media was not much higher. The fact that Kurds scored higher than Turks and Surinamese can be explained by the previous ban on Kurdish media in Turkey – only lifted very recently – and the existence of Kurdish diaspora newspapers and magazines. Kurdish media is in fact easier to access in Europe than in Turkey. Eagerness to follow ‘homeland’ news seemed to go together with hunger for other (Dutch and Turkish) news as well.
Another way to measure political interest is by examining how often and with whom people discuss Dutch and homeland politics. We need to know how regularly individuals maintain contact with friends and family in the homeland and in other countries where members of their own national or ethnic group reside. ‘Contact’ refers to actual visits to the homeland, but also to communication by post, email or telephone. Do respondents discuss Dutch and homeland politics and, if so, which topics? The findings are presented in table 3.6.

Table 3.6 Transnational contacts and discussing politics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Suriname N=40</th>
<th>Turkey N=40</th>
<th>Kurds N=21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homeland visit between 1999-2003</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact with ≥5 friends and family members in the homeland ≥ once a year</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political discussions with homeland contacts</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact with ≥1 friend and family member in third countries ≥ once a year</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political discussion with third country contacts</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussing homeland politics in the Netherlands ≥ once a month</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussing Dutch politics in the Netherlands ≥ once a month</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All Turks and the majority of Kurds visited Turkey at least once between 1999 and 2003, often more frequently. For Surinamese, trips to the homeland were much less frequent: a little more than half visited Suriname over the same period. The main explanation for this difference was the monopoly of the Dutch and Surinamese airlines KLM and SLM on flights to Suriname, making tickets prohibitively expensive. Most people needed to save for several years to visit friends and family.

The large majority of all respondents maintained contact by phone, email or mail with at least five family members and/or friends in the homeland. About three-quarters of Turks and Kurds also maintained contact with relatives and sometimes friends in third countries. The majority of these contacts lived in Germany, Belgium and France and to a lesser extent in Switzerland, Denmark and the UK. Families met on occasions such as weddings, births, funerals and circumcision parties. A quarter of Surinamese maintained contact with Surinamese in third countries, mainly relatives. This number is surprisingly high as the Netherlands is traditionally the main destination for Surinamese emigrants. Their contacts mainly lived in the US, but also in Canada, Australia, Germany, Belgium, India and the Caribbean. Due to distance, Surinamese don’t see their third-country contacts as often as Turks and Kurds. If they see each other they generally meet in Suriname.
Around three-quarters of Kurdish and Turkish respondents discussed political themes with their homeland contacts. The most popular topics among Kurds were elections, the human rights situation in Turkey and EU membership negotiations. Some Kurdish respondents said they do not discuss sensitive political themes such as matters related to the Kurdish party PKK\textsuperscript{18} over the phone. They fear wiretapping: it would not affect them but might have consequences for their friends or family. Turks mostly discussed the general socio-economic climate. About half the Surinamese respondents said they discussed politics; most inquired about how their contacts were coping financially. Others said they did not discuss politics over the phone due to the cost of calling Suriname.

Homeland politics was less frequently discussed with contacts in the Netherlands than with homeland-based contacts. Turks and Surinamese generally discussed homeland politics with people from their own group whereas Kurds also discussed Kurdish politics with Turkish and Dutch people. All respondents discussed homeland politics as much as Dutch politics with their contacts in the Netherlands, while Dutch politics were as much discussed with people from their own national or ethnic group as with Dutch people. The most popular Dutch political topics were daily politics and themes relating to migrants, such as integration.

Homeland politics were least discussed with contacts in third countries, with whom many respondents discussed family matters. A Kurdish second-generation female said when she discusses politics with Turkish Kurds in other European countries, it mostly relates to daily life in the countries of settlement. ‘We often discuss integration issues, how we are living in the country as foreigners, because that’s how they see us, as foreigners’. Politics is more often discussed with friends than with relatives, especially among refugees, as a Kurdish respondent explained:

\begin{quote}
I go to Belgium twice, sometimes three times a year to visit my friends. Friends from Germany and even from Australia come over to gather. We just miss each other. If we have time, we visit each other… and then yes we talk about politics. We are all refugees so it’s logical… we also need to recover from the war. We are still suffering, some just can’t make it and it ended worse with others. So politics is part of our daily life and our past… (Kurdish female, first generation).
\end{quote}

The data on media use showed that some Kurds also consume media focusing on all Kurds, including those from Iraq, Iran and Syria; we asked Kurdish respondents how much they identify with Kurds in different countries. Similarly, we posed Surinamese the question whether they felt attached to the country of their ancestors.

\textsuperscript{18} At the time of interviewing, the PKK no longer officially existed, but was succeeded by the KONGRA-GEL. Generally, however, people keep using the old name, PKK.
To see whether such ethnic identification fostered transnational activity, we first asked respondents if they had ever visited these countries (see table 3.7).

Table 3.7 Attachment to ancestral country/ethnic group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Suriname N=40</th>
<th></th>
<th>Kurds N=21</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5/2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feels attached to the ancestral country of origin or broader ethnic group</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visit to the ancestral country of origin/country of settlement ethnic group ≥ 1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Less than half of Surinamese and more than half of Kurdish respondents said they felt attached to an ancestral country and a broader ethnic group.

Among Surinamese, such identification was especially high among East Indians, of whom the majority (eleven out of fifteen) felt attached to India. More than half (eight) – mainly from the first generation – have visited India, though this identification should not be overestimated. Respondents said they visited India out of curiosity to see where their ancestors came from; most felt more attached to Suriname. While some authors emphasise the increasing popularity of ‘roots trips’ among first generation East Indian Surinamese to Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, from where their ancestors emigrated to Suriname (Jones 2004: 81), these are often once-in-a-lifetime visits without structural meaning. For example, in 1999 the Indian government introduced an ID for Persons of Indian Origins (PIO) for people with a father, grandfather of great grandfather born in India. It lets PIOs enter India without a visa and provides certain social and economic rights without political rights. In 2000 only six PIO cards were requested by East Indian Surinamese in the Netherlands (Hira 2000: 101).

Two Chinese respondents felt attached to China, and had visited the country at least once. Only two Afro-Surinamese felt attached to Ghana, but had never visited the country. Other Afro-Surinamese and respondents who indicated they identified as ‘general Surinamese’ (see table 3.1) stated their ancestors had come from so many continents, how could they possibly identify with one? The Amer-Indian respondent had Portuguese ancestors and had visited Portugal on holiday, but not in search of his roots. Finally, the Kurdish respondents who identified with Kurdish people wherever they lived argued: ‘one people, one nation’. Three first generation respondents had been in Iraq, as a transit destination from where they sought asylum in the Netherlands. Kurds who did not identify with Kurds from other countries stated that their cultures were too different and that a united Kurdistan was an illusion.

The findings on general political interests (as seen by consumption of mass media and discussion of homeland politics) indicate interest in homeland and Dutch politics – and eagerness to follow homeland and Dutch news – go hand in hand.
Active discussion of homeland politics with contacts in the homeland does not hinder discussion of Dutch politics with native Dutch or members of the national/ethnic group. The factors that seem to determine general interest in homeland politics are political opportunities, length of stay, and migration motives. For political opportunities, the availability of homeland or diaspora media in the Netherlands is decisive. Discussing politics with homeland contacts over the phone is limited by cost (Surinamese) and safety for homeland contacts (Kurds). Finally, migrant groups with numerous political refugees, combined with a short length of stay (Kurds), tend to be most interested in homeland politics. Taken together, homeland politics is most often discussed with friends and relatives residing in the homeland and for whom this is part of their daily lives, rather than with contacts in third countries and in the Netherlands.

(Trans)national societal participation

General interest or disinterest in homeland news and politics is one thing, but what does this mean for concrete participation in collective action with a homeland goal? What does involvement in collective homeland activities imply for participation in Dutch civil society and in the civil society of one’s national/ethnic group? How does this involvement change with length of stay in the Netherlands? To address these issues we posed questions on migrants’ past and present membership in ethnic organisations, ethnic organisations with homeland activities, and Dutch organisations (see table 3.8).

Table 3.8 Organisational membership and homeland directed activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Suriname N=40</th>
<th>Turkey N=40</th>
<th>Kurds N=21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5/2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in activities for a homeland issue ≥ 19</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present membership in an ethnic organisation</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present membership in an ethnic organisation with homeland directed activities</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past membership in an ethnic organisation</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past membership in an ethnic organisation with homeland directed activities</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present membership in a Dutch organisation</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past membership in a Dutch organisation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19 Question G1a was: In the past were you ever occupied with a political or societal theme that has something to do with the homeland? If yes: signing or offering petitions, donations, participation in peaceful demonstrations, contacting the media, contacting politicians, other like...
Surinamese scored lower on participation in homeland-directed activities than Turks and Kurds. Only seven respondents had participated in at least one activity relating to a homeland social or political theme. Three were active in the 1980s when Suriname was ruled by the military, signing or offering petitions to the Dutch parliament on human rights. One respondent participated in annual protests in front of the Surinamese embassy in The Hague on the day the military rulers killed fifteen opponents of the regime on 8 December 1982:

We were there every year, always trouble… in the middle of the street we started quarrelling with Bouterse [leader of the 1980 revolution, LN] adherents… we wanted to address the issue [so-called ‘December murders’, LN]. How long did it take before the Dutch government positioned itself? […] But we also didn’t want the people of the Surinamese embassy to have a nice and quiet December 8. We wanted to let them know that we are here and to give to people who have been murdered a voice (Surinamese female, intermediate generation).

The other three respondents supported social activities directed towards Suriname, including raising funds for an orphanage, the Leprosy foundation, a Hindu temple, a football stadium and childcare. Finally, one person visited the ‘districtendagen’ organised in The Hague. On this day

[all Surinamese districts presented themselves, actually to promote their district and to provide information. And an important goal is that people meet, exchange knowledge and capital… and that the development of Suriname enters a take off phase…. Networks become visible, new networks between the Netherlands and Suriname are created… and this forms a base for societal changes in Suriname (Surinamese male, first generation).

Compared to Surinamese, Turks were much more actively involved in homeland issues. More than half the respondents (24) had participated at least once in an activity for a homeland issue; eighteen had donated money and goods via local mosques to the victims of the earthquake that hit the Marmara region in 1999. But that was not all. Three interviewees went to the region to provide medical aid and distribute food packets and other necessities. Another lent out his apartment in Istanbul to acquaintances who had lost their homes.

Other activities included donating money through organisations such as the Sunni Muslim organisation Millî Görüş and signing petitions. None, however, could recall what they had signed for, or for what goal funds had been raised. Only three interviewees had participated in demonstrations with a transnational character. The first marched in 1978 against the release of the movie ‘Midnight Express’.
to him, this film (about an American man put in a Turkish jail for smuggling hashish) portrayed Turkey negatively: ‘it was an incorrect picture’ (Turkish male, first generation). One woman marched regularly between 1980 and 1982 against military rule in Turkey. She also protested and collected signatures in 1993 when Sunni Muslims burnt down a hotel in Sivas, leading to the death of 37 Alevi and non-Alevi intellectuals and artists gathered for a cultural festival (see the next chapter). The third interviewee participated in a demonstration against the installation of the Kurdish Parliament in Exile (PKDW) in The Hague in 1995.

Kurdish respondents were more active in homeland political issues than their Surinamese and Turkish counterparts. Their numerous activities were all political and lasted over longer periods; it was therefore impossible for respondents to name them all. Most respondents told us about their protesting history and thereby indicated their political goals.

Three Kurds were already active in the 1980s and participated in activities against the junta in Turkey.

During the junta in 1980 we often demonstrated... in front of the Turkish consulate in Amsterdam.... The last ten years I have become less active, but before I was very involved. I performed with my az [kind of guitar, LN] during demonstrations. My lyrics were politically loaded, songs that were illegal in Turkey in those days (Kurdish male, first generation).

The majority (twelve) were especially active in the 1990s when the war between the Turkish army and the PKK was at its height (see chapter 7). For roughly a decade, people joined numerous protests, from signing petitions to contacting the media and politicians, and even going on hunger strikes. One respondent, who regularly joined protests organised by the PKK in the Netherlands in this period, explained:

When I was young... there was a human rights crisis in Turkey. We didn’t protest [in the Netherlands] against the Turks, but against the Turkish state. You could be arrested [in Turkey, LN] for only putting a red, yellow and green pepper together [colours of the Kurdish flag, LN]. I got emotionally involved [...] and became very active, went to demonstrations all the time. Information about protests spread very fast (Kurdish female, intermediate generation).

The arrest of PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan in 1999 sparked a great deal of protest. Two respondents participated in a hunger strike; others took to the streets in Amsterdam and The Hague.

When Apo [Öcalan, LN] was arrested, my nationalistic feelings came to the fore. I was devastated, I cried, it felt
like the Kurdish people were raped. I didn’t cry about him. I don’t have much sympathy for him, but despite the many mistakes of the PKK, he was the symbol of hope (Kurdish male, intermediate generation).

Marching in demonstrations against Öcalan’s arrest did not necessarily mean commitment to him as a leader. Another interviewee explained:

I often just came along with people, but I didn’t always agree with the goal of the demonstrations. The goal was to demand attention for the Kurdish question, but at the same time one individual [Öcalan, LN] was the central figure. I didn’t like that at all (Kurdish female, intermediate generation).

Most respondents felt that by the time of interviewing (2004), the situation in Turkey had improved and the need for protest was less urgent. Some stated that although the demonstrations in the 1990s had received media attention, goals had not been achieved. Others argued that the media only paid attention to demonstrations that turned violent, while the many peaceful marches did not receive the attention they had aimed for:

I don’t march anymore, because I feel it has no effect. If you truly want attention, then you – unfortunately – have to make trouble. I think the media would pay more attention if Kurds would shoot a bullet through the window of a Turkish restaurant, than to thousands of Kurds who protest again, for the hundredth time (Kurdish male, intermediate generation).

Eight respondents were still regularly involved in protests – signing petitions and occasionally attending demonstrations, including those in solidarity with Kurds in Iraq and Syria. As one interviewee explained:

I feel committed to all Kurds, not only in Turkey… if [Kurdish, LN] people for example are arrested or murdered I feel I have to do something. I can’t think of any reason why I shouldn’t demonstrate, that never happened to me (Kurdish male, first generation).

So far, events in the homeland seem to be the leading reason for participation in homeland directed activities. These events were often of a political nature, such as the 1980 coups in Suriname and Turkey and the arrest of the PKK leader Öcalan, while natural disasters such as the 1999 Marmara earthquake also triggered collective action. Participation thus largely appeared ad hoc.

To examine the extent to which migrants were more structurally involved in homeland activities, and how this participation had changed over time, we examined
past and present membership in ethnic organisations that pursued homeland-directed activities. To see how this related to integration within ethnic and Dutch civil society, we compared these memberships with involvement in ethnic and Dutch organisations.

One-quarter of Surinamese respondents were members of Surinamese organisations, the majority of which had activities aimed at Suriname. The most mentioned activities were fundraising and collecting goods for schools and orphanages in Suriname. Other recipients included sports clubs and religious, socio-cultural or interest organisations. In most cases migrant organisations targeted specific ethnic or religious groups: Afro-Surinamese, East Indian, Hindu, Muslim or Christian.

Socio-cultural organisations were more popular among Surinamese respondents than charities. This stemmed from past membership in socio-cultural (student) organisations during their studies. Student organisations’ activities towards Suriname followed the political climate there. One respondent was a member of a student organisation in the late 1960s, before Surinamese independence in 1975. In addition to welcoming newly arrived students, the organisation aimed to increase ‘black awareness’ and Surinamese nationalism – part and parcel of the independence struggle. Another respondent, active in a student organisation during the military regime in the 1980s, explained how it tried to influence diplomatic relations between the Netherlands and Suriname:

We closely followed political developments in Suriname… we organised discussion evenings, with someone who introduced a theme and presented his opinion. We also tried to inform Dutch politicians about the situation and urged them to do something about it (Surinamese female, intermediate generation).

In the 1990s, when Suriname had become a postcolonial democracy, another respondent was a member of the Surinamese student organisation Studiname in Rotterdam. Instead of trying to influence homeland politics as students in the 1960s and 1980s had done, they invited politicians and people from the private sector to keep them abreast of the latest political and economic developments in Suriname.

Overall, in the past as well as in the present, membership in Dutch organisations was more common among Surinamese than membership in ethnic ones. Roughly half the respondents at the time of interviewing were members of a Dutch organisation, most frequently sports clubs. Respondents also mentioned Dutch professional and student organisations as well as international charities such as UNICEF and Greenpeace.

At the time of interviewing, nine Turks were members of Turkish organisations. Sunni and Alevi organisations that, according to the respondents, were not engaged in activities directed towards Turkey were the most popular (five). One respondent was a
member of a Turkish organisation catering to Turks living in one Utrecht
eighbourhood. Only three were members of Turkish organisations with activities
directed towards Turkey. One respondent was an administrator in a local Alevi
organisation in The Hague engaged in religious and social activities in the
Netherlands. The organisation, however, also involved itself in political activities when
it was deemed necessary:

Three times a week, when we hold services in the *cem*
[Alevi place of worship, LN], I prepare meals for the
visitors… when something political happens in Turkey
[against Alevis, LN] we organise activities because we
[Alevis, LN] want to live in freedom (Turkish female,
intermediate generation).

One respondent was member of a Turkish student organisation that organises
seminars on Turkish topics and trips to ‘Turkey. Another was member of a *Milli Gəriş*
women’s organisation that, alongside activities to improve members’ knowledge of
Dutch society, invites Dutch politicians to speak on Dutch politics and Turkish
politicians visiting the Netherlands to keep members up to date on political
developments in Turkey.

Fewer respondents (seven) were members of Turkish organisations in the past;
these were more often focused on Turkey (five out of seven). Socio-cultural
organisations were more popular than religious ones. One respondent in 1986 was a
founding member of a Turkish cultural centre linked to the nationalist Turkish
political party MHP; it promoted integration of Turkish youths in Dutch society:

This organisation organised homework guidance,
computer training and Dutch language courses for
youths. But Turkish politics was also important. The
organisation was linked to a party in Turkey [the MHP,
LN]… there were around sixteen or seventeen of these
organisations in the Netherlands, the directors
maintained contacts with Turkey… you should never
forget your own country. You have to pay attention to
your own race (Turkish male, intermediate generation).

This individual left the organisation due to personal conflicts. Other respondents,
however, left social cultural organisations when the atmosphere became too
politicised due to tensions between Kurds and Turks in the mid 1990s:

I used to be a member of this Turkish cultural
organisation, just playing Turkish music and folk
dancing. But around 1995 I left…yes, because in this
period the organisation became politicised… I just
wanted to cooperate in joint cultural activities, not
Turkish or Kurdish… it really became political… that’s bad (Turkish male, intermediate generation).

Another respondent explained why he never became a member of a Turkish organisation in the Netherlands:

I was about to found a Turkish organisation in Delft with some friends [in the 1990s, LN] but I quit because they went on a Kurdish track… Hey, I mean, I am in the Netherlands! … I am not going to discuss Turkish politics in an association in the Netherlands. Really unnecessary. That’s my point. Turkish politics should be discussed in Turkey… you have no influence anyway … Turkish organisations are very isolated and work on their own. It’s kind of hopeless what they are doing (Turkish male, second generation).

While Turkish socio-cultural organisations with homeland activities – especially political ones – were on the decline, religious organisations emphasising spiritual development in the Netherlands were growing in popularity. Among the intermediate and second generation, there was a small increase in membership in Dutch organisations, especially sports clubs; others mentioned charity, professional, cultural and student organisations. Not one first generation Turk we interviewed was ever a member of a Dutch organisation.

At the time of interviewing in 2004, half of the Kurdish respondents (eleven) were members of a Kurdish organisation, most of which were involved in activities aimed at Turkey or Kurdistan. These included the Kurdish Information Centre (KIC) and a local chapter of the Kurdish federation FED-KOM. The diversity of organisations, however, was remarkable. Only three respondents were members of an organisation focused on Turkish Kurds. The other eight were members of either Turkish organisations, or Kurdish organisations targeting all Kurds. Finally, one was a founding member of an organisation that emphasised a specific local Turkish-Kurdish identity. The variety in the Kurdish sample shows that Kurds do not form a homogenous group acting separately from Turkish migrants.

Many respondents (six) were members of the Kurdish student association KVSN. The activities of this organisation, one member explained, focused on ‘Kurdistan’:

… we organise lectures, debates about actual topics, anything that interests people… It’s all about meeting other Kurdish students and to remain attached to the Kurdish cause… Yeah, we just try to keep the Kurdish cause alive… all our activities are directed to Kurdistan (Kurdish male, first generation).
Other members appreciated KVSN was no longer attached to a nationally oriented Kurdish political party such as the Turkish PKK. Instead, KSVN targeted Kurds from all over ‘Kurdistan’, including Iraq, Iran and Syria.

For me it is very important that KSVN now has members originating from all over Kurdistan, not only the Turkish part… everybody knows who has which political colour, but the association is not political anymore. Our association shows that Kurds are able to cooperate (Kurdish female, intermediate generation).

What I really like is that people from all over Kurdistan gather, normally everybody is separated… KSVN is not affiliated to any political party, it’s just fun… and it’s important to cooperate. If you aim at an independent Kurdistan, you will have to cooperate eventually (Kurdish male, intermediate generation).

Another respondent talked about political fatigue among Kurdish youths:

I am currently working on the founding of a new Kurdish organisation in The Hague… we want to give Kurdish organisational life a new impulse, no traditional Kurdish stuff, but music, pure culture and no politics, our youths really want this. Last month I organised a party, so many people called to ask who organised it. They actually asked which political party initiated the event. When I told them it was us, they were very happy. They are just tired of politics (Kurdish female, second generation).

A first generation respondent hoped to break down the barriers with a new organisation. It focused on a local (Dersim) identity, which gave room to Zaza speaking people:

We have founded Stichting Dersim. We said, we have to do something with Dersim to create an umbrella, because Dersim is a politicised area. In Dersim the Turkish left is very strong and all the Kurdish parties are strong, so doing something in Dersim which is bound to political parties… it won’t work… we think that Dersim needs to develop its own identity. Dersim shouldn’t be dominated by Kurmanji20 (Kurdish male, first generation).

Another first generation respondent was not tired of politics at all. Although he was a member of the Turkish-Kurdish workers organisation KOM-KAR, his

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20 One of the four Kurdish languages.
organisation looked beyond Turkey to Kurdish human rights issues in other countries as well:

The association maintains contacts with the media, with other Kurdish organisations and with Turkish democratic organisations… with demonstrations we seek attention for the Kurds from Syria and Iraq and the human rights situation in Turkey. We talk with the press, send out press releases and we prepare a dossier for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. We don’t talk directly to the minister but with a high ranked official (Kurdish male, first generation).

Three respondents were members of the Turkish-Kurdish federation FED-KOM, which mainly has activities for Kurmanî-speaking Kurds from Turkey.

Five Kurdish respondents were not members of specifically Kurdish organisations, but ones catering to all people from Turkey regardless of ethnicity. Examples include the Islamic organisation Millî Görîş and the leftist democratic workers organisations DİDEF and HTIB (see the next chapter). The activities of these organisations had no connection to the Kurdish cause. A member of DİDEF explained:

For example, we organise information meetings when … our contacts such as trade unions or student organisations in Turkey are put under pressure by the state… Or when someone is arrested unjustly and cannot afford a lawyer, we collect money so he is able to pay his lawyer…. And once this newspaper Eirensel had financial problems and was about to disappear. We organised a party and supported them with the money we raised (Kurdish male, first generation).

At the time of interviewing, seven Kurds were members of Dutch student, professional, charity, anti-racism and cultural organisations.

The general picture – both in the past and in the present – is that Kurds are the most, and Turks the least, active in ethnic organisations with homeland-directed activities. A remarkable shift, however, was seen among Kurdish youths: many seemed to be tiring of explicitly political activity and were embracing an umbrella Kurdish cultural and political identity independent of political parties and nation-states. At the time of interviewing, Surinamese were the most involved in organisations with charitable activities aimed at the homeland (see for Afro-Surinamese also Bijnaar 2007). While Surinamese in the past were more involved in organisations with homeland political activities, this declined after Suriname became a postcolonial democracy in the 1990s. Turkish membership in organisations with homeland activities also declined as individuals tried to avoid Turkish politics and focused on religious activities. Surinamese and Turkish involvement in Dutch
organisations correspondingly increased while Kurdish involvement remained roughly stable.

Taken together, these results on transnational societal participation indicate that the socio-economic and political climate in the country of origin (e.g. dictatorships, economic malaise, ethnic struggles and natural disasters) are decisive for participation in homeland activities and membership in ethnic organisations with homeland-directed activities. Once the situation in the homeland stabilises, we see a clear decline in transnational participation. Political opportunities in the country of origin seem especially important for groups in diaspora (Kurds) which feel excluded from political participation in the homeland. Finally, participation in Dutch civil society increases with length of stay.

(Trans)national electoral sympathies and preferences

The previous sections examined general political interest and participation in Dutch and migrant civil society. This section more closely examines specific political interests. Did the first generation sympathise with a particular political party or movement in the country of origin while still living there? Did they continue to sympathise with this party or movement after settling in the Netherlands? Did the second and intermediate generation inherit such sympathies? If given the chance, would respondents vote in homeland and Dutch elections? Did they give voting advice to homeland contacts? Which Dutch and homeland parties did they prefer?

Table 3.9 (Trans)national electoral activities: political parties

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Suriname N=40</th>
<th>Turkey N=40</th>
<th>Kurds N=21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5/2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathising with a homeland political party or stream at present</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathising with a homeland political party or stream in the past</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending an event of a homeland political party in the Netherlands ≥ 1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present membership in a Dutch political party</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past membership in a Dutch political party</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To answer these questions, we first asked respondents about their present and past sympathy for homeland political parties and movements and if they ever attended a homeland party event in the Netherlands (see table 3.9). We then asked how they expressed this sympathy. Following Kriesi, five types of sympathisers were distinguished: non-voters, voters, adherents, members, and activists (1993: 78). Activists constitute the core and non-voters the periphery; voters are those who voted for a party in the past or who say they would vote for it if elections were presently to take
place. Adherents do not just vote for a given party but are attached to it, without necessarily being members. Finally, in the inner-most circle, we find members who have already actively contributed to party activities – the party activists (ibid.).

Given the high scores on indicators of political interest, it is not surprising that Kurds score highest on sympathy with a political stream or party in the past and/or present. More surprising, however, was that almost half the Surinamese sympathised with a political party in the past, but no longer did so at the time of interviewing. How can this be explained?

Nineteen Surinamese had sympathised with a homeland political party in the past. First generation respondents mostly voted for a specific party in Suriname and attended its ‘mass meetings’ during campaigns. Visiting mass meetings, however, did not necessarily mean people were ‘activists’ or ‘adherents’. Mass meetings in Suriname are social events where families and friends get together to eat, drink and have a good time; it is not uncommon to frequent the mass meetings of several parties or alliances – for entertainment and to meet people (see also Brana-Shute 1990). Three intermediate and two second generation respondents had sympathised with a political party in the past because their parents or uncles were active in the party.

In the past, the most popular political parties were the traditional ones: NPS and VHP. Sympathy followed ethnic lines: Creoles sympathised with the NPS and East Indians with the VHP. The nine respondents who used to vote for the VHP all said they were East Indians. Another respondent explained how ethnicity was an incentive to become a member of the NPS, not least as he hoped party membership would facilitate socio-economic mobility:

[The NPS] that’s really the party for black people and I am black, so yes I felt and still feel committed because they are still doing very well... When I was young I went to the NPS to become a member... it was kind of an opportunistic move, because I saw other people benefited from party membership... you see I did sympathise with the party but the main incentive was that I hoped to obtain a scholarship for my studies... in the end it didn’t really get me anywhere, but my own strength did (Surinamese male, first generation).

In other cases family (also) played an important role:

Yeah, the fact that I am an Afro-Surinamese and my uncle was active in the NPS made me sympathise with this party (Surinamese male, second generation).

I was involved in Surinamese politics for twenty years, because my ex-husband was prime minister for the PNP (Surinamese female, first generation).
My parents were very active in the party [NPS, LN], so you just follow them. That is how it usually goes (Surinamese male, first generation).

At the time of interviewing, only two persons still sympathised with homeland political parties (to keep up to date with developments in Suriname). The large majority stopped sympathising with Surinamese political parties after settling in the Netherlands, arguing they now lived in the Netherlands and were ‘integrated’. None of the interviewees ever visited a meeting of a Surinamese party in the Netherlands.

Roughly half (seventeen) of the Turkish respondents had sympathised with a political party in the past. Some first generation respondents were active in a left or rightwing youth movement in the 1970s:

Before I came to the Netherlands 25 years ago, there was daily guerrilla war going on in the streets… with Dev Sol and the PKK… I wasn’t really active but I just came along with friends. You had to make a choice: left or right. I chose for the left (Turkish male, first generation).

Another respondent recounted how the ‘guerrilla style’ was continued in the Netherlands:

In Turkey I was very active within the Grey Wolves… demonstrating, discussing…. When I arrived in the Netherlands I continued… sometimes I ended up in street fights, helping other people out. I don’t like it when ten guys fight against one, so we help that one man. We get other people and also form a group of ten… I am older now, not as active anymore, but still a Grey Wolf… I sometimes go to the Türk İslam Vakfı [an organisation affiliated with a federation known for sympathy with the Grey Wolves, LN] … I just go there for fun and sometimes we discuss politics (Turkish male, first generation).

Two interviewees’ sympathy for a homeland party continued after settlement in the Netherlands. Breaks and conflicts within parties also affected them; in the event, both chose to support a new split-off of an older party:

I was one of the founding members of the AP in 1961… which now has been succeeded in the DYP… my brother has a high position within the party. When I call him I always ask about the DYP and he explains what’s going on (Turkish male, first generation).

In Turkey I helped the Refah Partisi very often… in many ways. For example, I secretly supported the people who ended up in jail because of the opinions they expressed,
like women who were detained because of wearing a
headscarf [in public spaces, LN]. Now, I support the
AKP… because the Refah Partisi is closed and Erbakan
[RP leader, LN] is old. Besides, Erdoğan [leader of the
AKP, LN] is a pupil of Erbakan. I was very angry when
Erbakan distanced himself from Erdoğan. Ever since I
have been supporting Erdoğan (Turkish male, first
generation).

In most cases, sympathy meant respondents voted for the party when they still lived
in Turkey. While the ANAP was popular, many respondents explained they lost
interest in the party after the death of its founding father, Turgut Özal.

As in the Surinamese case, the intermediate and second generation stated they
previously sympathised with a political party because their parents did:

I felt committed to the CHP because of my parents…
especially because of my mother…. She watched the
news every morning and if something happened she
started calling her friends. My parents voted for the
CHP, were fanatic, but weren’t active in the party
(Turkish female, intermediate generation).

My father used to work for an office of the Demokrat
Parti. At home I used to play with the cordons of the
party. It wasn’t a conscious choice, but I knew I was on
their side (Turkish male, intermediate generation).

Once when I visited Turkey I went to two meetings of
the ANAP during the [1999, LN] election campaign…
candidates came to visit the people… I went there.
Mainly because of my father, he was really into it
(Turkish male, second generation).

At the time of interviewing, only eight respondents still sympathised with a homeland
political party. Three travelled to Turkey to vote for the AKP in the 2002 elections:

We went on a holiday with 40 people and we all voted
for the AKP. We also raised and donated money for the
party and assisted the AKP campaign (Turkish male, first
generation).

Another respondent ended up campaigning for the CHP in 2002, partly by chance:

In 2002 we went with a group to a concert of Alevi şair
players in Istanbul… but it was also election time and I
distributed flyers for the CHP… I feel Turkey is going
backwards because of the AKP, you know, they are very
conservative Muslims. And the CHP, that’s the party of
Atatürk…. Unfortunately I couldn’t vote, because you
need a permit and I didn’t apply… on the one hand it didn’t really matter, but on the other hand my whole family is there… (Turkish female, intermediate generation).

Four other respondents more passively sympathised with a party and followed developments from a distance. Only two people had ever visited a meeting organised by a homeland political party in the Netherlands. One respondent went to a lecture organised by the AKP; the other went to a concert of the extreme left party DHKP/C (which is illegal in Turkey).

The Kurdish case differs. Two-thirds (fourteen) of the respondents had sympathised with a political party in the past. The main difference related to the migration motives of the first generation (or parents of the intermediate and second generation):

I was very active in the left movement [Dev Yol, LN] in the 1970s, when the PKK was established I joined them… smuggled weapons and joined their struggle [because of these activities he was arrested at the age of sixteen, LN] … actually I was sentenced to death, but because I was under the age of seventeen I was convicted to twenty years, after eleven years I was released. They [the Turkish intelligence service, LN] was keeping an eye on everything I was doing, so I fled (Kurdish male, first generation).

Like some Turkish respondents who were politically active before they migrated, several Kurdish individuals maintained their political sympathies after arriving in the Netherlands. One respondent, detained in Turkey for being active in the Kurdish socialist party PSK, continued his activities for the party in exile.

Changes in Kurdish individuals’ support for specific political groups mirrored developments in Turkey (see chapters 6 and 7). As in the Turkish and Surinamese cases, the political activity of the direct family influenced respondents’ political engagement. As one respondent who had previously sympathised with the PKK explained:

I grew up in Dersim, a very left-wing area… My parents were staunch communists and that was how I was raised… After the PKK was founded Dersim was influenced by Kurdish nationalists (Kurdish female, first generation).

One second generation respondent sympathised with the PKK, as her parents had done:

My father had a high position in the TKP/ML. This was a Marxist-Leninist party. They campaigned for Kurdish
cultural rights, language and culture [both the party and its cause were illegal in Turkey, LN]. In the early 1980s my parents fled to the Netherlands, here they became very active within the PKK, we went to meetings, hunger strikes and demonstrations all the time (Kurdish female, second generation).

But in some cases, socialisation outside the family appeared as an incentive to quit:

I used to be a communist, but maybe more because my whole environment was communist or socialist and we felt suppressed by the Turkish government… but when I went to school I learned other things. At a certain point I saw communism was leading nowhere (Kurdish male, intermediate generation).

In the past, Kurdish individuals sympathised with a variety of parties. Heading the list were two illegal Kurdish parties – the PSK and the PKK – as well as the legal party DEHAP and its predecessors. Kurds also sympathised with a variety of radical left parties or movements such as Dev Yol, the TKP and the TKP/ML. While the PKK was previously the most popular, some respondents stopped sympathising in the mid-1990s due to disappointment with its leader:

...around 1995 I became critical. I thought: this man [Öcalan, LN] cannot lead us, this man is acting like a God, at some point this goes wrong. He turns himself into a second Stalin. Then I became more passive, very passive. When he surrendered in 1999 we said this is betrayal. We wanted the PKK to continue their armed struggle (Kurdish male, first generation).

I got so tired of discussions that were leading us nowhere. I was extremely disappointed when Öcalan was arrested and apologised to the parents of the Turkish soldiers who died in fights with the PKK. I already said it before: he’s nuts… If he had been a true martyr, he would have continued his struggle till death (Kurdish female, intermediate generation).

Disappointment with the PKK explains why those who sympathised with a party dropped from fourteen in the past to nine at the time of interviewing. Despite criticism of its leadership, the PKK, together with DEHAP, evoked the most sympathy among respondents. Some argued that DEHAP and the PKK were the same. One individual who used to be a member of DEHAP explained:

Now I am a member of the PKK. In the Netherlands the PKK supports the struggle in Kurdistan, in Turkey they fight against the Turkish army and protect the
Kurdish people in the region.... In fact DEHAP is the political wing of the PKK. They must be crazy to admit this, but every Kurd knows... so actually I didn’t really change (Kurdish male, intermediate generation).

Only one respondent voted for DEHAP in the 2002 elections in Turkey. Another obtained a seat in the Kurdish parliament in exile where he represented the PKK. More generally, however, sympathy for Kurdish or Turkish parties is expressed through attending events organised by these parties or their representatives. These meetings are often combined with cultural activities such as festivals and concerts, with political speeches mixed in between. Apart from building solidarity, these events are important fundraisers. Sixteen respondents had visited such an event more than once, not necessarily organised by the same party; all sixteen declared they had donated money or bought a ticket – even if they did not intend to actually attend – to financially support the party.

The largest number of respondents (ten) frequented meetings organised by DEHAP:

I went to a meeting just after they changed the name from HADEP to DEHAP. I think it was to promote the new name. Later they also organised a festival with lectures and music (Kurdish male, first generation).

I went to election campaigns. DEHAP had a kind of solidarity tour in Europe, for example at a festival in Germany. Back in Turkey he [DEHAP official, LN] got arrested for this (Kurdish female, second generation).

Often it’s not the party, but representatives of the party in the Netherlands who organise these kinds of events, because DEHAP officials have difficulties obtaining visas (Kurdish male, intermediate generation).

Six respondents attended meetings of the PKK (not officially announced like DEHAP events). Another respondent regularly attended lectures by PSK officials, while three Kurdish respondents frequented the events of the illegal radical Turkish parties DHKP/C and DKP. These meetings regularly took place together with concerts by leftwing or Kurdish artists:

I often go to Kurdish parties and festivals... The music, the songs, it’s always about politics and always political speeches are given. You can’t separate those things... I also went to concerts of Dev Sol [DHKP/C, LN] and DKP, but I really went for the artists... and yeah they have a clear ideology. They are Turkish, but pro-Kurdish. That’s a good thing (Kurdish female, second generation).
That so many Kurdish respondents had recently taken part in the meetings of Kurdish or Turkish political parties is hardly surprising; parties such as the PKK, PSK and DHKP/C are illegal in Turkey and mobilise among leftwing or Kurdish migrants in Europe (see also chapter 7). Parties that are legal in Turkey also organise activities in the Netherlands because they are newly founded (AKP) or have succeeded an old party under a new name (DEHAP). Surinamese parties, in contrast, do not seem to provide many opportunities for individuals living in the Netherlands to participate.

These opportunities are reflected in past and present levels of ‘sympathy’ for homeland political parties. Among Surinamese, one person could be categorised as a party ‘activist’ and another as an ‘adherent’ while still living in Suriname. Seventeen fell under the category of ‘voters’. But by the time of interviewing in 2004, only two Surinamese still felt committed to a Surinamese party, and even then only passively: they followed news on party matters mainly through the media.

Among Turkish respondents, four were party ‘activists’ while still living in Turkey. Thirteen were ‘voters’ or (because they were less than eighteen years of age) committed to the party because their parents were activists or adherents. After settlement in the Netherlands – or among the second generation – four could still be categorised as ‘activists’, voting in Turkey and/or actively campaigning for the party of their choice. Four others maintained their sympathy more passively and followed party matters from a distance.

Among Kurdish respondents, we see that all persons who said they sympathised with a political party in the past were activists or adherents, in that they actively involved themselves in party activities. After migrating to the Netherlands, nine said they (still) sympathised with a party; all can be considered activists or adherents due to their active participation in all kinds of activities organised by (representatives of) these parties. Technically, the majority of Kurdish respondents (eighteen, see table 3.3) were able to vote in Turkish elections since they have dual citizenship. But only one respondent actually travelled to Turkey to exercise his right to vote – a low figure considering the relatively high number of party activists. This can partly be explained by the fact that some first generation respondents are political refugees and are afraid to return to Turkey. The majority of respondents also support parties that are illegal and thus do not compete in Turkish elections.

Dutch political parties

At the time of interviewing, Kurdish respondents clearly sympathised most actively with political parties (see table 3.9). Did this also apply to Dutch politics? Compared to Turks and Surinamese, Kurds were relatively more often members of a Dutch party. Two Kurdish respondents were active members of the green-left (GL) and socialists (SP) parties. Two Turkish respondents were likewise active members of GL. Among Surinamese, four interviewees had previously been members of a Dutch
political party (GL and the social democratic PvdA). Two persons gave up their membership for financial reasons, and because active politics was not to their liking. At the time of interviewing, two respondents were still members of the PvdA. One, however, added that he used to be more active in the past:

[I]t’s not a party for workers anymore. That’s sad. It was a beautiful party in the era of uncle Joop [den Uyl, PvdA leader between 1967 and 1986, LN]. He was a great guy. I get emotional when I think of it… I used to talk to people, told them about the PvdA view and their importance for society and strongly recommended them to vote for this party (Surinamese male, first generation).

What does sympathy for homeland parties and membership in Dutch parties mean for voting behaviour? We asked respondents whether, if possible, they would vote in homeland or Dutch elections. If they could vote in the homeland, would they advise friends and family to vote for their preferred party? The answers to these questions are summarised in table 3.10.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.10 Possible voting in elections and homeland voting advice</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would give voting advice to friends and family in the homeland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would possibly vote for national homeland elections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would possibly vote for Dutch local or national elections</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The vast majority of respondents would vote in Dutch elections (if they were able to). Considering their low scores on present sympathy for homeland political parties, it is striking that Surinamese scored higher than Turks on whether they would vote in the homeland. This might be explained by the fact that Surinamese cannot have dual nationality. For them the question was purely theoretical: thirteen of those who said they might vote in Surinamese elections said it was a stupid, unrealistic question. The majority of hypothetical homeland voters also stated they wouldn’t know who to vote for because they weren’t familiar with the parties.

For Turks and Kurds with dual or Turkish nationality (the majority, see table 3.3), the question is more realistic: they can vote in Turkey. Some actually did, as we saw earlier in the section on sympathies for Turkish and Kurdish parties. Nevertheless, less than half of the Turkish and not even a third of the Kurdish respondents indicated they would exercise their right to vote. Many said they didn’t want to travel all the way to Turkey to cast their ballots. Some added they might vote
if they were visiting Turkey anyway. For Kurdish interviewees who came to the Netherlands for political reasons, voting in Turkey was hard to imagine – for them, visiting Turkey remains dangerous. Two other Kurdish respondents indicated other reasons why they would never vote in Turkish elections. For one, it would clash with his Kurdish nationalist agenda. The other was rather pessimistic about the effect of voting:

In my opinion Kurds should never enter the Turkish parliament. If we want to separate, we shouldn’t cooperate with Turks (Kurdish male, first generation).

Absolutely not! You know, when the AKP started governing we thought Turkey would become Islamic, but no, they just do what the US tells them to do. Nothing changes anyway (Kurdish male, intermediate generation).

Nevertheless, during election campaigns Kurds and Turks gave friends and family voting advice more often than Surinamese. The majority of Surinamese respondents stated that how their contacts vote in Suriname is none of their business; they would have their own opinions and would know best what to do. The same reasoning was expressed by more than half the Turkish and Kurdish respondents. The Turks who gave advice simply did so because ‘their party is best’. In contrast, some Kurdish respondents recalled they would call their contacts, even if they already knew they would vote for the ‘Kurdish’ DEHAP. Just to be sure, as each vote counts.

If respondents had to vote for national homeland or Dutch elections, which party would they vote for? We handed respondents show cards with the main homeland and Dutch parties and asked them to indicate with a number from 1 to 10 the probability they would vote for this particular party and why (see Tillie 1995 for the theoretical foundations of political party preference). The results are reproduced in simplified form in table 3.11 (for a detailed overview by country of origin/ethnicity and generation, see tables B.7-12 in appendix B).

The Dutch social democratic party PvdA was the most popular among Surinamese and Turks. Generally, both Turks and Surinamese said they liked the party’s policies on labour, health care, childcare and social equality. Turks added they found the party attractive because of its immigration policies. Among Kurds, the PvdA shared first place with the leftist parties GroenLinks and SP. GroenLinks was popular because it was perceived to be the most ‘left’; the SP was appreciated for its ‘disciplined’ opposition in parliament. Kurds who rated the PvdA highest stated similar reasons. Two respondents said they preferred the SP and the PvdA because they had good Kurdish and Turkish candidates. The great majority of all respondents (97 out of 101) rated the LPF lowest, arguing the party is ‘racist’ and against
foreigners. While the LPF no longer exists, at the time of interviewing in 2004 it was a significant force in Dutch politics.

Table 3.11 Political party preferences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Suriname</th>
<th>Turkey</th>
<th>Kurds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dutch political parties</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest preference (8-10)</td>
<td>PvdA</td>
<td>PvdA</td>
<td>SP/PvdA/GroenLinks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowest preference (1-3)</td>
<td>LPF</td>
<td>LPF</td>
<td>LPF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Homeland political parties</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest preference (8-10)</td>
<td>VHP/NPS</td>
<td>AKP</td>
<td>DEHAP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowest preference (1-3)</td>
<td>NDP/ABOP</td>
<td>DEHAP</td>
<td>MHP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Don’t know the parties (average)</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeland</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As for homeland political party preference, it is telling that around a third of Surinamese respondents were unfamiliar with parties in Suriname and were thus unable to rate them (generational differences were negligible).\(^{21}\) In contrast, only four Turkish and one Kurdish respondent were unable to rate the parties because they did not know them.

Among Surinamese, the NPS and the VHP were the most popular parties; this was comparable to findings on past political sympathies. The majority of respondents who favoured the NPS said voting for the party was a family tradition; the majority of respondents who rated the VHP highest explained the party represented the interests of their ethnic group (East Indians). The multiethnic NDP and the Maroon party ABOP were the least popular. The NDP was lowly rated because many people saw its leader, Desi Bouterse, as a criminal; his performance when he ruled the country as head of the army (1980-1987) also attracted criticism. The ABOP received low ratings because people did not really know the party. Respondents also associated its leader,

\(^{21}\) Radio *Worldomroep* conducted a telephone survey in May 2005 among 500 Surinamese in the Netherlands. They were asked for whom they would vote, were voting possible. The results were comparable to ours: 54 per cent of respondents could not name a party; the NPS and the VHP were the most popular (16 and 9 per cent, respectively).

Ronny Brunswijk, with violence for his past leadership of a guerrilla army (see chapter 5).

Among Kurds, DEHAP was popular because ‘it’s the only Kurdish party’. The level of support, however, should not be overestimated: a quarter of respondents (five) graded DEHAP with a 1. Some suggested DEHAP cooperated with Turkish parties. Others felt DEHAP was too radical and that there was no need for a separate Kurdish party. A large majority of Turkish respondents rated DEHAP lowest because they were ‘communists’, ‘violent’ and/or illegitimately wanted to divide Turkey. Most Turks preferred the AKP, in government for two years at the time of interviewing and perceived to have improved Turkey’s social and economic stability. All Kurds rated the MHP with a 1 – for its nationalist and ‘anti-Kurdish’ ideology.

For Dutch parties, the social democratic preferences of Turks and Surinamese in our sample corresponded with the results of the 2002 Amsterdam municipal elections, with the PvdA the most popular party among Turks and Surinamese (Michon & Tillie 2003: 6). Numbers are unfortunately unavailable for Kurdish voting behaviour. Homeland voting preferences also corresponded with election results in the last national and municipal elections in the countries of origin (in Turkey in 2002 and 2004, in Suriname in 2005). In Turkey the AKP became the largest party after national elections in 2002, and locally after the municipal elections in 2004. While DEHAP did not gain influence nationally, it had a strong showing in the southeast, where many Kurds live (for previous elections see Güneş-Ayata & Ayata 2002; İncioglu 2002). In Suriname the VHP and NPS won the elections in 2005 in the alliance Nieuw Front and entered a second term in government. These outcomes suggest that Surinamese, Turkish and Kurdish party preferences reflect party preferences of the majority of voters in the homeland.

In sum, the findings on (transnational) electoral activities and possible voting behaviour and advice suggest that migrant sympathies with homeland political parties diminish as they settle and come to consider themselves ‘integrated’ (Surinamese). This, however, is combined with actual opportunities to (continue to) sympathise with homeland parties in the Netherlands. As the results have shown, Surinamese parties seem to provide no opportunities for migrants to participate, whereas Turkish parties provide few and Kurdish parties provide plenty of room for those living in the Netherlands to be actively involved in party matters. These opportunities are reflected in the types of sympathy they generate. ‘Party activists’ were found most frequently among Kurds. Voting for a homeland party is a political opportunity that can only be used by sympathisers of legal political parties who (also) maintain homeland citizenship – and feel they can safely return to vote.

Whether migrants wanted to vote in homeland elections had no impact on their desire to vote in the Netherlands; the majority of respondents indicated they would vote in the next Dutch elections. The ability to vote in homeland elections bore directly on homeland party preferences. Many migrants without dual citizenship
(Surinamese) were unfamiliar with homeland parties. Finally, homeland party preferences seemed to mirror homeland election results. With the low scores on giving homeland voting advice, this implies migrants do not influence homeland politics as much as homeland politics influence migrant politics.

**Reproducing transnational political involvement?**

The quotes in the previous section showed that kinship influenced sympathy and voting preferences for political parties while still living in the country of origin. This dovetails with Kriesi’s findings on Dutch voting behaviour, which showed that in the early 1990s political socialisation through the family remained an important determinant of voting preference. Preferences were largely transmitted from one generation to the next (Kriesi 1993: 80).

Do kinship ties also affect transnational political involvement? To answer this question, we examined the similarities and differences of transnational involvement among related respondents. As recounted previously, we asked respondents to name a relative of another generation whom we could approach for an interview. In total we interviewed seventeen Surinamese, twelve Turkish and two Kurdish ‘pairs’ (see appendix B, table B.3). This section focuses on some current indicators: embeddedness in migrant civil society, Dutch political party membership, sympathy for a homeland political party, participation in homeland activity, and participation in homeland parties’ events in the Netherlands (see table 3.12).

Of the 31 pairs we interviewed, only one pair (two sisters) sympathised with the same homeland party (AKP), one pair (mother-daughter) were members of the same Dutch political party, and four pairs were member of the same ethnic organisation with homeland activities (mother-daughter, father-son two, sisters). Eight pairs participated in the same activity with a homeland goal; seven of them donated money or goods via the same organisation or person to the victims of the 1999 earthquake in Turkey. Especially Surinamese scored low in this respect. Only one pair was member of the same ethnic organisation with homeland activities, a very small foundation that donates money to an orphanage in Suriname. But the son’s membership here came as no surprise: his father founded the orphanage. Transnational political activities thus do not seem to be reproduced by younger generations.

In some cases, we found pairs had inherited a preference for a specific political party. One intermediate generation Turkish woman sympathised with the CHP and explained the preference came from her parents. She actively campaigned for the CHP when in Turkey during the 2002 election campaign. Her second generation daughter, however, did not sympathise with the party and did not accompany her on the trip. The same intermediate generation Turkish woman sits on the board of an Alevi organisation in the Netherlands, which occasionally organises activities directed at Turkey. She helped out with activities and was there three times a week. Her daughter also became a member of this organisation, but whereas the mother stated it
engaged in homeland activities, the daughter claimed it did not – probably because she
did not participate in them. At the same time, the mother is a member of the Dutch
political party GroenLinks. Like her own parents, who were fanatical supporters of
the CHP when living in Turkey, she is, in her own words, a ‘fanatic’ in GroenLinks.
Thanks to her enthusiasm, a large part of the family in the Netherlands became
members of the party, including her second generation daughter and first generation
parents.

Table 3.12 Reroduction of transnational political activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>‘Generation’ 22</th>
<th>Suriname N=34</th>
<th>Turkey N=24</th>
<th>Kurds N=4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation in activities for a homeland issue 23</td>
<td>pair 1 2</td>
<td>pair 1 2</td>
<td>Pair 1 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- 6 1</td>
<td>7 11 7</td>
<td>1 1 1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership in an ethnic organisation</td>
<td>1 3 1</td>
<td>1 4 2</td>
<td>2 2 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership in an ethnic organisation with homeland directed activities</td>
<td>1 3 1</td>
<td>1 2 2</td>
<td>2 2 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathy with a homeland political party or stream</td>
<td>- 1 -</td>
<td>1 4 1</td>
<td>- - -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in activity of homeland political party in the Netherlands 23</td>
<td>- - -</td>
<td>- - -</td>
<td>1 1 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership in a Dutch political party</td>
<td>1 - 2</td>
<td>- - -</td>
<td>- - -</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In another case, a first generation Turkish father used to be very active in the
Refah Partisi, at the time of interviewing, he sympathised with its spin-off, the AKP.
He even went to Turkey with 40 others to vote for the party. His intermediate
generation son, however, no longer sympathised with any Turkish political parties;
when he did in the past, it was with the MHP and not his father’s party.

A politically active Kurdish couple who fled from Turkey passed on their
involvement in the Kurdish movement to their two daughters, who remain very active
in organisations and events. When they were young, their parents took them to
dozens of demonstrations and events, mainly of the PKK. According to the

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22 Initially we asked mainly first generation respondents to give us names of a second generation
respondent. As we have sisters, nephews, etc. in the sample, this didn’t work in some cases. ‘First’ therefore
refers to the older respondent, generally belonging to the first generation. ‘Second’ refers to the younger
respondent, generally born in another decade and often belonging to the 1.5 or second generation.
23 Question G1a was: Were you in the past ever occupied with a political or social theme that had
something to do with the homeland? If yes: signing or offering petitions, donations, participation in
peaceful demonstrations, contacting the media, contacting politicians, other like...
daughters, their parents are no longer as active and feel the younger generation should take over. Only in this one case was pure homeland political interest reproduced.

Parental migration motives, however, do not explain everything. One Kurdish intermediate generation youth (not interviewed within a pair) was very active within Kurdish ethnic organisations and DEHAP, though his parents arrived in the Netherlands as labour migrants. He stated his parents initially did not support his political path:

My parents, and actually my whole family, tried to keep me away from politics as long as possible, because they are afraid for me being arrested in Turkey for what we are doing. What we do is, of course, not illegal… But for sure sometimes I am afraid that if I go to Turkey they say hey […] aren’t you member of this and that organisation… It’s a risk, but I take my chances (Kurdish male, intermediate generation).

In this case the intermediate generation respondent was more interested in Kurdish politics than his parents. It is not an isolated example. Van Bruinessen (2000) found that Kurds who arrived in the Netherlands as ‘Turkish guest workers’ in the 1970s – before the flourishing of the Kurdish nationalist movement (see chapter 7) – had internalised Turkey’s official doctrine that every citizen of Turkey is a Turk. Only gradually did these migrants in Europe ‘rediscover’ their Kurdish identity. This process of rediscovery – which owes much to the activities of political refugees – is ongoing. The children of immigrant workers who grew up in Europe thus tend to be much more interested in Kurdish identity and politics than their parents. ‘Labour migrant’ parents did not politicise their children; rather, many parents returned to their Kurdish roots under the influence of their children (Van Bruinessen 2000).

In sum, the data on pairs suggests that first generation individuals who remain politically attached to the homeland are unlikely to transmit their political affiliations to their children or to other younger relatives in the Netherlands. As Van Bruinessen’s work (2000) shows, neither can parental political migration motives explain such transmission; we need to take into account the historical and political environment that provides second generations with opportunities to be transnationally active, but also to drop out. This point is underlined by Eckstein, who argues that ‘generational experiences are not only grounded in intra-family dynamics but very much shaped by the historical context in which parents and children live’ (2002: 12 see also Manheim 1959 [1952]: 292; Butterfield 1971: 30; Stacey 1978). For Kurds, the (changing) historical context was the arrival of Kurdish nationalist exiles in the Netherlands. These exiles were part of a Kurdish movement in Turkey that gained ground after many Kurds came to the Netherlands as Turkish labour migrants. By continuing their nationalist activities in diaspora, Kurdish refugees provided the children of labour migrants with opportunities to become involved in diaspora politics and to politicise
their parents. Thus different generations were more likely to politicise one another when diaspora politics was rife. Transnational politicisation within the same family, however, rarely occurred; we found politicisation by parents significant for the first generation prior to migration.

**Dutch political opportunity structures**

The previous section showed that the historical context – or in terms of the explanatory factors outlined in chapter 2, homeland political climate and migrant civil society – were more important for politicisation than family ties. The preceding sections also showed that the majority of respondents, if they could, would vote in Dutch elections. We further saw that Kurds were more interested in homeland politics and were more embedded in ethnic organisations with homeland activities than Turks and Surinamese. How do these findings relate to trust in Dutch politics? Are people transnationally active because they feel excluded from the Dutch political opportunity structure, as scholars like Koopmans et al. (2005) have argued?

To answer these questions we more closely examine two aspects of the Dutch general and field-specific political opportunity structure. The first concerns consultation of migrants regarding group-specific and general problems. The Dutch government’s creation of national advisory boards in 1985 resulted in the creation of the Consultative Council of Turks in the Netherlands (IOT) and the Consultative Council of Surinamese in the Netherlands (SIO). Made up of national Turkish and Surinamese federations (see also the next chapter), the IOT and the SIO represent their respective group’s ‘general interests’ regarding social development, healthcare, seniors and so on and give both solicited and unsolicited advice. In 1998, they were brought together under the roof of the National Consultation Minorities (LOM), installed to advise the government on integration policy (similar advisory bodies existed on a local level see Vermeulen & Penninx 2000: 23-24).

With this aspect of the political opportunity structure in mind, we asked respondents whether they felt their ethnic group was sufficiently consulted regarding group-specific and general problems (see table 3.13). The majority of Kurds (eighteen) thought Kurdish group-specific and general interests were unrepresented because Dutch institutions see them as Turks. One respondent argued that Kurds should become members of the IOT. Another rhetorically asked: ‘How could Kurdish interests be represented if I am not even able to register as a Kurd?’ Another respondent felt Kurds were not consulted because ‘institutions don’t talk with radicals’. Three individuals stated the opposite; they felt sufficiently consulted, because in their opinion Kurds should not be consulted separately from Turks.
Table 3.13 Consultation of ethnic/national group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Suriname N=40</th>
<th>Turkey N=40</th>
<th>Kurds N=21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.5/2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation regarding group-specific problems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation regarding general problems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Around half of the Turkish respondents felt Turks were not sufficiently consulted over group-specific (22) and general (eighteen) problems. Many stated that politicians should more often visit places where Turks gather, and take their opinions more seriously. Respondents who thought their problems were sufficiently represented pointed to Turkish organisations and mosques defending their interests.

A good third of Surinamese individuals did not know whether Surinamese interests were sufficiently represented. As many thought Surinamese were insufficiently consulted, but argued that Surinamese themselves were to blame. In their opinion, Surinamese are not active enough in organisations and thus invisible to Dutch institutions. Those who thought their group was adequately consulted generally saw parliamentarians of Surinamese origin as their representatives; others pointed to the Surinamese advisory organ (SIO). Thirteen (out of 40) Surinamese respondents did not know whether Surinamese were sufficiently consulted over general problems; 18 felt that they were.

The presence or absence of parliamentarians from one’s own ethnic group seemed to significantly affect feelings of being adequately represented among some Surinamese and Kurdish individuals. How did they estimate the possibility of a member of their ethnic group being elected locally or nationally? The second aspect of the political opportunity structure under study is thus the representation of migrants in Dutch political parties. Migrants with Dutch nationality are obviously able to vote in Dutch general and municipal elections, while migrants without Dutch nationality but who have lived in the Netherlands for at least five years obtained in 1986 both passive and active voting rights in municipal elections. Migrants have since been represented in (especially left) Dutch parties. While Turkish and Surinamese vote for parties first, they also vote on the basis of ethnicity (Michon & Tillie 2003: 43-44).
Generally speaking, migrants in the period under study have been underrepresented in the cabinet, parliament, municipal councils and other political bodies (see for example De Beus 2002). In 2002, 113 Turkish and 36 Surinamese city councillors were elected (IPP 2006: 3), while the number of Turkish city councillors who identify as Kurdish remains unknown. In 2003, four Members of Parliament had Surinamese ancestry while three had Turkish backgrounds. In 2003, twelve members of the Provincial Executive had Turkish ancestry while ten members had Surinamese backgrounds. These numbers seem to suggest that Turks are better represented than Surinamese in local and national politics, though this is not the case for other political positions. Functions like minister, state secretary, mayor and alderman have been filled by individuals with Surinamese but not Turkish backgrounds.

With these numbers in mind, we asked respondents to indicate which candidate with which ethnicity had the highest and lowest chances of being elected in local and national elections. Did estimates differ between the groups? And why? We posed this question as we felt it would be more fruitful to focus on differences between ‘us’ and ‘them’ to reveal group self-image (see Cadat & Fennema 1996 for similar questions on the self-image of migrant politicians). We asked our respondents the following question: There are four persons with different ethnicities. Could you rate on a scale from 1-10 who, according to you, has the highest chance of becoming a municipal councillor or member of parliament? The average scores are presented in table 3.14 by generation and country of origin/ethnicity.

All respondents thought that ethnic Dutch have the highest chance of obtaining a seat on the municipal council or parliament. Surinamese graded their own group the highest (after the Dutch), arguing that they are more ‘Dutch’, have more political experience and are generally more accepted. In contrast, they rated Turks and Kurds low, because in their view they speak Dutch rather poorly. Kurds rated Turks higher than Kurds because, as they argued, Turks are more numerous, have their own country and are more active politically. Finally, Turks argued that they have a higher chance than Kurds because Kurds have a negative image, are associated with the PKK, do not have a homeland and are small in number.

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24 Via the internet and personal communication, there should have been at least three city councillors that identified as Turkish-Kurd, see also http://www.azady.nl/readarticle.php?article_id=433, accessed on 27 November 2007. In official statistics, however, they are counted as Turks.
Table 3.14  Presumed electoral chances per population group, scores 1-10 (average)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generation</th>
<th>Suriname N=40</th>
<th>Turkey N=40</th>
<th>Kurds N=21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surinamese</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turks</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurds</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kurds thus felt least represented in and most excluded from the Dutch political arena. At the same time, they are the most active politically, interested in both Dutch and homeland politics. This suggests that homeland political activity does not preclude political participation in the Netherlands, but may actually reinforce it. Surinamese are politically and socially more active in the Netherlands than Turks, but have little interest in homeland politics – they seem ‘politically assimilated’ in the Netherlands. Turks are positioned between the two other groups. While they were more active in ethnic organisations with homeland activities in the past, Turks today are more often members of Turkish organisations – such as mosque organisations – which focus on activities in the Netherlands. Their interests have gradually shifted from the homeland to strengthening their own Turkish identity in the Netherlands.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined several indicators for transnational politics: general interest in Dutch and homeland politics, (trans)national societal participation, Dutch and homeland electoral sympathies and preferences, their reproduction through kinship ties, and (perceived) opportunities within Dutch politics.

Of the three groups, Kurds were the most interested in homeland politics and Surinamese the least – here interest seemed to be reinforced by the availability of (political) opportunities in the country of origin and in diaspora. Participation in homeland-directed activities was largely determined by homeland political developments (or crises, such as earthquakes); involvement in homeland politics for all groups waned as the urgency passed. We further saw that transnational political involvement was unlikely to be passed on from the first to the intermediate or second generation; in the Kurdish case, the contemporary context – in this case, the influx of political refugees – had a greater effect on group politicisation. Under these conditions, intermediate and second generations could influence the transnational behaviour of the first generation.

The degree to which respondents felt included or excluded by Dutch (migrant) politics corresponded with the ethnic group’s participation in formal structures and visibility in elected office. Surinamese generally felt more included than Turks, though

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not regarding group-specific issues. Kurds felt excluded on most levels because they are not recognised and represented as Kurds but as Turks.

So far, we can state that Kurds are most involved in transnational activities and Surinamese the least. This can partly be explained by the selection bias of highly educated and politically engaged respondents in our Kurdish sample. The analysis, however, revealed the importance of homeland opportunities for transnational activity. Combined with general background characteristics, we can conclude that at the individual level, transnational political activities and ties are most likely to develop when a person’s migrant group:

- is excluded from homeland politics or does not have a homeland;
- has a high percentage of migrants with political migration motives;
- arrived relatively recently, thus containing a large first generation;
- is highly politicised, with politics being a part of daily cultural and social life;
- has a highly developed civil society;
- maintains a strong ethnic identity that forms the basis for a nationalist programme;
- feels politically excluded or insufficiently represented in the country of settlement.

Additionally, we found that Kurds were more involved and interested in Dutch politics than Turks, but less than Surinamese. In more abstract terms, this means that intense homeland activity and social and political interest and participation in the country of settlement are not mutually exclusive – they can easily go together (though of course they don’t have to, as seen in the almost politically assimilated Surinamese). Political engagement with the country of origin seems to positively affect political interest in the country of settlement. What matters is that one is politically engaged at all.

So far, the findings on individual transnational political ties and activities suggest that at least some of the factors presented in figure 2.1 in the previous chapter are valid: political opportunities in the countries of origin and the country of residence, homeland political climate, migration motives, length of stay and migrant civil society. How do these findings fare at the collective level? Are patterns there comparable to findings for individuals? The next chapter examines the transnational ties of Turkish, Turkish-Kurdish and Surinamese organisational networks in the Netherlands.