You will never again be a Chilean like the others:
From diaspora to diasporic practices among Chilean refugees returning from exile

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Abstract

In this paper we focus on repatriation of refugees who came to Norway after the coup d'état in Chile in 1973. The Chilean refugees formed part of a diaspora during exile. The authors' concern is the returnees' relationship with the diaspora upon return.

The purpose of the article is to discuss whether the notion of diaspora may contribute to an understanding of the situation of the returnees. Diaspora is widely used in migration studies, although the concept is not particularly related to studies on refugees and their return.

The article is based on interviews with Chilean returnees from Norwegian exile. The authors argue that their situation may be best understood as one of continued diasporic identity and diasporic consciousness.

Key words: Chile, refugees, exile, return migration, diaspora, diasporic practice, diasporic consciousness

Introduction

This article focuses on the repatriation of refugees who came to Norway after the coup d'état in Chile in 1973. The purpose is to discuss whether the notion of diaspora may contribute to a better understanding of the returnees' situation. The concept of diaspora is widely used in migration studies, although it is seldom used in studies on either refugees or returnees (Bolzman, 2002). This concept is traditionally used in relation to the dispersion of a population caused by a forced or traumatic historical event (Cohen, 1995). For Bolzman (2002), who writes about Chilean refugees, exile is the starting point for a diaspora. Exile can be described as a situation that results from having to leave one's native country within a context of political violence.

Diaspora originally referred to the dispersal of Jews from their historic homeland, though now it is often utilised to describe various well-established communities that have experienced any type of displacement. There has been an increasing preoccupation with the theorising of "diaspora" over the past decades, and the concept has been highly contested (Braziel and Mannur, 2003). Today, some argue that the term is now applied too loosely to describe any community with a history of migration (Brubaker, 2005; King and Christou, 2008), and it has been claimed that the concept is overused and under-theorised (Vertovec, 1996). Diaspora studies have often focused on marginalisation, persecution and loss, but also on survival and hope for the future (Berg, 2010:116). Our purpose here is to demonstrate that the concept may also be useful in shedding light on the process of return migration.

In this article, we pose three main questions: Firstly, how are diasporic practices upheld after returning to the country of origin? Secondly, whether it is possible to leave a diaspora, or thirdly, if belonging to a diaspora is a long-lasting or even permanent condition?

Social workers are engaged in refugees settling into exile as well as in their preparation for returning to their country of origin. Knowledge about dilemmas and challenges the repatriated might face upon return after having been abroad under such specific circumstances for several years could improve social work with refugees, as social workers gain a better understanding of the challenges related to return migration.

After a short introduction to the Chilean diaspora, we will present a theoretical discussion of the concept of diaspora. Based on interviews, we then describe, analyse and discuss some experiences of returning from exile.

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Methodical approach

In the autumn of 2006 we interviewed 13 women and men who had been back in Chile for at least three years after returning from exile in Norway. They had all been politically active, or had close family members who had been politically active before they left Chile. The interviewees were recruited through three independent Chilean-Norwegian networks and lived in various parts of the country, including both rural and urban areas.

The interviews were qualitative and semi-structured. Nine individual and one group interviews were conducted. While individual interviews provide a large amount of information about individual experiences, group interviews can generate rich and dynamic data, as the idea of the latter type is that the participants will inspire each other to talk further about their thoughts and experiences.

The interviews were held in Norwegian, Spanish and English, depending on the linguistic knowledge of the interviewers and the preference of the interviewees. The interviews were taped and transcribed. In order to maintain the anonymity of the informants, the gender has sometimes changed, and occupation, age or places are not mentioned.

The interviews focused on the reasons for returning to Chile and decision for and experience of returning, including political activities after return, work and living conditions and social networks maintained after return, both in Chile and in Norway and other countries as well.

The sample is relatively small. Nevertheless, despite the fact that the informants' backgrounds varied in terms of gender, age, social class, occupation and region of residence, the information received had similarities in some important aspects. Our findings are further strengthened by the fact that they correspond with those of other researchers in relation to Chilean repatriates who had been in exile in Norway (Valenta and Berg, 2003; Berg, 2010).

The Chilean diaspora

After the coup d'état in Chile in 1973, thousands of Chileans were forced to leave the country due to repression and state terror. Forced exile was central to the regime's policy to eradicate the Chilean left, and while approximately 4000 persons were expelled, many more had to escape in fear of their lives (Wright and Oñate, 2007). The Chilean refugees fled to more than 200 countries all over the world, and more than 450,000 Chileans continue to live in other countries (Artigas, 2006). The exiles formed what eventually became the Chilean diaspora, which has been dispersed to different countries and continents and become increasingly crystallised (Médam, 1993), as exile became long-lasting.
During the dictatorship, Chileans who had left the country after the coup d'état needed permission from the Chilean authorities to come back, and most exiles were prohibited from doing so. Some exiles even lost their citizenship. Starting in 1983, the regime only allowed a small number of exiles to return. Thus, it was not until 1990, with the transition to formal democracy, that the majority of exiles were able to visit and to resettle in Chile (Llambias-Wolff, 1993; Lira and Loveman, 2005).

Chileans in exile identified with their country, but not with the military regime, and took for granted that most of their compatriots shared their opposition. They organised themselves with the objective of constructing solidarity organisations, while at the same time recreating political parties abroad. The Chilean exile community was important in maintaining the resistance against the military regime (Bolzman, 2002; Wright and Oñate, 2007). The exiles organised cultural activities within a political and solidarity framework. During the first years of the dictatorship, most of the exiles believed the dictatorship would only last for a short

period. However, some members of the exile community lost their commitment to political activism when they realised that the dictatorship was going to continue for some time. This influenced the Chilean refugee communities, and tension emerged between the political logic of the first years in exile and the non-political logic that emerged from the common exile experiences that addressed practical challenges (Bolzman, 2002).

After 1990, the new democratic regime encouraged those in exile to return, and even established an office to help facilitate this. While some returned, many chose to stay in their host countries (Bolzman, 2002). There were many reasons why the exiled did not go back, including the fact that they were established with families in their country of residence, they had adapted to their new surroundings and gotten jobs, not to mention that Chile had changed during the years of the dictatorship (Wright and Oñate, 2007). The returnees encountered socioeconomic, judicial, cultural and psychosocial obstacles (Bolzman, 2002). Those who did return "found their reception icy", as the dictatorship's propaganda machine had succeeded in establishing a generalised idea about a golden exile, indicating that it had been comfortable, luxurious and to their own benefit to live abroad (Wright and Oñate, 2007:63).

After the dictatorship ended, the situation changed for the exiles. The decision to return no longer laid with the Chilean state, but instead became an individual one. Chilean embassies and other institutions became accessible, and social interaction was constructed more around claims towards the country of origin. Thus, new projects, identities and organisations emerged (Bolzman, 2002).

Returning home?

Not much has been written about the experience of the repatriation of refugees (Koser and Black, 1999; Ghanem, 2003, 2005) or about political exiles returning to Chile. Rebolledo and Acuña (2001) claim that one of the reasons for this is the "policy of oblivion", which implied that after the transition to democracy the dictatorship was not talked about. Hence, important topics such as exile and return were excluded from the collective memory, in part because of the divided views on the dictatorship.

In international refugee policy, voluntary repatriation is often considered to be the only, and expected, solution. As a consequence of this, there has been little interest in the experiences of the returnees or the meaning of repatriation from the returnees' point of view (Koser and Black, 1999; Ghanem, 2005). Repatriation is often understood as being the equivalent of a homecoming, but as emphasised by Rebolledo (2006) and Ghanem (2005), both the country that people return to and the returnees themselves have changed. Therefore, both Hammond (in Koser and Black, 1999) and Ghanem (2003) draw our attention to the need to consider the very language we use, as returning to one's country of origin is not necessarily the same as coming home.

Studies show that the refugees' feeling of belonging to the country they fled is an important reason for returning from exile (Jonassen, 2000). However, returning means different things to different people. For the policymakers and executives in the exiles' host countries, it often means only crossing the border of their nation state. For some refugees this is satisfying, while for others it is not. For some, "coming home" means going back to the geographical region or area where they lived, to the house they inhabited or to the network and cultural setting they were part of before leaving (Koser and Black, 1999). Understanding notions of home as contested and relational captures a sense of ambivalence in relation to home and belonging that is often felt by those in diaspora (Mavroudi, 2007).

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Returning to ones country of origin brings one cycle to an end for the refugees, while simultaneously starting a new one (Koser and Black 1999). The returnees have to break away from the habits of exile, together with adjusting to the country to which they are returning. Benedetti (1984) refers to this as des-exiliation, which Rebolledo (2006) claims has much in common with exile, as both the flight from and the return to the country of origin implies a feeling of being uprooted and not belonging to the society in which they live.

Exile deprives refugees of their country, their home and of their time, the time that goes by in their native country while they are away (Lundberg, 1989). The country and the people left behind by the refugees undergo political, structural, economic and social changes. Similarly, the refugees themselves have also been affected by living in exile and may no longer be the same people they were when they left. Thus, a time discrepancy occurs between those who went into exile and those who remained at home (Rebolledo, 2006). Upon returning, this experience of deprivation repeats itself, as the time, events and place of the exiled are unknown to those who stayed at home. Repatriation also leads to a deprivation of the dream of a homeland, as the country they return to is often not the country they imagined in exile (Munch, 1994, Askeland and Sønneland, 2008).

Diaspora: Trends in the literature

Within the diaspora literature, it is possible to separate several trends, of which two are central. The traditional, sociological approach to diaspora is descriptive and gives clear criteria for its categorisation. The more recent, often labelled as a postmodern approach, treats diaspora as a social condition, denotes transnational movements and ties in with arguments linked to globalisation and the growth of non-nation based solidarities (Anthias, 1998; Brubaker, 2005; Mavrodi, 2007). Brubaker (2005:6) refers to this as "an interesting ambivalence in the literature, a tension between boundary-maintenance and boundary-erosion". On the one hand, boundary-maintenance makes it possible to speak of the diaspora as a distinctive community maintained by dense social relationships that cut across state boundaries, linking members of the diaspora from various states into a single transnational community. On the other hand, the literature on diaspora highlights the fluidity and hybridisation process. Mavroudi (2007) makes a distinction between homeland-orientated ethnic groups and identities, and fluid, non-essentialist, nomadic identities. She conceptualises diaspora as being both bounded and unbounded, as well as a process. A process implies dynamic negotiations between collective, strategic and politicised identities, and individual flexible, hybrid and multiple identities. Werbner (2004, in Mavrodi 2007) sees diasporic communities as cultural, economic, political and social formations in process, and therefore as culturally and politically reflexive and experimental. Diasporas recognise collective responsibilities, while at the same time containing internal divisions and dissent.

Brubaker (2005:13) suggests that it would be more fruitful and more precise to speak of diasporic practices such as making stances and claims, formulating expectations and projects, mobilizing energies and appealing to loyalties than to speak of "a diaspora" or "the diaspora" as an entity or a bounded group. Diaspora as a category of practice opens up the possibility of empirically studying to what degree there is a diasporic project, how it is supported whether people adopt or sympathize with diasporic stances and how identities are influenced. Brubaker (op. cit.) maintains that diasporic practice is a normative category that tries to remake the world more than describing it.

In the traditional or classic typological literature, different criteria are highlighted as being necessary in order for a diaspora to exist. According to Brubaker (2005), three core elements can be identified in most definitions and discussions on diaspora: dispersion in space, homeland orientation and border maintenance. Over time, these criteria have been

ascribed various conditions. The first criterion, dispersion in space, is the one most broadly accepted. However, it has been used for forced or traumatic diaspora when state borders have been crossed, for scattered populations within borders and for ethnic communities living across state borders. The second criterion, homeland, was previously used to describe an orientation towards a real or imagined homeland, and has recently also been used "as oriented by continuous cultural connections to a [single] source and by a teleology of 'return'" (Clifford, 1993 in Brubaker, 2005). Hence, it is more linked to culture than to a specific geographical homeland. As the third criterion, border maintenance implies preserving a distinct identity over time in relation to the host society. This may arise from either a reluctance to assimilate or as an unintended consequence of social exclusion. Nevertheless, the fulfilment of this criterion is what makes it possible to speak about a diaspora as a distinct transnational community linked by social relationships and solidarity across borders. Border maintenance and identity preservation are strongly emphasised as criteria for identifying a diaspora.

Along these lines, Bolzman defines a diaspora as having both structural and dynamic dimensions. A diaspora consists of a minority without a state that preserves symbolic and concrete links with the country of origin, promoted also by the myth of return, the elaboration of an identity and specific claims vis-à-vis the country of origin as well as the country of residence (Bolzman 2002:92). King and Christou (2008) maintain that what distinguishes the diasporic condition from other contemporary international migration is an historical continuity across at least two generations, in addition to a sense of the possible permanence of exile.

The recent discussion of the term diaspora represents an attempt to challenge the idea that migration leads to a sharp and definitive break with one's homeland, that migration trajectories are unidirectional and that migration necessarily leads to assimilation (Brubaker, 2005). It takes into account the refugees' specific transnational experiences and social relationships (Wahlbeck, 2002), and provides us with an alternative way of thinking about transnational migration and ethnic relations (Anthias, 1998), and also involves a conception of identity that avoids the essentialism of some of the discussion on ethnic and cultural identities (Hall, 1990).

Transnationality is often linked to diaspora. It emphasises the bonds that migrants, including refugees, maintain with their countries of origin, seemingly to an increasing extent. The term has been conceptualised as "a process by which migrants, through their daily life activities and social, economic and political relations, create social fields that cross national boundaries" (Basch, 1994:22 in Gustafson, 2004). They become involved in more than one country (Appadurai, 1995), which often becomes visible through language, celebration of religious and national festivals, eating and dressing habits and social behaviour (Berg, 2010).

There are two main trends in the literature on transnationality. The first understanding of the term is used to point out new phenomena, such as the increasing contact migrants maintain with their countries of origin in describing or explaining them, and analysing their consequences. The second use of the term is linked to research on immigration and its consequences, thus it is less relevant to this article. Gustafson (2002) holds that studies of transnationalism represent a new theoretical approach which challenges the idea that rootedness and national belonging are natural and desirable, while migration is exceptional.

This recent development, often labelled the postmodern theorisation of diaspora, relates diaspora to hybridity. Within this literature, diaspora often denotes a social condition that entails a particular form of consciousness that is particularly compatible with postmodernity

and globalisation (Anthias, 1998). Hall's (2003) concern is that of the black diaspora formed through the slave trade and colonisation, in which a mythical Africa constitutes the homeland. He emphasises the importance of hybrid identities in understanding diaspora.

> [...] by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of "identity" that lives with and through, not despite, difference; by *hybridity.* Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference. (Hall 2003:235)

Hybridity is described in two different ways in the literature in earlier and newer versions (Pietersee, 2001). Earlier versions refer to the colonial power of the north in the south with a strong influence on culture and languages, whereas the newer consists of a wider range of combinations of cultural and/or institutional forms, and is promoted by migration, trade and globalisation. This newer version of hybridity, which is related to this use of the term diaspora, denotes a:

> ...wide register of multiple identity, cross-over, pick-n'mix, boundary-crossing experiences and styles, matching a world of growing migration and diaspora lives, intensive intercultural communication, everyday multiculturalism and erosion of boundaries (Pietersee, 2001:221).

Diaspora and return migration

As previously mentioned, the concept of diaspora has not been explored much in relation to return migration, although there are some exceptions.

King and Christou (2009:3) introduce the concept of a counter-diaspora, referring to the return of second and third generation migrants. The return of first-generation migrants will not form part of such a counter-diaspora, but is rather "straightforward" they argue. We would suggest that a return to one's country of origin is anything but straightforward, and that the term could also be applied to the return migration of first-generation refugees.

As a returnee to Jamaica, Williams (2007:264) refers to having to live with a "double consciousness" as a result of living simultaneously both "inside and outside of a white society" while in Britain, and of realising he had no essential Jamaican identity to which he could return. As a returnee, he experienced that his reactions and behaviours were different from those of other Jamaicans. To fully settle, he needed to accept his "diasporic identity" (op. cit.:266) in that while being part of a Jamaican diaspora in Britain, he had also integrated some of the hegemonic culture. Thus, Williams maintains that return migration is not a definitive break with the diaspora, but instead constitutes a new chapter in the development of a diasporic identity. A diasporic consciousness (Appadurai and Breckenridge, 1989 in Vertovec, 1999) indicates that having been in a diaspora, a collective memory of another place and time will always exist and continue to exert an influence on one's identity.

Pilkington and Flynn (2006) introduce the term "diaspora in diaspora" when referring to the Russians who lived in border countries and were forced to move back to Russia after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Arguing that the relationship with a homeland is the main characteristic of a diasporic identity, they suggest that the Russian returnees became a diaspora in diaspora when confronted with what they had regarded as their homeland. Over the years, it had become what they anticipated to be their mythic homeland. This resulted in a feeling of otherness and of being different when faced with the daily trials of housing, employment and status, and with open hostility and social exclusion. Upon returning,

Russia was not recognised as the homeland that they had anticipated, and they experienced a diasporic identity.

Whereas the traditional, sociological understandings of diaspora highlight specific required criteria for deciding whether or not a given group is a diaspora, the postmodern approach to diaspora is more preoccupied with identity, relationships and consciousness.

In this article, we draw on both approaches to diaspora. Our purpose here is to explore whether the concept of diaspora can yield new insight into return migration. We do not aim at defining whether or not the Chilean returnees could be considered diaspora in accordance with the traditional approach. However, the returnees formed part of the Chilean diaspora while in exile. We would argue that upon their return, the diaspora became extended to their country of origin. Still, since our aim here is to explore how the concept of diaspora can yield insight into return migration, we draw most heavily on the postmodern tradition.

A diasporic approach to return migration: The return of the Chilean-Norwegians

In order to discuss whether the Chilean returnees upheld diasporic practices after their return, or whether they had actually left the diaspora they belonged to, some aspects of the understandings of diaspora and diasporic practices will be focused upon. In the more traditional approaches to diaspora, Brubaker (2005) reminds us of three core criteria for defining a population as a diaspora: dispersion in space, homeland orientation and boundary maintenance. Since our aim here is not to decide whether or not the returnees constitute a new diaspora, aspects other than those of the traditional approach also must be taken into consideration. Drawing on both traditions, we have chosen to look at four aspects that appear to be of importance in order to explore the fruitfulness of the concept of diaspora when discussing return migration.

The first aspect is the idea of a *mythical homeland* or the *myth of a return*. This notion is crucial in the understanding of diaspora, both in the more traditional and postmodern approaches. In the latter, however, the emphasis is more on an idea of a cultural, rather than geographic homeland. In this article, the mythical homeland is emphasised, as the concept of this aspect is fundamental to all understandings of diaspora.

The second aspect is *transnationality*. This aspect is emphasised more in newer approaches to diaspora, as to an increasing extent, immigrants and refugees maintain activities and bonds across national borders.

Diasporic consciousness and *hybrid identities* make up the third aspect. These are core points in postmodern approaches to diaspora, in which the use of the term attempts to challenge ideas of migration as a sharp break with the homeland (Brubaker, 2005). At the same time, it denotes an identity "that lives with and through, not despite, difference" (Hall, 2003:235). Such an approach to diaspora may prove useful in achieving a fuller understanding of return migration.

The fourth aspect is that of *maintaining claims* against at least two states, an aspect highlighted both in the more traditional and postmodern approaches.

1 - A mythical homeland and the myth of a return

The people we interviewed had kept the dream alive of going back to Chile during all their years in exile, and as the exile was prolonged, Chile became a mythical

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homeland. For many, this image of the mythical Chile was still upheld after their return, despite their knowledge that the country had changed during their absence (Sønneland and Askeland, 2010; Rebolledo, 2006). They found themselves at a point of intersection between the dream and the new Chilean reality, which they continued to compare. […] you bring with you a picture of the country, like Isabel Allende describes so well in her novel. It is a very strong experience, because you arrive with an image that you can call the "Invented Chile", like Isabel Allende says, and you arrive with an idea of commitment.

Although the cities had changed, new buildings and roads had been constructed during the exiles' absence; the main changes the interviewees encountered were in the political and economic system, together with peoples' behaviour, values and social interaction.

The military regime oppressed political opposition, and introduced neo-liberal economic policies that were continued and deepened under the democratic governments after the election in 1992. The disappointment with the Chilean economic system, called a "law of the jungle" by one interviewee, was mentioned in nearly all the interviews, as was the description of how the neo-liberal economic model had led to poverty, social fragmentation and individualisation.

Many were active in the Chilean solidarity movement during exile, and maintained a dream of continuing this political activism upon return. They expected to meet a Chilean society ready for political change and political work after the dictatorship. Instead, they faced a disillusioning reality, in which they perceived of society as having become superficial and without political participation.

> … because the political people and the political circles were destroyed during the junta, right?

> I still feel like a socialist, right. But in a way you may call me an old socialist, in the old way. […] When I came back I started to […] teach socialist ideas to the youth. But the old people who live here said, no, that was just stupid. […] Chile had changed. The people had changed, so we had to express things in new ways, have a new connection to reality, to our programme. And we had to build that particularly with the youth, right. And this was my idea with the students, the teaching. […] Quite a few of them were very satisfied […] and wanted to continue […] but the party, they wouldn't have it. […] So I disassociated myself a little [from the party].

Several mentioned the solidarity that existed before they went into exile, but that had now disappeared.

> We thought about the community, we thought about the neighbours, we were not alone, right, but our neighbours were also an important part of us. And we worked together, particularly during the Allende government. But after the Junta period everything stopped. Everything that was collective, in common, was dangerous. Thus, people became unaccustomed to do it. So we think that perhaps in the future […], working together might come back.

One of the interviewees expressed it like this: *In a way, we live in the past.*

In various ways, the Allende period is being referred to in many of the interviews as what Milibrand (1964) called a "golden past". The Chile that several of our interviewees described as being the country they had dreamt of in exile was one of

political activism and activity. Political activity was the reason why the returnees had to leave Chile, and many had fond memories of political activity and solidarity during the Allende years. For some, returning was a political act. My image and the image I kept were of Unidad Popular, the revolutionary government, of Salvador Allende and all of those things where you had freedom. Where there was a future to fight for, there was a commitment with your country. Now we meet another environment, where there is not even… It is terrible, the political part of it. I am not talking about the economic part, about how you do not exist as an individual, but everything comes from the top, there is no level of participation.

The disappointment experienced by being confronted with a neo-liberal Chile where political activity was scarce seems to contribute to the maintenance of an identity linked to an idea of a Chile that is quite different from the actual country. People seem to handle the situation in different ways. Some were engaged in political activities such as trying to regain activism in the socialist party, as referred to above. Others were active in human rights organisations, participated in cultural work or would demonstrate their political stance by choosing a community school for their children. However, in some of the interviews, sometimes along with an engagement in political or human rights organisations, we also observed a certain resistance to or even withdrawal from mainstream Chilean society.

I do not meet those people a lot, so […] in that sense I am isolated from the common social environment.

Despite the current political situation, some nevertheless expressed hope for changes and a better future. In one of the interviews, a man mentions his belief in both the Chilean youth and in the new political processes that are taking place in other Latin American countries such as Bolivia and Venezuela.

People are not as afraid anymore, and that is important. […] we are seeing new generations where people do not feel fear. It is not that they are different, that they are better than others, but they have lived a different period. There are no forced disappearances now. They do not exile people. That has an influence. So all of those who have not lived through those things have more freedom to express themselves. Those of us who had to live through those things have the fear that the same could happen again. The others [young people] don't know that [fear].

The idea that it is easy to idealize what is far away, both in time and in space, was suggested in the group interview.

Still, one idealizes things, too. For instance, it is obvious that there has been a change in Chile, but before the coup there were really bad things, too, that you would remember when you were in other places. There was poverty and misery.

The period of Unidad Popular was very short and it solved few things, probably because of the short time. […]. It is kind of psychological; when you are abroad you remember some things. And I think that when one comes back here, one idealizes a lot of what was back there.

It could be suggested that by maintaining a hope for a better Chile, the returnees uphold an idea of a mythical or dreamt of Chile that is not the country they encounter every day. They continue to sustain it through participating in political, environmental and human rights organisations and activities, and in small forms of everyday resistance towards the existing system.

2 - Transnationality

In our interviews, we found a high degree of transnationality. All of our interviewees had relatives abroad, either in Norway or other countries, with whom they kept in touch. Some have children still living in Norway. Few, although some, also travel to Norway to visit their relatives, and a few receive visitors from Norway. Several of our interviewees had lived in various countries, most of them before they came to Norway, but some before they returned to Chile. These countries include Argentina as well as various European countries and Canada. Through contact with relatives in both Norway and other countries, transnational spaces are maintained, although economic and legal limitations make it difficult for most of our interviewees to leave Chile again in order to study or work abroad. Yet, those who hold Norwegian citizenships have fewer legal barriers in relation to returning to Europe. One of the women we interviewed had spent some time in Spain before returning to Chile, and still kept the option of going back to stay in either Norway or Spain. Another family considered the option of going back for a year to Norway, which is where the children in the family were born.

> We have a daughter […] she absolutely wants to live in Norway for one year. […] She tries to remember everything, as she was five when we moved back, she was in kindergarten and everything, so she speaks Norwegian.

Berg (2009) refers to such practices as "transnational lives", in which communities are found across national borders. Yet, several of the interviewees mentioned that they found it hard to stay in contact with people in Norway, as their lives in Chile had become so different from the lives of their Norwegian friends and colleagues. Nevertheless, many keep in touch via e-mails, telephone calls and letters to people in different parts of the world. However, these contacts seem to be mostly with family members and relatives than with friends.

All of our interviewees spoke Norwegian, although many found it hard to keep it up. Some families maintained Norwegian words as part of their daily vocabulary for many years after returning. In some families, the children use a mix of Norwegian-Spanish in their internal communication. Having a Norwegian language competence had even helped one of our interviewees to obtain work with Norwegian companies in Chile.

The returnees stayed updated on both political and other developments in Norway. The sources of information were both Norwegian online newspapers and family and friends still living in Norway, and one was even kept updated on Chilean news by his son in Norway. How informed they were on Norwegian society became clear in a discussion on housing prices in Oslo and recent problems in the Norwegian health sector. Some returnees continued to stay in touch with the Norwegian embassy, where they sometimes celebrated the Norwegian constitution day. However, they did not receive invitations for such events any longer, so their participation depended on themselves getting in touch with the embassy. As a result, not everyone participated.

The return itself had transnational elements for several of our interviewees. They first intended to return to Chile in the early 1990s, went back to Norway for a period because they did not succeed in getting work in Chile, but then eventually returned to Chile to stay. This element of travelling back and forth is no longer possible for most of them, although some have been back to Norway to visit family and friends. Only a few of the people we interviewed held Norwegian passports and were able to travel to Norway whenever they wanted, though this was limited by their economy and also by the discomfort of travelling that far.

3 - Diasporic consciousness, feeling of otherness and hybrid identities

The strong bond with Norway and the upholding of transnational practices reinforces an identity that to us appears to be diasporic or hybrid in the "pick and mix" sense of the word.

> Because in a way we were not Chilean now, not Norwegian, we were nothing.
> And Chileans in general were very different from those we knew when we left Chile

The diasporic consciousness that arises from having lived in several countries is central in the more postmodern understanding of diaspora. For some, this involves a feeling that they do not "belong neither here nor there". The returnees are influenced not only by Chilean society, but also by Norwegian society and the Latin American diaspora during exile.

> I became aware that many things there in Norway, with the exiles, were related to Latin America. You are more Latin American abroad […], and that becomes a part of you afterwards. That stays with you. And you learn that there are also other things happening in the world, that Chile is not… [the centre of the world]. So you get a broader vision. That is very important.

Thus, on their return, the diasporic consciousness continues to form part of their lives, as Appadurai (1995) claims, both through everyday practices and through collective memory.

> The mere process of becoming part of the Chilean society again, it will never finish, I believe. You will never again be a Chilean like all the others who walk the streets. […] The main difference is that you have gotten to know another culture, you behave in a different way because you have lived in another country where there is a different way of doing things.

> In several of the interviews, it was mentioned how other people remarked that they were different from other Chileans. One woman told us how her language was commented upon.

> People sometimes ask me if I am from Colombia, maybe not because of the accent, but because of the way I pronounce the s-es.

Another woman emphasised how growing up in Norway had influenced her way of gendered behaviour and identity.

> We [who have been in Norway] are more conscious about how you are as a woman, both bodily and emotionally, and everyone says that "you show in all ways that you are different, because you act differently". And then I ask, yes, but what is different? And it is about […] being really determined, and how you act, and how you treat people. […] When I came back and began to work here, Chilean women thought that I was easy and wanted something to do with everyone that I smiled to. And I heard that often, that I smile at everyone. So can I not smile, I asked? No, because that is the way it is interpreted. Honestly, I said, it is fine that they interpret it that way, but that is not why I smile […].

At the same time, there is an interesting ambivalence in our material. In our interviews, sometimes even in the same one, people might tell us that they are very Chilean, but that they also feel "different".

> No, I do not feel foreign, I feel Chilean, and I have become perfectly integrated.

You will never again be a Chilean like the others

In the interviews, Norway and Chile were often compared, and positive aspects were found about both countries. One man told us how his relationship with Chile was very different from that with Norway.

> When I think about Chile, I think about people, when I think about Norway, I think about the landscape.

One woman told us that she liked the Norwegian political and welfare systems very much, but was not that fond of the people. The safety net of the Norwegian welfare system is mentioned in many of the interviews, together with the lack of a similar system in Chile. Many aspects of Chilean culture were described as very positive in comparison to Norwegian ways of living, including the family culture and the habit of talking to others.

> In Chile, despite of everything that people here have lived through, they are a happy people, a good humoured people and they are good at bearing the burdens of the day. I think that has helped this people a lot. You can have the most serious situation and almost a tragedy, and there will always be something that can make people look at the brighter side of things. Chileans are such positive people. And I want to maintain this with the family, absolutely, and also that here we always struggle. We struggle, we struggle every day.

Being on time, trusting in others and listening to other people were mentioned as positive aspects of Norwegianness that are still maintained after returning to Chile. Some have the Norwegian habit of calling people before they visit, and a few were even reluctant towards receiving visitors who had not made appointments before they arrived.

When we conducted the interviews in peoples' homes, we could observe how Norwegian furniture and decorations still formed part of the returnees' homes. To a large degree, this is due to the Norwegian repatriation policy, which helped finance the returnees in bringing their belongings with them when they left. Material objects revealed the fact that they had had a prolonged stay in Norway.

4 - Claims towards two or more countries

Economic transactions related to pensions and loan payments constitute parts of transnationality. Most of the interviewees reported claims toward both the Chilean and the Norwegian state, mainly in relation to pensions.

All of the returnees we interviewed worked in Norway, most of them in permanent positions and often in a field they were experienced in or educated for, whether in Chile or Norway. Several of the interviewees had already reached retirement age and were permitted to take Norwegian pensions, while one was awaiting an additional Chilean pension. Some only returned to Chile after reaching retirement age, and two had received or applied for a Norwegian disability pension. There were also those who had jobs in Chile that would also be entitled to a Norwegian pension once they reached the retirement age of 67.

Whereas Norway and Chile attained an agreement about pensions, implying that people can receive their Norwegian pensions after returning to Chile, there does not seem to be any type of arrangement regarding the repayment of Norwegian student loans. Those who did have such loans found them very difficult to pay back. With a Chilean income lower than that of an average Norwegian, they were not able to repay the loans, or at least not at the speed suggested by the bank, and found it difficult to communicate with the bank from Chile.

Once having returned to Chile, some of the interviewees described a feeling of being abandoned by Norway. While in Norway, a return had been presented to them as a possibility due to a programme of repatriation, but once they were re-established in Chile, the Norwegian state became absent in their lives. Particularly in the group interview, this feeling of being abandoned or even deceived by the Norwegian state came through quite strongly.

> In this aspect I criticize the Norwegian authorities. They did not follow it up [policies towards returnees], unfortunately, and I think that was also one of the reasons why so many families failed and returned to Norway. We do not ask that they give you a job or that you have the same opportunities that you have in Norway. But for instance, if you are out of a job in Norway, you went to the social services. Although you did not like to go there, in certain periods you had the possibility to go. Here, there was no one or nothing to help you. If you had something to eat today, you had something, but no one would know if you had anything to eat. There was a reason why we were political refugees approved by the UN, so I don't know... I expected more, I still have that feeling. I expected more from the Norwegian government, I expected more from the Chilean government.

Again, particularly in the group interview, the fact was highlighted that people who have had permanent residence permits lose their right to live and work in Norway after they have been back in their country of origin for two years.

> I still have the passport, and when I went now I presented it and I said "But I have a permission to stay indefinitely". "No", they say, "you left Norway, and after two years you lose everything". "But here is a document". "No", they say, "the law comes first, before the document". So not even a document that you suppose is so legal is final. No, it does not work there, after two years they decide that it is not valid.

This was seen as being quite unfair, also because the interviewees had worked during all their years in Norway and had hence contributed to the economy. It was described as a feeling of initially being thrown out of their home country of Chile, and later from their second home country of Norway.

Diasporic identity and practice in Chile?

As refugees in Norway, the interviewees formed part of the Chilean diaspora. Based on the material in this article, we will argue that diasporic practices and identity were upheld even after return, as exile has influenced their behaviour, ideas and values.

The idea of a possible or mythic return can be said to be upheld, although not to a geographical place. The returnees continued to maintain a dream about a different country, and experienced boundaries towards Chilean society due to their own resistance and to mechanisms of exclusion from working life and to some degree from social life. Rather, the mythical place is a "golden past", somehow similar to an idea of what the Allende days were like. In our understanding, the dream of a mythical homeland was sustained even after returning, as the country encountered was not the country of their dreams. The majority of our interviewees carried on their ideals from the 1970s, while at the same time readjusting to contemporary Chile. Values and practices resulting from the influence of both Norwegian and exile culture and society were upheld, and we find in our material that a resistance towards the changes in Chile is expressed through political and cultural activities. Nonetheless, they still kept a dream about a different country while in exile.

The returnees upheld transnational relationships that were established during exile. Their families and friends continue to be dispersed geographically. Social and cultural links between

those who returned and those who chose to stay behind in Norway, in addition to other countries they were exiled to, continued to be nourished and sustained. Such links were both symbolic and concrete, as the returnees also maintained their interest in Norwegian society.

Among others, Hall (2003) describes diasporic identities as being a hybrid. Such hybridity can be expressed through combinations of various cultural practices that were not there before the exile. It may make the return to the country of origin more complex, as we have seen in our material, and contribute to the returnees' own feelings of being different, thereby contributing to a continuing diasporisation. Nevertheless, this hybridity also represents a resource for re-establishing life in Chile. Our informants describe a situation in Chile where they are integrated, as they participate in labour life and establish social networks, but are still not assimilated as they uphold diasporic values, practices and identities.

The returnees had political and economic demands towards the Chilean and Norwegian states, and claim the right to work and reside in both countries. The latter would imply a change in Norwegian immigration policies. Their demands towards the Chilean state are related to returning and to reparations for past human rights violations. In accordance with Brubaker (2005), we understand this as diasporic practice.

King and Christou (2009) reserve the term counter-diaspora for the second and third generation of migrants, although the challenges they describe for the second-generation returnees strongly resemble those that we find in our material. Consequently, it could be argued that even first-generation returnees constitute a counter-diasporic migration when the exile has lasted for a prolonged period of time. Pilkington and Flynn's (2003) main arguments for characterising Russian returnees as a diaspora in diaspora is their sense of "otherness" and of being different based on life experiences in their host country, as well as a confrontation with the Russian reality, rather than the dreamt of country. This very much resembles what we see in our material on the Chilean returnees. However, while the concepts of counter-diaspora and diaspora in diaspora refer to crystallised groups, we find in our material that to a large degree the returnees do not interact with each other and therefore cannot be said to be crystallised. Even so, they share many experiences related to both exile and return which have influenced their identities. During their life in diaspora, they have gained a diasporic identity and consciousness that continue to influence their way of relating to the world. Thus, the Chilean returnees' situation may be best understood as one of continued diasporic identity and diasporic consciousness. Such an approach also allows for an individuality of the exile experience and for the differences that exist within diasporic communities and practices.

Another question we pose in this article is whether it is possible to leave a diaspora, or after having once belonged to a diaspora, does it becomes a permanent condition no matter where people live. As refugees in Norway, the interviewees formed part of the Chilean diaspora. The Chilean exiles fulfilled all the criteria for being understood as diaspora in the more traditional understanding of the term. During their time in exile, the diaspora changed from being a floating diaspora, still in the making, to becoming a crystallised, stable and institutionalised diaspora, using Médam's (1993) distinction. Once they were back in Chile, the returnees no longer formed part of a diaspora in a classical understanding of the term. However, on the basis of our material we will maintain that the returnees preserved a diasporic identity and consciousness based on diasporic experiences in exile, the influence of their host society and the idea of a mythic homeland. The exile has affected their cultural practices, traditions and language. We will therefore argue that it is not fully possible to put a diaspora behind, as the experiences and links continue to influence the returnees' condition and practices after resettling in their country of origin. For that reason, we also claim that the notion of diaspora may help us shed light on the situation of the Chilean political returnees.

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