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Euro-Who? Competition over the definition of Dersim's collective identity in Turkey's diasporas

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ABSTRACT

This article focuses on the construction and competition over Dersim identity that takes place in Dersim's diaspora, which also creates the necessity to critically engage with the concepts of Euro-Turks and Euro-Kurds. In doing so, it argues that while the activities of Dersimlis in the Dersim diaspora in Europe and in Turkey enable new identity claims, they also perpetuate a sense of belonging that builds upon ethnic, religious and/or linguistic domination. The first section broadly reviews the theoretical discussions on the complexity and fluidity of collective identities, diasporic movements, and the role the intelligentsia plays in the construction and competition over the definition of collective identities in diasporas. Building on this framework, the second section introduces the case of Dersim, the region and its history, and discusses the role Dersim diaspora and its intelligentsia play in (re)defining Dersim's collective memory and competing over the definition of Dersim's identity.

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KEYWORDS Diaspora; Euro-Turks; Euro-Kurds; Dersim; collective identity

Introduction

Political conflicts in Turkey since the 1970s have precipitated flows of migrants to Europe,[1] particularly to Germany and Sweden.[2] These political migrants in Europe have 'thereby changed the composition of the respective diasporas from predominantly apolitical guest worker communities to networked and homeland-oriented political activist organizations.'[3] In response to this change, Turkish political authorities sought to 'monitor political dissidence abroad' and further urged Western European governments 'to control the activities of opposition groups.'[4] The European Union's progress reports on Turkey have repeatedly highlighted the responsibility of the Turkish

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government for combatting terrorism 'in accordance with the rule of law, human rights, and fundamental freedoms,'[5] while the Turkish state maintains accusations of its European counterparts for, in the words of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, 'supporting terrorists.'[6] The groups deemed terrorists have historically been the Kurdistan Workers' Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê*, PKK) and Kurdish [*Kürt*], Alevi [*Kızılbaş*] and leftist [*Komünist*] groups.[7] In the aftermath of the failed 15 July 2016 coup d'état, the ruling Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) subjected not only the Gülenists – who were accused of staging the coup – but also other journalists and academics to a 'war discourse.'[8] Recent years have consequently seen rise in members of the Gülen community, journalists and academics seeking refuge in Europe.

Turkish citizens living in the European diaspora are often dubbed 'Euro-Turks,' a concept that refers 'to those Turks that live in a European country other than Turkey and who are socially and economically integrated into that country, even though politically they may retain their Turkish citizenship.'[9] The population of Turkish citizens living in Western Europe is estimated at around 5.5 million.[10] No precise statistical data exist, as it is difficult to discuss a homogeneous Turkish diaspora in Europe due to the multifaceted nature of its ethnic and religious configuration. Various Kurdish sources claim that approximately 800,000–1 million Kurds live in Europe.[11] And Alevi sources make similar claims, suggesting 700,000–1 million Alevis live in Europe.[12] These sources are unreliable. Nonetheless, they allude to the complexity of defining the Turkish diaspora.[13] The literature hosts extensive study of the heterogeneity of diasporas,[14] including works addressing the multifaceted identity structures among so-called Euro-Turks.[15] Østergaard-Nielsen refers to the intricate structure of the Euro-Turks, defining this group as a 'large community of Turks and Kurds (from Turkey) in Europe,'[16] and a 'visibly heterogenous collection of ethnic (Kurdish, Laz, Zaza, etc.) and religious (Sunni, Alevi)[17] subgroups.'[18] Adamson more recently discussed the 'multiple, fractionalized, and contentious' politics of Turkish diasporas.[19]

Kurdish[20] and Alevi[21] movements from Turkey in Europe have yielded ample study in the literature.[22] Some works discuss the 'emergent identity [of] Euro-Kurdishness,'[23] or 'Euro-Kurdistan,'[24] as 'a space where painful experiences are channelled into a creative process of nation building driven from below.'[25] The concept of Euro-Kurds, like Euro-Turks, refers to a heterogeneous group in which divergent actors and individuals are involved.[26] In her recent work on the struggles and discourses of the Kurdish diaspora, Demir examined how diaspora groups secure and discard their identities through 'ethnic entrepreneurial labouring.'[27] By this, she refers to processes of active learning and unlearning through which Kurdish transnational actors struggle to 'de-Turkify' to 'salvage and reconstruct Kurdishness in

diaspora.'[28] Focusing on the Kurds in London, she explains how activities of the members of the Kurdish diaspora with Turkish citizenship aim to 'remove asymmetric discourses'[29] and 'the intense Turkification to which Kurds have been subjected to in Turkey.'[30] She does this through emphasis on their Kurdish ethnicity yet speaking of Turkish, their Kurdish backgrounds but origins in eastern Turkey, and that they are not Alevis but 'Alevi Kurds.'[31] The latter discourse, which Demir describes as 'repositioning of religion'[32] merits further scrutiny. Demir refers to Neyzi's article, which is about two musician brothers Metin and Kemal Kahraman from the eastern Turkish province of Dersim,[33] to explicate how 'diasporic groups engage in discursive battles in order to shed ethno-political identities brought from home.'[34] Demir focuses on the 'de-Turkification' efforts of the diasporic Kurds, whereas Neyzi emphasizes the regional vantage point and Metin and Kemal Kahraman's discovery of their unique Dersimli identity 'through performing and narrating multiple selves.' Neyzi further explains how Alevis have 'historically been divided on the basis of linguistic and ethnic affiliation' particularly between Turkish and Kurdish nationalisms that 'have been eager to declare them variously as "really Turkish" or "really Kurdish."'[35]

This paper investigates the Dersim diaspora that challenges both the Euro-Turks and the Euro-Kurds conceptualisations with their distinctive linguistic, religious and ideological layers of the Dersimli identity. I use the term Dersimli to define the heterogeneous community in Dersim.[36] I argue that what defines Dersimli is its distinctive Alevi religious identity, which can be described as a belief system combined with various unorthodox religious practices, such as Shamanism, Paganism, and Christian (Armenian) beliefs. In addition to its religious identity, Dersim is a multi-lingual community where Dersimlis speak Turkish, Kurdish (*Kurmanji*, *Kırdaşki*), and/or Dersimce (also referred to[37] as *Kirmancki*, *Zazaki*, *Zone Ma, Desimki, So-be,* or Dimilki in the literature).[38] Dersim has also been the stronghold of leftist movements and insurgent groups in Turkey since the late 1960s. This earned the province the name 'Little Moscow' in the 1970s.[39] Bestowing on the term 'Kirmanc' an ethnic identity, Dersimlis identify themselves as Kirmanc, saying '*Ma Kirmancim*' (I translate this as 'I am Dersimli').[40]

The Dersim diaspora intersects and interacts with the Turkish state as well as Kurdish, Alevi and leftist movements, and also stands as a distinctive, regional group. Considering this background, the aim of this paper is to focus on the construction and competition over the Dersim identity that takes place in Dersim's diaspora, which also creates the necessity to critically engage with the concepts of Euro-Turks *and* Euro-Kurds. In doing so, the paper argues that while the activities of Dersimlis in the Dersim diaspora in Europe as well as in Turkey enable new identity claims, they also perpetuate a sense of belonging that builds upon ethnic, religious and/or linguistic domination. The first section of the article broadly reviews the theoretical

discussions on the complexity and fluidity of collective identities, diasporic movements, and the role the intelligentsia[41] plays in the construction and competition over the definition of collective identities in diasporas. Building on this framework, the second section introduces the case of Dersim, the region and its history, and discusses the role Dersim diaspora and its intelligentsia play in (re)defining Dersim's collective memory and competing over the definition of Dersim's identity.

The findings rely on 56 qualitative, in-depth interviews carried out with Dersim's intelligentsia, members of which include politicians, civil society members and administrators, lawyers, academics, musicians, film makers, authors, media workers. The interviews took place in Turkey (Istanbul, Eskisehir, Ankara, Dersim) and Europe (Cologne, Stuttgart, Munich, Hannover, Berlin in Germany, Geneva, Zurich in Switzerland, Brussels in Belgium) between 2014 and 2015.[42] The selection of interviewees originated from some key figures such as deputies, artists and civil society administrators within the Dersim community, and continued through snowball sampling to include others of different ages, professions and, most importantly, organizational and ideological connections to reflect the various debates over the definition of Dersim's collective identity. The interviews are supported with written documents such as institutional websites, posters and opinion columns published in print or online newspapers or personal blogs.

Collective identity, diaspora and the role of intelligentsia

Fredrik Barth argued in 1969 that processes of ethnic boundary making define ethnicity, and hence claimed that the 'ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses.'[43] This process of ethnic boundary making among different groups involves competition, a 'process of constituting and re-constituting groups by defining the boundaries between them.'[44] As scholars now largely agree, identity is not a fixed entity but rather 'a project, a non-settled accomplishment.'[45] In fact, Melucci coined the term 'identization' instead of using 'identity.'[46] New social movement theories emphasize the importance of a definition for clear collective identities in successful collective actions. Whittier writes, 'Before members of any group can present "their" demands to authorities … they need to know who "they" are,' she also accepts that 'these identities may have to be consciously created.'[47] Polletta and Jasper put forward several questions to understand what collective identities are and are not, and produced the following definition:

> Collective identity describes imagined as well as concrete communities, involves an act of perception and construction as well as the discovery of pre-existing bonds, interests, and boundaries. It is fluid and relational, emerging out of interactions with a number of different audiences (bystanders, allies, opponents, news media, state authorities), rather than fixed. It channels words and actions,

> enabling some claims and deeds but delegitimating others. It provides categories by which individuals divide up and make sense of the social world.[48]

Collective identity thus warrants description as a phenomenon in continuous production that is 'historically situated and entangled in power relationships.'[49] The interplay of political opportunity structures, cultural opportunities or constraints, and the targeting of audiences are important in explaining how factors shape, characterize and determine the continuity of identity frames.[50] Diaspora is an important space in which these factors interplay, culminating in 'diaspora politics as a form of strategic social identity construction in which political entrepreneurs attempt to create a transnational "imagined community" based on a particular identity category.'[51]

In his acclaimed article, 'The "diaspora" diaspora,' Brubaker discusses the literature's proliferating use of the term 'diaspora' and criticizes the widespread tendency to treat diaspora as a fixed entity. He argues that the term, like nation-state, collective identity or ethnicity, refers to a hybrid and fluid 'category of practice, project, claim and stance.'[52] Brubaker cites Sheffer's work to illustrate this problem, claiming that such conceptualization of diaspora communities as 'bona fide actual entities' often fails to recognize 'the heterogeneity of diasporas.'[53]

In fact, as Anthias argued before, the idea of diaspora tends to homogenize transnational groups diverse with 'different political projects' and may also crosscut in terms of gender, class, political affiliations and generation.[54] In relation with this heterogeneity, Anthias writes that the diaspora concept 'needs to formulate a theoretical conception of ethnicity that avoids primordiality,' asserting the necessity to clarify that diaspora does not equate to ethnicity.[55] In a later article, however, Anthias contrasts the concepts of transethnic and transnational, saying the connection between hybridity and diaspora neglects the exclusionary aspects of ethnicity.[56] She writes, '[T]here is a *subtext* which involves privileging the point of "origin" in constructing identity and solidarity. If this is the case, then it sits uneasily with the view that diasporas can transcend the orientation to homelands.'[57] This corresponds to the Euro-Turk mis-conceptualization, which neglects the differences between the groups coming from the same nation state, origin or homeland. Eliassi argues that the boundaries between 'us' and 'them' are not something that happens among nation-states but also 'within the territorial framework of the same nation-states, where there is an *ethnonational hierarchy* of belonging and non-belonging.'[58]

In her response to Brubaker's article, Werbner addresses two problems with 'The "diaspora" diaspora.' She first cites the consensus that diasporas are 'heterogeneous social formations, marked by internal divisions and fuzzy boundaries,'[59] and more importantly she criticises Brubaker for failing to theorize the '*dynamic social principles* underlying the shifting

boundaries of diaspora formation in the late modern world.' To overcome these problems, Werbner suggests using the five principles of social analysis developed by the Manchester School of Social Anthropology: situational analysis, conflict theory, the social field, the extended case study and social networks.[60] These principles rely on the idea of cross-cutting identities and individuals determining which identity to use, perform or highlight based on social situations,[61] and that competition and conflict prevail over shared cultural symbols and values that nonetheless strengthen the weight of these symbols and values,[62] performed in 'spaces of dialogue.'[63] Werbner suggests using an extended case-study method to allow researchers to observe the society, with its complexity and fluidity, and to produce a theory of social processes and networks. Furthermore, she argues that there are moments when diasporas *have* boundaries, which she defines as 'momentary reality'[64] that is only 'highlighted situationally, dialectically and over time, in action, through performance and periodic mobilizations.'[65] Although Werbner's findings are not vastly different from Brubaker's in that both stress the fluidity of diaspora boundaries, her analysis addresses the methodological need for extended case studies that would allow researchers to trace those moments and the reasons why fragmented groups suddenly unite and split.

In a more recent critique of Brubaker's article, Alexander notes that Brubaker points to the complex links between diaspora and race and ethnicity, and formulates diaspora 'as a process of claims-staking and *remaking*' identities.[66] However, Alexander also claims that this process of claims-staking and remaking also ensues within existing power and structures, sustaining 'discourses of difference and practices of exclusion,' which she criticises Brubaker for failing to discuss in his work.[67] In response to Alexander, Brubaker accepts her criticism of being 'sociologically presentist,' and, referring to Hacking's work, claims:

> The language of diaspora contributes to 'making up people' and to 'creating new ways for people to be' [n]ot because it is imposed on them […] but because the language of diaspora, as it is appropriated *by* them, enables telling of new sorts of stories and the shaping of new sorts of self-understandings and subjectivities.[68]

Brubaker, like Werbner and Alexander, thus underlines the necessity of studying diasporas from historical and sociological perspectives, focusing not only the present but also the past and the process.[69] Studying the past and the process of collective identity construction and competition in diasporic movements also demands more stringent analysis of the role of intelligentsia. Like Brubaker, Werbner also claims that collective identities and conflictual relations are 'often the product and construction of […] a *buried intelligentsia locked in arguments of identity among themselves*.'[70] Adamson explains that nationalism has functioned as a mobilizing ideology by those who 'have

been situated in transnational spaces as exiles, expatriates or migrants' and who have been 'positioned at the nexus of two societies in a state of in-betweenness.'[71] Tölölyan's work also features such arguments, claiming that those who adopt a 'diasporic stance' are 'members of putative diasporas' often forming 'only a small minority of the population that political or cultural entrepreneurs formulate as a diaspora.'[72] Furthermore, not one but multiple 'diasporic civil societies'[73] exist as domains for the remembrance, discovery, commemoration and negotiation of diaspora identities. Fraser claims that a well-functioning democracy requires 'subaltern counterpublics' in which different identities, interests and needs are reformulated and negotiated.[74] When counterpublics do this by using the existing grammar of nationalism, the situational moments of clear boundaries quickly blur and discord to create new subaltern groups to emphasize their unique ethnic, religious, linguistic or regional identity. In this process, diaspora becomes a space for communities to experience different social, political, economic and psychological settings and 'political opportunity structures'[75] compared to the 'homeland.' It is crucial in creating mechanisms of identity and culture production, often sparking new long-distance, subaltern/micro-nationalisms.[76]

Diaspora communities 'remain socially and culturally in the homeland that they have left behind.'[77] This in-betweenness precipitates diaspora communities' formulation of 'a conception of identity which lives in and through … hybridity' and serves as a 'dialogic space wherein identity is negotiated.'[78] The outcome of such negotiations – home and host country contexts – is not necessarily a cohesive collective identity. Rather, negotiations may lead to fragmentation, meaning a process of producing new definitions other than the existing ones. As with Turkish or Kurdish diasporic communities, we cannot discuss a united Dersim diaspora or a concrete or unchallenged definition of the Dersimli identity. The following section starts with an introduction to Dersim's history of 1937–38, which caused competition over the definition of Dersim's collective identity. It then discusses the role Dersim's diaspora and diaspora intelligentsia play in the construction of Dersim's collective identity in ways that challenge the concepts of Euro-Turks and Euro-Kurds.

Dersim 1937–38 and the collective memory

Although many Anatolian Alevis were content with the secular tone of the recently founded Turkish state in 1923, Köse argues that Alevis who spoke Kurdish or Dersimce instead of Turkish had 'a much more cynical and, to a certain extent, antagonistic vision of Republican Turkey in comparison to Turkish-speaking Alevis.'[79] Since Dersimlis were neither ethnically Turk nor dominantly Turkish speakers, the Turkish state elite considered them

'elements to be cured,' especially as official state policies grew increasingly intolerant of difference. This stance began with non-Turkish and non-Muslim elements in the 1930s. Dersimlis were, in a way, stuck between integration with the secular Turkish state and disintegration from it with its particular ethnic, linguistic and cultural identity. Göner describes this as the 'outsiderness' of Dersim, arguing that although its inhabitants were not officially minorities, it was still 'an anomaly in need of state intervention.'[80]

From the early 1930s, the Turkish state has aimed at 'pacifying, disciplining, and further assimilating the southeast in accordance with the vision of a homogeneous Turkish nation-state.'[81] With the Law of Tunceli in 1935, Dersim was officially renamed Tunceli, which would be the name of the military operation conducted in 1937. Throughout 1936, Dersim saw the construction of roads, bridges, schools, post stations, military barracks and police stations by the Turkish state to bring 'modernization' and 'civilization' to this isolated region that had remained relatively autonomous since the Ottoman Empire. The Turkish army first intervened in Dersim on 4 May 1937, followed by two more military attacks by September 1938. According to the official accounts then prime minister Erdoğan shared in 2011, 13,800 people were killed in Dersim between 1936 and 1939, and around 11,600 were exiled to western Turkey.[82] Given that the population of Dersim in 1935 was reportedly around 101,000,[83] Dersim may have lost one quarter of its population in 1937–38. After the military operations in 1938, then Minister of Interior Şükrü Kaya instructed the Ministry of Culture to open boarding schools for Dersimli children of over the age of five. The objective was the assimilation of the younger Dersimli generation into Turkishness through education and marriage. Another method of converting Dersimli children besides deportation or schooling was through adoption as adopted-helpers.[84] These policies show that Dersim 1937–38 satisfies the five criteria of genocide described by the United Nations.[85] Dersimlis also identify 1938 as *Tertele Peen* ('Second Massacre' in Dersimce), the first massacre being the Armenian Genocide in 1915 which they refer to as *Tertele Vıren* ('First Massacre' in Dersimce).

For decades, divergent perspectives have viewed the incidents that transpired in Dersim between 1937 and 1938 have viewed differently. These have shifted from military operations against rebellious tribes to Dersim's resistance against the oppressive state, from the massacre of the Turkish state to acts of genocide.[86] The contradictory definitions of Dersim 1937–38 eventually resulted in its acceptance as at least a state massacre.[87] However, no such agreement has formed as to which particular identity these military operations targeted. The discussions surrounding Dersim's collective identity progress with movements and Dersim's intelligentsia from within Turkey and the diaspora.

The Dersim diaspora and its intelligentsia

With a population of approximately 82,000, Dersim province has the lowest least population density in Turkey.[88] Around 250,000 Dersimlis are believed to be living elsewhere in Turkey, and 85,159 live in Istanbul along, as reported by 2013 population statistics.[89] Approximately 200,000 Dersimlis live in Germany, and around 350,000 Dersimlis live in various other parts of Europe.[90] Dersim becomes most crowded in the summers, when thousands of Dersimlis from Turkey and Europe return to vacation.

The Dersim diaspora is a 'labour, cultural, and victim diaspora at the same time in different contexts.'[91] Starting in the late 1950s, many Dersimlis migrated to Europe in search of work, allowing its categorisation as a labor diaspora. But over time, their cultural – ethnic, linguistic and religious – awareness grew, and they organized around their unique identity, marking it a cultural diaspora. Dersimlis were forced to flee to Europe for political reasons near the end of the 1970s and especially in the aftermath of the 1980 military coup in Turkey. These political refugees living in exile became important actors in evoking the traumatic events of Dersim's collective memories of 1937–38, the 1993 Sivas Massacre[92] and the forced evacuations and village destructions in Dersim[93] (1994) adding the victim diaspora definition to Dersimlis in Europe.[94]

Identity-based movements flourished as the left was hampered in Turkey and around the world. Nonetheless, the leftist ideology never disappeared in Dersim. No direct transition existed from class-based movements to micro-nationalist, identity politics (e.g. Kurdish movement, Alevi movement, Zaza movement)[95] but the two were interwoven. The Dersim diaspora not only retained an important role in the mobilization of these movements in Europe but also remembered and reproduced the Dersim identity. The collapse of the Soviet Bloc and emergence of neoliberalism in the international sphere, the Sivas Massacre and the forced village evacuations and destructions in Dersim were some of the key historical events my interviewees addressed to describe when and why they started accentuating their ethnic, religious and linguistic identity over class identity. Throughout the 1990s, the views of Dersim's political intelligentsia on socialism, Alevism, and Dersim changed significantly. 'The fall of socialism and our split from socialist organisations to do, rather, identity-based works, happened simultaneously,' noted one interviewee.[96] Another suggested the 1990s as the decade in which a distinct Dersim identity began to emerge, saying, 'modern institutions, including the nation-state, have de-functionalised with the impact of globalization and communication technology, which made previously oppressed identities more and more visible. This can be said for the Dersim identity as well.'[97] Although almost all my interviewees continued to identify themselves as leftists or Marxists, some Dersimlis were involved in the Kurdish movement and

some have eventually began emphasizing on their unique Dersimli identity. Regardless of their movement they were proximate to, political refugees and those in exile in Europe became important actors by evoking the collective memory of Dersim 1937–38 genocide, organizing gatherings to protect Dersim's cultural, linguistic and religious identity and eventually establishing institutions to maintain their activities.

The relatively more comfortable European atmosphere was important in facilitating former activists' ability to individually distance themselves from the turmoil in Turkey, allowing them to re-visualise themselves, and consolidating their ideological standpoints. My interviewees, of whom some legally and others illegally fled to Europe, commonly expressed an appreciation of the unrestricted atmosphere they enjoyed in Europe. With this and their intellectual and organizational background, they became better at organizing a Dersimli society.[98] I have heard from several interviewees that they benefitted considerably from the public libraries in Europe when researching their history and identity. One interviewee said, 'I must admit that my most efficient years as an author are my years in Europe … There's no censorship, no taboos, the sources I have supplied here could occupy me for many more years.'[99] Another described the cultural discussions about Dersim in Europe, especially in Germany and Sweden, as a 'renaissance,' saying, 'Even being Kurdish was a crime in Turkey.'[100] One other interviewee said:

> Here, there's a free environment, here you don't need to hide the things you read, or the meetings you attend. There is no police behind you. People come here from a place of fear, a republic of oppression, where their friends are murdered, their villages are burnt down. There is freedom here.[101]

The diaspora movements and their intelligentsia also receive criticism, and at times face consideration as detrimental to Dersim society. As members of the diaspora sought a way back to Turkey and Dersim, they sparked 'long distance nationalism'[102] according to some interviewees. 'Each person in Dersim sat in front of the Internet in their homes and created an imaginary Dersim. This imagined homeland was their destructed dream,' said one interviewee exiled to Europe.[103] 'There are so many of our people in the diaspora, even more than there are in Dersim. But they are all dreaming different things … some turn Dersim into a political tool, and some work to protect Dersim's language and culture,' said another Dersimli in political exile.[104]

This suspicion was directed by Dersim's intelligentsia with different ideas about Dersim's identity towards each other. Some accused the Kurdish movement and others accused the other movements in Europe that had split from the Kurdish movement to establish new organizations. This unambiguous competition that individuals and institutions in Europe undertake has also received partial address in the academic literature. Van Bruinessen claims

that the Kurdish perception of other movements has been highly suspicious. He writes:

> Kurdish nationalists perceived [Zazaist and Kirmanc-Alevi movements] to be potentially dangerous and suspected the Turkish secret police to be the true motor behind this separatism in Kurdish ranks. … They were equally distrustful of the official sponsorship of the Turkey-wide Alevi resurgence, which they considered as an ill-disguised attempt to drive a wedge between the Kurdish Alevis and the other Kurds.[105]

During my interviews, I encountered many comments about how the Kurdish movement was, and continues to be, sceptical of the newcomers, the Alevi, Zaza and Kirmanc movements. 'When I wanted to learn Zazaki in the Berlin Dersim Community (BDC) in 1998, people told me not to go there, that they are Zaza activists, separatist and enemies of the left,' said one interviewee.[106] The BDC's poor reputation quite likely originated from its perception as a rival to the European Kurdish movement. Another interviewee commented on this issue saying, 'The Dersimli intellectuals in the diaspora played a role in raising awareness on Dersim identity. Because this was regarded as anti-Kurdish activity, it was not taken seriously, and it wasn't supported.'[107] This view is crucial in both highlighting the diaspora's role in the Dersim movement and implying the Kurdish movement's disincentive stance.

I also listened to interviewees address the critical role the Kurdish movement played in the survival of Dersim movements. One interviewee argued that the existence of the Kurdish movement was the key factor that allowed minorities in Turkey to stress individual identities, such as the Alevi identity or linguistic identity.

> If there was not a PKK movement, in Dersim as well as other parts of Kurdistan, we would not be able to talk about the Dersim identity, Alevi identity, Kurdish identity, or linguistic identities. The truth is loud and clear,

ze said.[108] Another interviewee agreed somewhat, saying that the Kurdish movement is 'insurance' for Armenians, Alevis and others struggling for democracy in Turkey. 'If the Kurds [the Kurdish movement] tell me "well go your own way," then there will be an Alevi genocide in Turkey,' ze said.[109]

Dersim's diaspora institutions and their competition through Dersim Festivals in Europe

Numerous Dersim associations have been established in Europe since the 1950s. The activities of these associations varied from family events such as weddings or picnics, to religious, cultural and political events such as *Cem* rituals,[110] *Gagan* and *Newroz* celebrations[111] and commemorations of Dersim 1937–1938. Religious, cultural and political events are significant in terms of representing the role of diaspora associations for identity (re)framing

and mobilization by 'remembering their selective past and culture,' allowing the Dersim diaspora in Berlin to 'perform and re-invent' a new particular identity.[112] These new performances of the Dersim diaspora also demonstrate that its collective identity is not fixed or agreed upon, meaning that the Dersim diaspora in Europe, as with the Dersim community in Turkey, is nowhere near a united community. To the contrary, major differences reign in Dersim's intelligentsia and institutions, especially in the definition of Dersim's collective identity.

It can be argued that the competition over Dersim in the diaspora became most obvious during the Dersim festivals organized by rival Dersim associations, the European Federation of Dersim Associations (FDG) and the Association of Reconstruction of Dersim (DYİC), on the same day in two different cities in Germany in both 2009 and 2010.[113]

The first Dersim communities were established in Berlin (1995) and Cologne (1996), followed by emerging communities in other cities such as Darmstadt in Germany and Basel in Switzerland. These Dersim Communities later united under the FDG in 2006 in the German city of Dortmund. The FDG seeks to act as an umbrella organization for Dersim Communities throughout Europe, which hosts a significant number of Dersimli immigrants or asylum seekers. Article 2.3 of their certificate of formation states that the FDG lays claim to the 'Kırmancki [Zazaki] and Kurdish' languages and defends the equality of the local languages spoken in Dersim. The FDG also supports Alevi beliefs and the Dersim faith, seeking to support Alevi requests in Europe to include the Alevi religion and philosophy as courses in district schools.

The DYİC was established in Cologne – another German city – two years before the establishment of the FDG, in 2004. The DYİC's main purpose is to 'reconstruct' Dersim, and it defines its mission as to support civil society, to open up cultural institutions and literacy and mother tongue courses, to improve women's rights and open up a women's house and to raise consciousness and knowledge on the subject of ecology. The DYİC also states that they will operate with the Dersim Municipality and other institutions in Europe such as the Dersim 1937–38 Genocide Opposition Association (DSKD) to organize joint events and projects.

In 2009 and 2010, the FDG and the DYİC concurrently organized Dersim Festivals in Bonn and Russelsheim in Germany. The banners used in 2009 are representative of the conflict over Dersim's collective identity. The FDG used a slogan declaring, 'Our language is our identity' ('*Zone Ma, Kamiye Mawa! – Sımane Me, Nasnama Meye!*') in Zazaki and Kurdish. The poster for the FDG's festival also depicts an Anatolian folklore dance performed by the Cologne Academy Dance Group. I could not find a poster for the 1st Dersim Culture Festival organized by the DYİC, but I watched videos recorded during the festival. The banner on the stage was emblazoned with the phrase, 'Welcome to Dersim Culture Festival. Dersimlis and Kirmancs

demand their names [recognition]' *(Sıma xer ame festivala kultura Dersim. Dersimne Kırmanc name xo wazen)* written in Zazaki. During the festival, members of the audience carried flags and posters of the PKK and its imprisoned leader Abdullah Öcalan and listened to Kurdish singer Siwan Perver. At the back of the stage were pictures of Mazlum Doğan, one of the founders of the PKK, along with prominent figures of Dersim in the 1930s: Seyyid Rıza, Alişer and Zarife.

Defining FDG's Dersim Festivals in Europe as cultural festivals in Germany, which aimed to introduce Dersim's local culture, including its gastronomy, music, literature, belief system and language to the host community, my interviewee said:

> We did not want the festival in Europe to turn into a rally of a political organisation. It would not have been right if all the organisations had turned up there with their flags and slogans. We gave everyone a stall if they requested one, but only on the condition that they did not disturb our guests. They did not like this, of course. We told them, 'Fellows, we want to introduce Dersim to Germans.'[114]

The FDG is equally critical of the Munzur Culture and Nature Festivals[115] organized in Dersim each summer, describing it as a 'curtain that veils the culture of Dersim, a political rally that has nothing to do with Dersim.'[116] Several interviewees close to the FDG movement told me that the festival organizers try to turn Dersim into a land of Kurds, as part of Kurdistan, despite Dersim's inability to fit into that category. They also the Hamburg May 4 'Memorial Day for Commemorating the Victims of the Dersim Genocide,' at which the presentations ended by projecting pictures of the PKK guerrillas who had died in Dersim. 'Then you think to yourself, "Is this a commemoration day for Dersim or a PKK night?"' an interviewee told me. 'Let's decide on that first.'[117] Another interviewee also criticised the Kurds for dominating the festivals in both Europe and Dersim, saying, 'It seems like these are not Dersim Festivals, Zazaki speaking people are not invited but Kurdish artists are, women members of Kurdish parties wander around in Diyarbakır's[118] local costumes in Dersim.'[119]

The DYİC is critical of the FDG, claiming that it has divided the unity of Dersim through their Zaza emphasis. One of my interviewees told me, 'We made this call to them [the FDG], we said let's not divide Dersim into pieces. You can reveal your particularity, alright, it is not a problem.'[120] However, the pro-Kurdish movement generally views the FDG with suspicion, believing they often act as an instrument of the Turkish state. Reiterating the same concerns about the Kurdish movement being targeted for division, another interviewee said:

> Our job is difficult. We are saying we are Kurdish, and Kurds are prohibited people in Turkey. The other says, 'We are Kirmanc' and they seem favourable

> to the hegemonic [Turkish state] power for at least dividing the Kurds. They stood out, in a way, and convinced many people. They gave money to people, you know, they collected thousands [of Euros]. They began to divide our people, perhaps not speaking openly, but they said Kurds are *Khur* [Kurds] and we are not *Khurs*. And they were using *Khur* in a pejorative way. This is a primitive and racist way of thinking, just like German right-wing looks at the Turks here in Germany. The perspective of the FDG towards the Kurds was just like this, and this has not taken them far. They are now dysfunctional.[121]

Indeed, these institutions prompted a period of action regarding Dersim's culture and identity, as well as further fragmentation. Although these two associations no longer organize separate Dersim festivals on the same day, the differences between their perspective on Dersim identity remain the same. The FDG emphasizes the Alevi identity and highlights the existence of the Zazaki language that coexists with Kurdish in Dersim. It also criticises movements that define Dersim primarily as Kurdish. The DYİC, on the other hand, is ideologically closer to the Kurdish movement, and although they also acknowledge the existence of the Kurdish and Zazaki languages and the Alevi identity in Dersim, they consider Dersim a part of the Kurdish identity and movement. As a result, both organizations blame each other for seeking to 'assimilate' Dersim into Kurdishness or to 'divide' Dersim's unity by introducing identities (i.e. Zaza) in opposition to the Kurdish identity, which they describe as projects of the assimilationist Turkish state.

Conclusion

In this paper, I argued that the concepts of both Euro-Turks and Euro-Kurds fail to conceptualize and, therefore, analyze multiple ethnic, religious, linguistic, ideological and cultural identities within the groups defined under the terms. Through the case of Dersim diaspora in Europe, I demonstrated the possibility for fragmentation, even in a small community, and challenged these conceptualizations with changing identity definitions. I also argued that the diaspora – and, thus, the host country – is paramount as a space that facilitates the realization, frame, implementation and contestation of political opportunities. The diaspora therefore operates not only as a space where identities can flourish but also where they can be debated, leading sometimes to further fragmentation and the perpetuation of divergence. On the one hand, actors in the liberal European political atmosphere increasingly emphasize their cultural identity (Alevi religiosity, Armenian heritage),[122] local language (Kurdish or Zazaki) and cultural legacy (such as traditions, music and nature). On the other hand, they emphasize their identity by imposing the modern concepts of ethnicity and nationalism to homogenize what persists as a heterogeneous community. As Soysal rightly argues, 'Once institutionalized as natural, the discourse about identities creates ever increasing

claims about cultural distinctiveness and group rights.'[123] Although this is not necessarily problematic, I argue that the Dersim case is pivotal to demonstrate how the outcomes of these movements could usher in more fragmentation rather than multicultural plurality.

Ongoing activities claim to overcome this division among Dersim institutions in Turkey and Europe. A group of Dersim's political intelligentsia organized a new initiative called *Dersim Meclisi Girişimi* (Dersim Assembly Initiative)[124] in early 2016. This initiative is symbolic for several reasons. First, it emerged during a period that already hosted numerous legal and illegal organizations operating in Dersim and Europe. The new initiative implied discontent with existing institutions. Second, this initiative's first meeting took place in Zwingenberg, Germany, indicative of the significant role the diaspora plays in discussions about Dersim. In fact, this initiative's website is multilingual, translated not only into Zazaki, Kurdish and Turkish but also German, French and English. Third, this initiative precipitated immediate and diverse reactions from Dersim's intelligentsia. Some accused it of polarization, of causing more division within the already divided community. Others voiced approval, underlining the need for an objective, fair institution to focus on Dersim's political, economic and cultural problems. This was a clear indication of the difficulties in seeking the unity of the different ethnic, religious and ideological groups in Dersim and the fact that competition is likely to last in the future with the enduring role of the diaspora in its orchestration.

Notes

1. Sirkeci argues that ethnic conflicts have been a 'direct push factor' for migration from Turkey to Germany, suggesting that it is 'a motivating factor, while not the most influential one.' See Sirkeci, "Migration from Turkey," 204.
2. According to The Integration of the European Second Generation (TIES) research, in 2009, 5.7 and 16.6 percent of the second-generation Turks' fathers in Germany and Sweden respectively came to Europe as asylum seekers. See Lelie, Maurice, and Jens, *The European Second Generation Compared*.
3. Eccarius-Kelly, "Political Movements," 91.
4. Østergaard-Nielsen, "Turkey and the 'Euro Turks'," 94. In 2010, the Turkish state established the 'Office for Turks Abroad and Related Communities.' See Adamson, "The Growing Importance of Diaspora Politics," and Mügge, "Ideologies of Nationhood."
5. European Commission, "Turkey 2018 Report," 5.
6. *Hürriyet Daily News*, "Europe is Only Pretending."
7. Lyon and Uçarer, "Mobilizing Ethnic Conflict," 934. However, it should be noted that the views of host countries towards these groups have not always been positive. In the 1990s, Germany saw the Kurdish mobilization as a 'domestic security problem.' For a detailed account of host country contexts in

Europe and their impact on diaspora groups from Turkey, see Baser, "Tailoring Strategies."
8. Turan, "Return to the Status Quo Ante," 192.
9. Triandafyllidou, "Euro-Turks: A Commentary."
10. *Dışişleri Bakanlığı*, "Yurtdışında Yaşayan Türk Vatandaşları."
11. *Kurdiche Gemeinde Deutschland*, "Zahl der Kurden in Deutschland." See also *Kürtler.com*, "Dünyada Kürtlerin Nüfusü Ne Kadar?"
12. *AABF*, "Almanya'daki Aleviler." See also *Birgün*, "Almanya'daki Aleviler."
13. Demir, "Battling with Memleket."
14. See: Brinkerhoff, "Diaspora Identity," 73; Adamson, "The Growing Importance," 292; and Lyons and Mandaville, "Think Locally," 137.
15. See: Kaya and Kentel, "Euro-Turks," 3–4; Østergaard-Nielsen, *Transnational Politics*, 67; Østergaard-Nielsen, "Turkey and the 'Euro Turks'," 80; and Lelie, Maurice, and Jens. *The European Second Generation Compared*.
16. Østergaard-Nielsen, "Turkey and the 'Euro Turks'," 80.
17. For an article that focuses on the inter-religious differences between these two Islamic subgroups and their attitudes toward outgroups (i.e. Christians, Jews and nonbelievers) in the Netherlands and Germany, see Martinovic and Verkuyten, "Inter-Religious Feelings." For the literature on Alevis in Europe focus on other issues as well, ranging from the transmission of intergenerational negative identity against second-generation Alevi-Kurds in the United Kingdom to ethnographic fieldwork that traces the transition of Alevism from a 'locally invisible' belief to a 'transnationally visible belief community', see Zirh, "Following the Dead" and Jenkins and Cetin, "From a 'Sort of Muslim'." Despite various efforts to study Alevism as a belief and a transnational movement across Turkey and Europe, one would still be hard-pressed to find a detailed study that compares Alevis and Sunnis in a European context.
18. Østergaard-Nielsen, "Turkey and the 'Euro Turks'," 81.
19. Adamson, "Sending States," 3.
20. See, for example, Eccarius-Kelly, "Political Movements"; Eccarius-Kelly, "The imaginary Kurdish museum"; Demir, "Shedding an ethnic identity"; Demir, "Battling with Memleket"; Baser, "Tailoring Strategies"; Baser, *Diasporas and Homeland Conflicts*; Lyon and Uçarer, "Mobilizing ethnic conflict"; Ayata, "Mapping Euro-Kurdistan"; Ayata, "Kurdish Transnational Politics"; and Khayati, *From victim diaspora*, 85.
21. Ertan, *Aleviliğin Politikleşme Süreci*; Massicard, "Alevist Movements"; Massicard, *The Alevis in Turkey and Europe*; and Özkul, "The Making of a Transnational Religion."
22. By the Kurdish movement in Turkey, I refer to the movement that follows the ideology of the PKK and its imprisoned leader, Abdullah Öcalan.
23. Soguk, "Transversal Communication," 176.
24. Ayata, "Mapping Euro-Kurdistan," 18.
25. Ibid., 23.
26. Baser, "Tailoring Strategies."
27. Demir, "Shedding an Ethnic Identity."
28. Ibid., 277.
29. Ibid., 288.
30. Ibid., 276.
31. Ibid., 287
32. Ibid.

33. I use the Dersim province in this article, although its official name is Tunceli, because I choose to use the name of identification used by my interviewees. The majority of my respondents and the Dersimli community I encountered during my fieldwork refer to the city of Tunceli as Dersim, usually avoiding the official name of the city.
34. Demir, "Shedding an ethnic identity in diaspora," 277.
35. Neyzi, "Embodied Elders," 94.
36. Dinc, "Novels and Short Stories." See also Dinc, "Collective Memory."
37. There is a debate on whether Zazaki is a dialect of Kurdish –like Kurmanji, Gorani, and Sorani– or a language on its own. Some argue that Zazaki is a dialect of Kurdish. See, for example, Sheyholislami, "Language Varieties of the Kurds," and Khalid, "Kurdish Dialect Continuum." Others, however, argue that Zazaki is a language on its own. See, for example, Ludwig, "Zazaki"; the *UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger* (http://www.unesco.org/languages-atlas/index.php?hl=en&page=atlasmap&cc2=TR); and the Endangered Language Alliance (http://elalliance.org/languages/iranic/zaza/). The Endangered Language Alliance states that Zazaki although was 'once considered to be a dialect of Kurdish, phonological and morphological differences between Kurdish and Zaza have proven that Zaza is a distinct language from Kurdish.' My interviewees also had different opinions on this. Some argued that Zazaki was a dialect of Kurdish whereas others strongly opposed to this idea and said these were two separate languages.
38. See Keskin, "Zazaca üzerine notlar."
39. Strasser and Akçınar, "Transnational dynamics."
40. Gülsün Fırat is among the academics who claim Dersimlis identify themselves as 'Kirmanc.' However, in using this term, she includes only Kurdish and Dersimce speaking Alevis in Dersim, excluding Turkish speaking Alevis. Contrary to her usage, I argue that 'Ma Kirmancim' identification includes Turkish speaking Alevis of Dersim as well. The Kırmanc identity is multilingual and it is inclusive of Kurdish, Dersimce, and Turkish speakers. See Fırat, "Dersim'de etnik kimlik."
41. By intelligentsia, I refer to the members of the Dersim society who act as politically motivated opinion leaders and engage in activities to 'comprehend reality, physical or social, and plot a rational course of action' on the historical, social, economic, political and cultural matters of Dersim. See Shalin, "Communication, democracy, and intelligentsia," 113. However, it should be noted that the literature features different ways of referencing this group, such as political/cultural entrepreneurs or activists.
42. Ethical constraints prevent disclosing the names of interviewees. My interviewees were primarily male, with only four women of 56 total interviewees. They were born between 1932 to 1987. The vast majority were born in Dersim, although they now live in different parts of Turkey and Europe. At the time of data collection, only 10 of my interviewees lived in Dersim, whereas 17 lived in Istanbul, seven in Ankara and 20 in different parts of Europe. The interviewees were selected in a way to represent different ideological backgrounds, and varying perspectives on the definition of Dersim's collective identity.
43. Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, 15.
44. Wimmer, "Elementary Strategies," 1027.
45. Calhoun, "Social Theory," 15.

46. Melucci, "The process of collective identity."
47. Whittier, "Sustaining Commitment," 105.
48. Polletta and Jasper, "Collective Identity," 298.
49. Weeden, "Ethnography as Interpretive Enterprise," 80.
50. Benford and Snow, "Framing Processes," 628.
51. Adamson, "Constructing the Diaspora," 41.
52. Brubaker, "The 'Diaspora' Diaspora," 13.
53. Ibid., 10. See also Sheffer, *Diaspora Politics At Home Abroad*.
54. Anthias, "Evaluating 'Diaspora'," 564.
55. Ibid., 570.
56. Anthias, "New Hybridities," 632.
57. Ibid. (my italics).
58. Barzoo Eliassi, "Homelessness and Statelessness." (my italics).
59. Werbner, "The Boundaries of Diaspora," 36.
60. Ibid., 37.
61. Ibid., 36–7.
62. Ibid., 38–9.
63. Ibid., 39.
64. Ibid., 35.
65. Ibid., 51.
66. Alexander, "Beyond the 'The "Diaspora" Diaspora'."
67. Ibid., 1551.
68. Brubaker, "Revisiting 'The "Diaspora" Diaspora'," 1559. See also Hacking, "Making up People."
69. Brubaker, "Revisiting 'The "Diaspora" Diaspora'," 1560.
70. Werbner, "The Boundaries of Diaspora," 40.
71. Adamson, "Constructing the Diaspora," 35.
72. Brubaker, "The 'Diaspora' Diaspora," 12.
73. Tölölyan, "Elites and Institutions."
74. Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere."
75. McAdam, McCarthy and Zald, *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*.
76. For discussion on the Kurdish movement in Europe and its engagement with the political opportunity structures see Baser, "Tailoring Strategies," and Berkowitz and Mügge, "Transnational Diaspora Lobbying."
77. Esman, *Diasporas in the Contemporary World*, 121.
78. Braziel and Mannur, *Theorizing Diaspora*, 5.
79. Köse, "Between Nationalism, Modernism and Secularism," 603.
80. Göner, *Turkish National Identity*, 2
81. Dressler, *Writing Religion*, 124.
82. *Al Jazeera*, "Erdogan apologises."
83. Aslan, "Genel nüfus."
84. Doğan, *Savrulanlar*, 50.
85. United Nations, "Office of the UN Special Adviser."
86. It shall be noted that İsmail Beşikçi was the first Turkish academic to conduct work on Dersim and define the events of 1937–1938 as an act of genocide by the Turkish state in 1977. What is also noteworthy is that in the first two forewords of his book in 1977 and 1989, respectively, Beşikçi only refers to the Kurdish element in Dersim. Whereas in the prologue of the 2013 edition of his book, he notes the importance of touching upon the Kurdish, Alevi and Zaza dimensions of the Dersim issue. Beşikçi, *Tunceli Kanunu (1935) ve Dersim Jenosidi*.

See also Ayata and Hakyemez "The AKP's engagement with Turkey's past crimes."

87. Erdoğan, while he was the Turkish Prime Minister and the leader of the AKP, made a ground-breaking statement on November 23, 2011 and apologized for the state actions in Dersim 1937–38 on behalf of the Turkish state. This was not only a brave testimonial at the state level, as Erdoğan was the first and only statesman who had dared to apologize for the state acts in Dersim in the 1930s, but also a pragmatic move against the Republican People's Party (CHP) and its leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, the Dersimli Alevi party leader since May 22, 2010. A detailed analysis of his speech can be found in Ayata and Hakyemez, "The AKP's engagement with Turkey's past crimes."
88. *TUIK*, "Adrese Dayalı Nüfus Kayıt Sistemi Sonuçları, 2017."
89. *Özgür Dersim* "2013 Yılı Nüfus."
90. These are estimated numbers given by the FDG. Other resources give different numbers. See, for example, Akçınar, *Re-invention of Identity*, and Çelik, "Almanya'da bir göçmen toplum: Dersimliler."
91. Ibid.
92. The Sivas Massacre was a traumatic event in the history of Turkey, where 37 Alevi intellectuals were burned alive by Islamic fundamentalists in the Madımak Hotel in the Sivas province in Turkey.
93. In 1994, the Turkish army set light to forests and villages, forcing villagers to evacuate, leaving their homes, fields, and cattle behind. Dersimlis often identify 1994 as the 'second 1938', seeing that year as the start of an oppression that has continued up to the present day. For a more detailed research see van Bruinessen, "Forced evacuations."
94. Yildiz and Verkuyten, "Inclusive Victimhood."
95. White, *Primitive Rebels,* 151, and Arakelova, "The Zaza People," 401.
96. Personal communication, Ankara/Turkey, 11 November 2014.
97. Personal communication, Istanbul/Turkey, 2 June 2014.
98. Personal communication, Dersim/Turkey, 1 August 2014.
99. Personal communication, Delbruck/Germany, 24 February 2015.
100. Personal communication, Berlin/Germany, 27 February 2015.
101. Personal communication, Hannover/Germany, 25 February 2015.
102. Anderson, *Long-Distance Nationalism.* See also Féron, "Transporting and reinventing conflicts," 371.
103. Personal communication, Zurich/Switzerland, 25 September 2014.
104. Personal communication, Cologne/Germany, 23 February 2015.
105. van Bruinessen, "'Aslını inkar eden haramzadedir!'," 18.
106. Personal communication, Cologne/Germany, 23 February 2015.
107. Personal communication, Ankara/Turkey, 11 November 2014.
108. Personal communication, Brussels/Belgium, 22 February 2015.
109. Personal communication, Istanbul/Turkey, 27 May 2014.
110. *Cem* is a congregational ceremony held by Alevis.
111. *Gagan* is the last month of the year for Dersimlis, representing the end of the year; *Newroz* is the beginning of spring for many cultures, including Kurds, Zazas, Turkmens, Afghans, Georgians and others.
112. Akçınar, *Re-invention of Identity,* 63.
113. For an ethnography of the two festivals, see Akçınar, *Re-invention of Identity.*
114. Personal communication, Cologne/Germany, 23 February 2015.

115. For a comprehensive analysis of the competition of identity and politics through Munzur Festivals see Sözen, "Culture, Politics and Contested Identity."
116. Personal communication, Cologne/Germany, 23 February 2015.
117. Personal communication, Istanbul/Turkey, 5 January 2015.
118. The reference to Diyarbakir is because the province is often regarded as the unofficial 'capital' of Turkish Kurdistan or Northern Kurdistan (*Bakur*).
119. Personal communication, Berlin/Germany, 28 February 2015.
120. Personal communication, Frankfurt/Germany, 25 February 2015.
121. Personal communication, Munich/Germany, 25 February 2015.
122. Tosun and Bal, "'Yol'da Kurulan Kimlik: Dersim Ermenileri."
123. Soysal, "Citizenship and identity," 6.
124. *Dersim Meclisi*.

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Pınar Dinç received her PhD degree in Political Science from the Department of Government, London School of Economics in January 2017. Her PhD dissertation, *Collective memory and competition over identity in a conflict zone: the case of Dersim*, explores the causes and mechanisms of ongoing competition over the nature of national identity through a case study of Dersim in the Turkish Republic. She worked on the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria (Rojava Cantons) as a Swedish Institute and Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul fellow at the Centre for Middle Eastern Studies (CMES) in Lund University between September 2017 and 2018. In October 2018 she started as a Marie Curie Fellow at CMES with the FIRE (Fighting Insurgency Ruining Environment) project, which focuses on conflict and the environment in the Middle East.

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