RUSSELL KING & NILAY KILINC

‘EURO-TURKS’ RETURN: THE COUNTERDIASPORIC MIGRATION OF GERMAN-BORN TURKS TO TURKEY

Willy Brandt Series of Working Papers in International Migration and Ethnic Relations 2/13

MALMÖ UNIVERSITY
MALMÖ INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES OF MIGRATION, DIVERSITY AND WELFARE (MIM)
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Abstract
Turkish migration to Germany is the third largest international migration in the world, and the biggest in Europe. It started in the 1960s as ‘guestworker’ migration but soon matured to a situation of more-or-less permanent settlement. We can now speak of the establishment of a Turkish labour diaspora in Germany and elsewhere in Europe, with the second and third generations of the so-called ‘Euro-Turks’ in place. This paper looks at the transnational experiences and ‘return’ orientations of the Euro-Turk second generation. It focuses especially on those who have relocated to Turkey as teenagers or in early adulthood. The empirical evidence comes from in-depth, semi-structured interviews carried out with a non-random sample of 35 German-Turks, interviewed in and around Istanbul in 2012. The ‘results’ sections of the paper are built around answers and insights into two main sets of research questions. First, what are the circumstances and motivations for the ‘return’ to the parental homeland? For instance, to what extent is it an ‘independent’ migration decision, as opposed to being part of a family return decision? What is the balance between personal, cultural, and economic reasoning for the relocation? Second, what are the ‘post-return’ experiences of these second-generation German-Turks? How do they develop careers in Turkey? Do they feel they ‘belong’ in Turkey or do they reappraise their ‘German’ upbringing and identity, and look back to the country of their birth in a new light? The paper contributes new insights, and especially a new case-study, to the growing literature on the transnational identity, migration behaviour and career pathways of an important cohort of the European migrant-origin population.

Keywords: Turkish migration, Germany, Euro-Turks, second generation, identity, economic and career aspects of migration.
Introduction

According to the World Bank’s *Migration and Remittances Factbook 2011*, Turkish migration to Germany is the third largest international migration in the world, after Mexican migration to the United States and Bangladeshi migration to India.¹ There is an estimated ‘stock’ of 2.7 million Turks in Germany, where they are the largest foreign-origin group; Germany is also by far the most important destination for Turkish migration.

In terms of world migration history, the Turkish migration to Germany (and to other European countries such as Belgium, the Netherlands and France) is relatively recent, a product of the 1960s and early 1970s, when bilateral recruitment schemes brought hundreds of thousands of Turkish workers, mainly young men at first, to work in German factories and construction sites. Along with Italians, Greeks, Yugoslavians and Spaniards, the Turks were hired as ‘guestworkers’ (*Gastarbeiter*), the assumption being that they would return home when their labour contracts expired. Whilst some did return, most did not and they were subsequently joined by other family members, especially spouses, and thus the so-called ‘second generation’ – German-born Turks, or very young children brought over as part of family reunion migration – was formed. Now, more than fifty years after Germany’s first labour recruitment agreement with Turkey in 1961, the third generation is reaching maturity, adding their numbers to a Turkish-heritage population in Germany which is increasingly difficult to enumerate because of the complications of birthplace, naturalisations, and problematic definitions of who, exactly, is a ‘Turk’.

The above brief contextual sketch, which we will enlarge upon presently, is the background to the research which we report on in this paper. Our study is about the ‘return’ of the second-generation offspring of the original migrants who went to Germany in the 1960s, and after. We put the word ‘return’ in quote marks because, statistically speaking, this is not true return migration; the migrants are moving to a country they have never lived in (with a few exceptions). Nevertheless, because of their Turkish heritage and (in most cases) nationality, they feel a strong link to their Turkish ‘homeland’; so, in a more ontological sense, there is a feeling of a ‘return home’ even if, as we shall see presently, their return brings with it a series of practical, emotional and identificatory complications.

This paper follows in the footsteps of an earlier programme of research into the Greek case of second-generation ‘return’ migration (Christou and King 2010, 2011; King and Christou 2010; King et al. 2011a), and deploys some of the terminology and research design of this earlier study. We call the ‘return’ of the descendants of the original migrants to their parental/ancestral homeland *counterdiasporic migration*. Whilst the long-term
emigration of Greeks to many parts of the world (North America, Australia, and several European countries) undoubtedly warrants the term ‘diaspora’, for the Turkish case this is not so obvious, and in fact the word ‘diaspora’ is not yet so often applied to the Turkish migration. We suggest that, after more than fifty years of migratory experience and the spanning now across three generations, the Turkish migration has evolved into a diaspora, not least because it satisfies what most diaspora scholars (eg. Brubaker 2005; Esman 2008) argue are the essential criteria for a diaspora, namely:

- a shared sense of ethno-national identity;
- dispersion from an original homeland, either through forced exile or voluntary migration for work, trade or settlement;
- the maintenance of ethnic boundaries, partly through the shared identity referred to above, and partly because of a sense of separation or exclusion from the host society;
- homeland orientation, either through the maintenance of transnational ties to the country or community of origin, and/or through a desire to return there some day;
- historical maturity, so that to the original migrants have been added subsequent generations who share their parents’ or ancestors’ diasporic identity.

Following Robin Cohen’s (1997) well-known typology of diasporas (victim, colonial, trading, labour and cultural), the Turkish case is a clear example of a labour-migration diaspora, although there were also political exiles, and hence more of a ‘victim’ diaspora, who left as a result of the military coup of 1980.

In terms of research questions and methodology, this study follows the Greek research cited earlier. We focus on two main issues: the motivations and migration processes which ‘produce’ this particular migratory form; and the ‘post-return’ experiences of these mostly young-to-middle-age men and women who have relocated to Turkey, either independently of their parents and other family members, or as part of a wider process of family return. To this end, a sample of ‘returnees’ was interviewed in Turkey via a semi-structured interview guide which was similar, but not identical to, the one used in the Greek research.

The Greek example is not the only instance of previous research on counterdiasporic migration. Previous studies have focused on three main geographical areas. First there are other studies set in southern Europe: notably Wessendorf’s pioneering research on what she calls ‘roots migration’ of second-generation Swiss-Italians to southern Italy (2007, 2009); Teerling’s
research on Cyprus, which included a separate sub-sample on Turkish Cypriots in the northern sector of the island (2011a, 2011b); and Sardinha’s ongoing research on Portuguese-Canadians and Portuguese-French who return to Portugal (2011). The second broad geographical context is the Caribbean, where a considerable volume of papers has been published by a research team headed by Robert Potter, mainly on the return from the UK of ‘Bajan-Brits’ to Barbados (see, e.g., Phillips and Potter 2009; Potter 2005; Potter and Phillips 2006, 2008). Another author who has worked on Caribbean second-generation ‘return’ is Tracey Reynolds (2008, 2011), in her case to Jamaica.

The southern European and Caribbean counterdiasporic settings are broadly comparable to the Turkish case in that both evolved from early postwar labour migrations to Europe and (less so) to North America. Hence, in our analysis in this paper, some comparative references to these two migratory domains will be made. The third geographical context of prior research is less comparable to the Turkish case. This is the body of work on ‘return’ of the nikkeijin or overseas-born Japanese to Japan, called by Takeuchi Tsuda, the leading author on the topic, ‘ethnic return’ (2003). Nikkeijin research is overwhelmingly about the ‘return’ of second- and third-generation Japanese Brazilians to Japan, where, since the 1980s, they were contract-recruited as preferential labour migrants to work in Japanese factories. As such they have more in common with the first-generation Turkish guestworkers who were drawn to Germany in the early postwar decades rather than the second-generation descendants of these Turkish migrant workers. The nikkeijin phenomenon has been much studied (in addition to Tsuda 2003 see de Carvalho 2003; Roth 2002; Sellek 1997; Yamanaka 1996), but will not be referred to further in this paper.

Our paper now develops as follows. First we delve a little more deeply into the history and phenomenology of Turkish migration to Germany and the formation of Turkish ethnic communities there. Then we outline the research questions and methodology that underpin our empirical study of Turkish counterdiasporic migration. Our main ‘results’ sections are twofold: first an analysis of the motivations and modalities of the ‘return to Turkey’ phenomenon as recounted through the voices of our interviewees; and secondly a synthesis of their ‘post-return’ narratives of survival, (non-) integration and settlement in Turkey. These results sections are foregrounded by a contextual section which documents, also with the help of interview evidence, the experience of the second generation prior to return, growing up in Germany. The conclusion draws out the main findings of the Turkish case and compares them to the existing literature on second-generation relocation to the parental homeland.
Turkish migration to Germany and the ‘Euro-Turk’ phenomenon

Turkish migration to Germany in the postwar decades of reconstruction and industrial prosperity can be regarded as the exemplary case of European labour migration. Turkey soon overtook Italy as the main ‘supply’ country for migrant workers to Germany; and Germany was by some measure the principle destination for Turkish migration. Bilateral recruitment agreements between the two countries were signed in 1961 and 1964. Migrants were recruited for work mainly in industrial employment, filling the low-skill jobs that native Germans chose not to do, thereby plugging an important manpower gap that otherwise would have held up economic growth. The guestworker model involved allocating migrant workers temporary work and residence permits, housing them in single-sex workers’ hostels. In the early stages of this migration regime, the Turkish migrants were mainly men aged 20-40, relatively skilled and educated compared to the average working population in Turkey, and mainly from urban and more developed areas of the country. Towards the later years of the 1960s and through the years of maximum recruitment flow during the early 1970s, the labour migrants came mostly from rural areas and had lower levels of formal education (Abadan-Unat 1976; Martin 1991). By this time, European and German social legislation favoured the immigration of family members, and the hostels emptied out as reunited and nascent families sought rented accommodation in towns near their factories and workplace sites.

The end of 1973 brought a turning-point. The first oil crisis, and the sharp economic downturn that it provoked, meant that Germany, along with most other industrialised countries in North-West Europe, halted the recruitment of migrant workers from outside the European Community. It was perhaps ironic that it was the first-ever Social-Democrat-led coalition government in Germany under Willy Brandt that took the decision to ban the immigration of non-EEC guestworkers. Whereas most other guestworker nationalities in Germany (notably Italians, Greeks and Spaniards) saw their numbers of workers decline by up to a half due to return migration, most Turkish workers and their families stayed on; they preferred to remain in Germany rather than return to the backward and uncertain economic conditions in Turkey.²

Between 1974 and the early 1980s, three principles of migration policy were implemented during the Social Democratic government under Helmut Schmidt. These were: (i) the continuation of the November 1973 ban on the recruitment of non-EEC workers; (ii) measures to promote the ‘integration’ of those foreigners who had the right to live in Germany; and (iii) financial incentives to encourage migrant workers to return to their countries of
origin (Bade and Münz 2000). Under this ‘promotion of return law’ (Rückkehrförderungsgesetz), voluntary returns received a bonus payment equivalent to €5250. Some 250,000 migrant workers (of all nationalities, including Turks) took the payment and returned to their home countries.

After the migrant-worker and family-reunion phases, a new inflow of Turkish migrants entered Germany (and other countries) in the 1980s; these were refugees and asylum-seekers escaping from the regime imposed by the 1980 military intervention in Turkey. Family-reunion migration continued, alongside clandestine migration (Euwals et al. 2007). At the same time, the German-born second generation reached maturity, presenting, along with second-generation Italians, Greeks etc., a new sociological group in German society – an increasingly numerous cohort of young people with ambivalent identities and loyalties. Sirkeci had initially called them ‘European Turks’ (2002); Østergaard-Nielsen (2003) abbreviated this to ‘Euro-Turks’, a term also used by Kaya (2004) to refer to Turkish immigrants and especially the second and third generation in European countries.

The 1990s brought a new phase in the nature of the ambiguous and contradictory relationship between Germany and its now-large immigrant and immigrant-heritage population. Up until then, German citizenship law had been based on the principle of jus sanguinis, which excluded immigrants from the ‘national’ population and the political community by virtue of their not sharing the ethno-cultural background of the host society. Whilst this principle was treated as sacrosanct particularly by conservative politicians, during the 1990s more progressive politicians, institutions of civil society such as grassroots citizens’ initiatives, and the liberal media increasingly contested this stance (Ehrkamp and Leitner 2003). The victory of the Social Democrats and the Greens in the 1998 German national elections brought this controversy centre-stage. One of the first actions of the new government was to break with the forty-year-old yet increasingly untenable claim that ‘Germany is not a country of immigration’ by acknowledging the reality of the presence of millions of so-called guestworkers as permanent immigrants (Ehrkamp and Leitner 2003).

A landmark initiative introduced at this time was the right of foreigners to obtain German citizenship. Since January 2000, immigrants’ children born in Germany, who had at least one parent who has been continuously resident in Germany for at least eight years, can gain automatic citizenship according to the jus soli principle. They hold dual citizenship until the age of 23, when they must decide between German citizenship and that of the country of their parents’ origin. The new provisions also include an easier access to citizenship for first-generation immigrants, reducing the residency requirement from 15 to eight years.
Access to naturalisation has made the statistics on the number of Turks in Germany, which are recorded on the basis of citizenship, increasingly problematic. During the early 2000s, Turks applying for naturalisation as German citizens ran at between 50,000 and 100,000 per year, compared to fewer than 10,000 per annum in the early 1990s. However since 2003 there has been a marked decrease in the number of Turks being naturalised. According to Kaya (2004) this is because German Turks are already content with their ‘denizenship’ status, which gives them civil, social and cultural rights (but not political rights), and because they were hoping for a more open ruling on dual citizenship. Nonetheless, naturalisations have continued, and are thought to be the main reason for the 9 per cent drop in the number of Turks recorded in the German Central Register of Foreigners between 2005 and 2011 (Sirkeci et al. 2012).

Return migration is another element which has a bearing on the evolution of the ‘stock’ of Turks in Germany. Return has been a continuous process throughout the half-century of Turkish migration to Germany – first as part and parcel of the ‘rotation’ policy of short-term guestworker contracts, then as a result of the ‘return incentive’ scheme implemented in the 1980s, and subsequently as families have started to return upon the retirement of the first-generation immigrants. Earlier studies of return migration during the 1970s and 1980s looked at the potential developmental impact of returnees, who were supposed to bring back new ideas and investment funds, but such hopes for a significant regional development stimulus were largely disappointed (see Abadan-Unat et al. 1974; Keles 1985; Toepfer 1985; and King 1986 for the wider debate). No study, however, to the best of our knowledge, has been made of those German-born Turks who return, either with their returning families or as independent migrants. Given the scale of the Turkish migration to Germany and Europe, we find this surprising.

Meantime, a combination of ambiguity and stereotype characterises the perception of Turkish migrants and their families in Germany, both on the part of the ‘homeland’, Turkey, and the ‘hostland’, Germany. One might add that this ambivalence is part of the self-perception of the ‘Euro-Turks’ themselves. It is still commonly believed in Turkey that migrants of Turkish origin and their descendants in Europe are **gurbetçi**, with a strong orientation to the homeland that will one day bring them back. On the other hand, they are also called **Almanca**, a term that depicts such individuals as being rich, eating pork, having a comfortable life abroad, losing their Turkish identity and becoming increasingly ‘Germanised’. Yet they are resolutely regarded as ‘foreigners’, ‘Turks’ and ‘Muslims’ in their countries of settlement, where their lack of integration is lamented. This ‘between two worlds’ feeling, which is especially strong, it could be argued, amongst the second generation,
has been powerfully, and also playfully, exhibited through different genres of art – for example in cinema, literature, music and comedy. As we shall see in the rest of this paper, sometimes this ambiguity is resolved, and in other cases it is heightened, when the second and subsequent generations return ‘home’ to Turkey.

Research questions and methods

With the above contextual background on Turkish migration and ethnic community formation in Germany in mind, and bearing in mind also the existing studies on second-generation ‘return’, especially those in roughly comparable settings such as other southern European countries, we specify two groups of research questions, one concerning the relocation itself, and the second regarding the experiences of living and working in Turkey. In more detail, then:

1. **What are the circumstances and motivations which lead members of the second generation to move to Turkey in their young adult lives?**

To what extent is this an independently-taken decision, or ‘forced’ as part of a ‘family return’ project in which parents (the first-generation immigrants) and possibly other family members are moving back to Turkey? How can this relocation be conceptualised in terms of the balance between ‘push factors’ from the host society (economic hardship, unemployment, social marginalisation, racism etc.) and pull factors from the home country (economic opportunities, cultural factors, perceived attractiveness of the Turkish lifestyle, marriage to a non-migrant Turk etc.)? What is the relationship between the research participants’ experience of being raised as a second-generation Turk in Germany, perhaps within a ‘Turkish community’ which retained close links with the Turkish homeland through frequent visits and other transnational connections, and the ‘return’ decision? Put somewhat differently, is social marginalisation and lack of integration within German society a causal factor for return? What are the returnees’ basic socio-demographic characteristics in terms of parental social-class background, social mobility within and across generations, educational qualifications etc.?

2. **What are the second-generation research participants’ experiences of living and working in their Turkish parental homeland?**

What are the interviewees’ initial reactions to life in the Turkish homeland? How do they resolve (or not) these initial reactions, if they are negative
or problematic? To what extent are they able to utilise their ‘German’ upbringing (language skills, educational qualifications, professional and vocational experiences etc.) in accessing employment and career opportunities in Turkey? How important is where they relocate to in Turkey (eg. in a large metropolis – Istanbul – compared to smaller places) for their progress in career and other spheres of life? How do they compare their new ‘Turkish lifestyle’ with the way of life they left behind in Germany? Do they reappraise their erstwhile ‘German’ lifestyles and identities as a result of the experience of living in Turkey? How do they react to any constraints or conflicts arising over gender relations and power structures in Turkey compared to the generally more gender-equal German society? What are the characteristics of their social circles in Turkey: do they mainly associate with other German Turks or Euro-Turks? How happy are they about their ‘new lives’ in Turkey; or are there strong feelings of disappointment, frustration and disillusionment? Finally, do they intend to remain in Turkey, move back to Germany, or perhaps move elsewhere?

In order to answer, or at least shed light on, these two sets of questions, a research design based on in-depth, semi-structured interviews to a target-sample of 30 second-generation ‘returnees’ was implemented in October-November 2012, preceded by a summer scoping visit during which the interview schedule and interviewing strategy and technique were tested on a pilot sample of five interviewees. Subsequently, one of the interviewees withdrew his permission to use his interview, and an extra ‘replacement’ interview was carried out. Hence the full sample, including the pilot, consists of 35, roughly equally divided by gender. Of these, 31 were face-to-face, and the remainder by Skype or Gmail. Most ‘live’ interviews lasted about an hour although a few were much longer – up to three hours. For logistical reasons, and given the geographical size of Turkey, the interviews were clustered in and around Istanbul: 26 were located in this major Turkish metropolis, and the remainder were conducted in small towns some distance to the west of Istanbul, Tekirdağ, and east of Istanbul along the Black Sea coastal region – Düzce, Devrek, and Ereğli. The age of interviewees ranged from 23 to 51 years, with a mean age of 37 years.

The interviews were semi-structured and open-ended. Our aim was to give the interlocutors as much as freedom as possible to narrate their ‘stories’ as they saw fit, highlighting what was important for them. However in order to give them some initial guidance, the interviewer (Nilay Kilinc) told them beforehand about the broad nature of the project – not giving too much away, however, for fear that this might shape their responses and accounts. The interviewer also stressed the ethical principles of informed consent, agreement to have the interview recorded, the respondent’s freedom to have
the interview terminated at any point, and their right to see and check the transcript. No particular problems or obstacles arose in this regard, save the withdrawal noted above.

We wanted to collect data on the full multi-generation migration life-cycle; hence we encouraged the interviewees to start their account with their parents’ (sometimes their grandparents’) migration to Germany, including both their pre-migration background in Turkey and their working, family and ‘ethnic’ lives in Germany. This usually set the scene for the participants to recount their own childhood growing up, usually in an industrial town/city in Germany, and their relationships, both in and out of school, with their German peers, other young German-Turks, and sometimes with children of other immigrant backgrounds. Following usually a chronological sequence, the narratives then moved to cover material which is more directly relevant to the two main research questions set out above, as well as shedding variable light on the long list of sub-components to the two key research themes.

The taped recordings were then transcribed and translated at the same time into English, in order to yield the nearly 500 pages of narrative text which are the raw material for our analysis in the rest of this paper. Rather than subject the textual material to standard software package analysis, we preferred what narrative expert Ivor Goodson (2006) has termed ‘bathing in the data’: that is, reading and re-reading over and again the interview transcripts in order to qualitatively understand the main narrative themes. In the ‘results’ sections which follow, we build our analysis upon the wider discourses and ‘narrative confluences’ as well as other themes which emerged from the interviews which were not specified in the detailed research questions listed above.

**Setting the scene: growing up ‘Turkish’ in Germany**

Before we confront the two main research questions – about reasons and modalities of second-generation ‘return’, and about the ‘post-return’ experience – we first sketch in the ‘pre-return’ background of the first generation’s migration to Germany and the birth and upbringing of the second generation. We need to do this partly because the life-narrative technique we used results in a more-or-less chronological account which stretches back to parental (and even earlier) migrations, reinforcing the value of a historically-grounded longitudinal approach; and partly because (as we shall soon see) the pre-return experience departs somewhat from our initial expectations and from the picture of tightly-woven ethnic communities which earlier research on the Greek diaspora in Germany portrayed (cf. Christou and King 2010; King et al. 2011a).
In our detailed spelling out of the research questions and subquestions above, hypothesised linkages were made between the motivations for the second generation to ‘return’ to Turkey (the first overarching research question) and their experiences of ‘growing up Turkish’ in Germany. We put forward two potential relationships, which to some extent sit alongside each other. First, we hypothesised that the likelihood of ‘return’ to the Turkish homeland would be positively related to having been brought up with strong Turkish ‘ethnic’ values and experiences within a ‘Turkish’ enclave community in a German city. Second – and to some extent this re-states the same hypothesis but from a different angle – we suggested that lack of integration in German society, with allied experiences of social marginalisation and discrimination, would also be a ‘push’ factor for return.

Although there are some individual cases where these hypothetical causal factors seem to have operated, the general picture which emerges from the interview evidence is very different. In order to demonstrate this difference we examine here the information gleaned from the first two sections of the interview, relating to the circumstances of the parents’ migration to Germany, and the experience of growing up as a young second-generation ‘German Turk’ in that country.

Parental background and migration history
When asked to recount their parents’ migration to Germany, interviewees gave a variety of vignettes, almost none of which, however, represented the migration of poorly educated or illiterate rural dwellers from the more ‘backward’ parts of Turkey, which in turn constitutes the stereotype of the mass migration of Turks to Germany in the 1960s and early 1970s. Indeed, many interviewees reproduced this stereotype, by using the phrase ‘We weren’t like the other Turks’ – referring to those rural-origin peasants who lived in Turkish ‘ghettos’ in the big German industrial cities. In order to be more systematic about the parental migration background, we break it down into three chronological components: parents’ lives in Turkey before their migration to Germany, the migration itself, and the work and general lifestyle of the parents in Germany.

Although the economic motive was usually fundamental to potential migration to Germany, most interviewees were at pains to point out that their parents were not poverty-stricken rural workers but were from towns and cities (above all Istanbul) and, although many were of working-class background, especially those from the Black Sea towns to the east of Istanbul, they had good levels of education by Turkish standards. Some, indeed, were graduates, and had a work experience in Turkey as professionals, civil servants or businesspeople. By choosing Istanbul as the base for most of the interviews, we were, naturally, likely to pick up a lot of second-generation
‘returnees’ whose parental origins were in that city-region.5

The diverse socio-economic background of the participants’ parents – a few truly working-class and poor, but most of lower-middle-class or even elite family origins – is related to the timing of their migration to Germany. Most departed in the first years of guestworker migration in the early 1960s, when the migrants were mainly drawn from Istanbul and other major cities, and had higher-than-average human capital. Another group of interviewees, mostly the younger ones, were the offspring of later migrants to Germany, who went as political exiles, professionals or students in the 1980s.

The following quotes represent examples of, firstly, the early wave of parent departures in the early 1960s, and second, a more educated and professional parental emigration in the 1980s.

My father found a job there [in Germany], you know, guestworkers. He had heard from my aunt’s husband that life was much better in Germany. They [aunt and husband] were planning to move to Germany to work in a textile factory... We weren’t a really poor family, but my parents decided to try it out... so they decided to go there and see... together with my aunt and husband... they all went to Berlin, it was in 1961. But evidently they did not stay there; they moved... and I was born in Düsseldorf (Berna, female, aged 48, interviewed in Istanbul).

It was mainly because of my father [that we were in Germany]. After my father finished his bachelor degree in Istanbul, he had the chance to go and do a master’s in Germany... but by that time my older brother was one year old... But then my mother’s parents sort of intervened and made it clear that they did not want their daughter to be left with the child in Istanbul... So my father did not go. He found a job in Istanbul... working as an engineer. My mother was a primary school teacher... Then, through the networks of the company he worked for, my father got an offer from Germany. He already knew German well, as he had studied in the German high school in Taksim [district of Istanbul]. Then they moved to Germany, to Bremen, and I was born there two years after they moved (Erman, M26, Istanbul).

From these descriptions of parental background and migration history, we get a clear impression that the second-generation ‘returnees’ whom we interviewed were drawn from the upper echelons of the Turkish migration to Germany: certainly not the ‘poorest of the poor’. The significance of this will become further apparent when we describe the lives of the second
generation growing up in Germany, and in our concluding discussion where we synthesise our research results and compare them with other studies.

Most first-generation parents of the research participants were recruited to work in German factories, since that was the ‘deal’ with Turkish migration to Germany in the 1960s and 1970s. The same held for the other guestworker nationalities – Italians, Greeks, Spaniards and Yugoslovs. However, unlike the more ‘traditional’ Turkish guestworkers, who stayed in their factory jobs largely because their poor educational background gave them no basis for occupational advancement, many of the parents of ‘our’ interviewees did experience some upward mobility, moving into positions of greater responsibility within the industrial sector, or setting up small businesses, or finding professional work (eg. as teachers, translators, or social workers with immigrants). Undoubtedly, the parents’ initially higher human capital endowment and their upward mobility in Germany gave the second generation more possibilities and choices about how to develop their own lives, with a move to Turkey being one of the options available.

Turkish family and community life in Germany

Consonant with the above-average social status of their parents vis-à-vis the mass of poorly-educated Turkish migrants, our respondents generally described an experience of growing up in Germany which had some decidedly ‘ethnic’ features, particularly within the family sphere, but which was also very ‘open’ to host-society influences. There are several dimensions of this dual or hybrid childhood and adolescent experience to be highlighted. Perhaps the best way of articulating some of these elements is through the words of our participants. We start by picking up again the account of Erman, who is at the ‘liberal’ end of the spectrum of childhood socialisation: remember that his migrant parents were both graduates from Istanbul. Erman’s move to Istanbul had started with an Erasmus exchange visit in 2009, after which he finished his degree in Germany and then relocated back to Istanbul after his graduation. At the time of the interview in 2012 he was working in a media production company in Istanbul and was the frontman of an underground band. When asked what his life was like in Germany, he replied:

Awesome! [said in English, with a laugh]. I had a great childhood. My parents were always very supportive of me. We were raised freely... not just in terms of behaviour... also thoughts and opinions. I had many German friends. I am saying this because I know that many Turkish families keep their children in a very conservative environment. The best time came when we moved to Berlin. My father got a promotion there, and there was where I started the gymnasium [academically-
oriented high school]. I enjoyed the multicultural atmosphere. Berlin in those days was crazy... you would see many subcultures...people who do arts and stuff... Don’t get me wrong; I was raised freely but they [parents] wanted me to become something... They would tolerate many things, and would not prejudge alternative lifestyles... but they wanted me to get a good education first and stand on my own feet... I also wanted that.

A somewhat more ‘Turkish’ upbringing was described by Eda (F23, Istanbul), the youngest participant, who was born in Munich. Her father had migrated to Germany much earlier but had died when Eda was 7 years old. Hence, she was vague about his migration, ‘since we didn’t talk about these things in the family, it makes us sad...’. Her mother worked in a fashion design house in Munich in order to support her three children, paying a childminder to look after them after school until they reached the age of secondary school. Eda had completed a make-up artist course in Germany before moving to Istanbul aged 20 to continue in the same line of work. In the first extract from her interview she describes an ‘open’ upbringing similar to that of Berna. In the second paragraph she switches to stress the more ‘Turkish’ elements.

We lived in a neighbourhood where there were mostly Germans... There are of course many Turks living in Munich... there is a district like a Turkish town, with Turkish coffee-houses where guys sit and play cards, there are carpet stores and kebab places... In high school there was only one other Turk apart from me, and in the make-up course there was no other Turkish student... So I was mainly with Germans whilst growing up... I had many German friends. There were a few Turkish kids I knew, but I wasn’t really close to them. I wasn’t raised with strict rules; I was able to do everything that the Germans did. For example, there was a mountaineering club at school and I was one of the active members. My mother never said to me ‘You are a girl, you can’t do that’.

[...] I was raised within the Turkish culture. My mother is a Kemalist [after Atatürk’s first name, Kemal]. She taught us Turkish history, Atatürk’s life, the history of the Republic... She cooked Turkish food, I love Turkish food... We always spoke in Turkish, since my mother believes that a child must be able to speak his/her mother tongue. That’s why she spoke only Turkish to us, even though her German is pretty good. I am happy that my mother pushed us to speak Turkish. As you can see, I don’t have any problem speaking Turkish, even though I came here only three years ago.
In the next and final interview quote of this set, we hear from Erhan (M43, Tekirdağ) who, unlike Erman (Berlin) and Eda (Munich), had grown up in a small German town, as had many of the participants. Erhan describes the implications and advantages of a German small-town upbringing, as well as making some typically disparaging remarks about the ‘other’ Turks who live in big German cities and never adapt to the German way of life. Erhan’s parents had been early immigrants to Germany; his father emigrated to Germany in 1960, initially on his own, later bringing over his wife and Erhan’s sister. Erhan was born in Germany in 1969.

I was born in [names small town]; it’s a small and peaceful town an hour or so from Stuttgart. I had a very happy childhood and upbringing. I got a good education; my school years passed well. Our town was in the countryside, surrounded by green spaces. I think it was an ideal place to raise children. Both my mother and father worked in the textile industry. My mother worked in the production part; my father’s work was more specialised as he was also doing some tailoring for special contracts… They had an active working life so I started kindergarten at an early age… I think my German became very good because I spent more time in school than with my parents. […]

We weren’t a typical Turkish family where the mother did everything. Every member of the family had certain tasks. We all helped my mother. If she cooked, me and my sister would clear the table and father would wash the dishes. I talked to my mother in Turkish and my father and sister in German. I think my family was quite modern compared to other Turkish families… My parents weren’t so educated but me and my sister graduated from university and made decent careers [Erhan now works in Tekirdağ as a salesman for an automobile company].

[...]

Other Turkish immigrants didn’t learn German; they didn’t raise their children with two cultures; instead they preserved their Turkish village culture in Germany and stayed in their own communities. This led to a kind of polarisation: Germans had prejudices against the Turks, and the Turks were prejudiced towards the Germans, because they didn’t get to know each other or share the same social environment. The biggest problem was illiteracy, especially common amongst the women.
Among the characteristic elements highlighted in these three participants’ narratives, which were common across many other accounts, we highlight the following:

- the general experience of growing up in ‘German’ neighbourhoods, and not in urban enclaves densely populated by Turks;
- a parallel experience in school, where the phrase ‘I was the only Turk in the class’ was repeated by several participants;
- the distinction made by many between their own parental/ancestral origins – ‘being from Istanbul’ – and those of other, rural-origin Turks in Germany who did not integrate and lived in ‘Turkish ghettos’ (quite a few mentioned the district of Kreuzberg in Berlin in this regard);
- the relative ‘openness’ and ‘freedom’ of their upbringing, which encouraged them to participate in many activities such as school trips, as well as gain access to the university-oriented Gymnasium high school instead of the vocational and academically downgraded Hauptschule where most second-generation Turkish pupils ended up;
- alongside this openness to German society and integration, the preservation, largely within the family setting, of many Turkish cultural features – food, language, a patriotic sense of Turkish history, and some religious practices.

We close this subsection with a few more details about aspects of ‘Turkish’ life in Germany which were not brought up in the three narratives above. The first relates to the Turkish language and history classes which second-generationers were encouraged to take in addition to their standard German curriculum. These classes, taught by teachers sent over from Turkey, were generally viewed negatively by participants, because of the authoritarian attitude of the teachers and the emphasis on rote learning, which contrasted with pedagogic practice in German schools. Here is a typical negative view, albeit more vehemently expressed than most. The speaker is Oktay (M51) who had been taken to Germany as a pre-school-age child when his father, who immigrated there in 1963, was able to bring his wife and child over as part of family-reunion migration. Hence Oktay is describing the ‘Turkish lectures’ he attended in the 1970s.6

They told us at primary school that some Turkish teachers were being sent to our school so we could get lectures from them once a week – if I am not mistaken it was on Wednesdays at 2 pm. My German teachers encouraged me to attend, they said ‘You should also learn Turkish history and language’, and so I tried it out... I hated the lectures!
I totally hated them! Horrible teachers, horrible lectures... These teachers used to hit the students and humiliate them for small things... I tried my best to stick it for six months but in the end I couldn't take any more. It was such a disaster! My Turkish was not good so the lectures were hard to understand... What's more, they used to give us homework... come on, we were nine-year-olds and we had to prepare homework every week: 'Read this book, memorise it and you will be examined on the whole book in one week's time'. I have never believed that such a system actually makes your brain work... In German schools, there is no such pressure on nine-year-olds.

The second area to mention is religion. Whilst some families held closely to Muslim religious practices, sending their children to Quran classes, fully participating in Bayram (religious festivities) or circumcision days and not eating pork, others were more secular and syncretic with regard to religion. Participants generally referred enthusiastically to Christmas celebrations, with trees and presents, and being part of Christmas plays at school, as well as keeping to the Bayram traditions. A typical account which reflected parents' willingness to follow at least the symbolic events of both religions comes from Fatoş (F43), born in Frankfurt to parents who migrated in the 1960s.

I joined in all the events at school – Christmas celebrations, Easter, and others... We bought a tree every Christmas and put our presents under it; the presents made me very excited! I enjoyed Christmas because it is a united, heart-warming day when everyone is cheerful and friendly. People are smiling, everyone goes shopping, the city comes alive, all decorated with lights... My family liked Christmas too; they didn't see it as something bad because it was a Christian celebration... But of course we celebrated our own religious days too. Every Bayram, my parents brought me nice dresses, we cooked Turkish food and invited our relatives.

Childhood visits to Turkey
A distinctive element of the second generation’s experience of growing up in Germany were ‘home-country’ visits with their parents, usually every summer for around 5-6 weeks. From the parents’ point of view these were an important part of their lives as emigrants and a way of keeping alive the dream of return. It was also important as a means of maintaining contact with kin and friends in Turkey and, in many cases, of demonstrating their material success as emigrants by bringing back presents and spending money. The return visit was perhaps the most tangible manifestation that the first
generation inhabited a ‘transnational social space’ (Faist 2000); indeed for most migrants, and not only Turks, such visits are constitutive of the entire migrant experience.

For nearly all of the second-generation participants, these holiday visits were a memorable part of their childhood and adolescence, a finding which resonates with other studies of return visits and their role in preparing the ground for a more definitive homeland relocation – see for example Conway et al. (2009) and Duval (2004) on the Caribbean and King et al. (2011b) on Greece and Cyprus. But the nature and interpretation of the visits changed over time, according to the development of air transport and the level of (under)development of Turkey, and also according to the age children were when they made their visits.

In the early years, before the era of mass air travel and budget-price flights, the trip was made by car and took two or three days, crossing many borders and following challenging routes through former Yugoslavia. Different participants saw these trips either as an exciting adventure or as a tedious and uncomfortable journey. One advantage was that car travel enabled prestigious German products to be brought down and distributed to family members; these products included not just consumer goods like TV sets, stereos and toys but also more mundane goods like chocolate, which was scarcely available in Turkey, or only in inferior quality. The positive memories of those holiday times were the good weather, swimming and sunbathing at the seaside, abundant local food, fun with cousins and relatives, and the general atmosphere of friendliness and hospitality. The negative impressions included the tedium of endless visits to relatives, some of whom were virtual strangers, the difficulty of communicating in Turkish, and Turkey being an underdeveloped country. Some participants recollected how they pined for their friends back in Germany and couldn’t wait to return. Two quotes which express fairly typical and balanced views of summer holiday visits:

When I was a child I thought of Turkey as a holiday place: it was all about swimming, playing with other kids around my age, barbecues with the family… When I grew older I started to enjoy these trips less because I realised that Turkey wasn’t all about sunbathing and nature. It was a backward place, especially when I compared it to Germany. As a youngster you weren’t able to find the cassettes and magazines you wanted. It was as if Turkey was a Soviet country. In Germany teenagers were more mature, more independent. In Turkey my friends had to get permission from their parents to go to the beach or the café, especially the girls. Turkey was more conservative than I imagined (Erhan, M43, Tekirdağ)
We came here during the summer. I quite enjoyed these holidays because the weather was great. There was no school, there was only swimming, sunbathing, playing with friends, eating ice cream... This was Turkey for me; Turkey was holiday and summer. I also enjoyed the road trip, it took two days. First we would come to Istanbul and to my grandparents’ place, and then we would go off to the summer seaside places. Kids were envious of my toys. We had really cool toys from Germany and the Turkish kids had really shitty toys. They were calling us ‘Almancı’ ‘Germans’. My Turkish was OK; it wasn’t advanced but it was enough to communicate. I remember that sometimes I would hear some new Turkish words from the local kids and mostly they would be swear words. So I would create an awkward silence at the dinner table by asking about the meanings of the swear words [laughs] (Fatih, M41, Istanbul).

Narrating the return decision and process
Reading and re-reading the interview narratives – what we referred to earlier as ‘bathing in the data’ – enables us to distil a number of narrative themes that echoed through the transcripts. In following this approach of teasing out ‘narrative confluences’ in the data we follow the lead of King et al. (2011a) and Sardinha (2011) who did likewise in their respective studies of second-generation return to Greece and Portugal. The themes relating to ‘return’ that we identify are by no means mutually exclusive; indeed most participants drew on at least two at various points in their accounts, reflecting not just their complex individualised experiences but also the logical connections that exist between some of the themes. Here are the themes that emerged:

- return as part of a family decision;
- return as a traumatic experience;
- return as an escape and a new start;
- return as a project of self-realisation;
- return and the attractions of the ‘Turkish way of life’.

We now consider and illustrate each in turn.

Return as part of a family decision
In her study of second-generation return from Britain to Jamaica, Reynolds (2008) discusses what she calls the ‘family narrative of return’, a situation in which the second generation grows up surrounded by constant talk about ‘going home’. Often, this imagined return is continuously postponed and
then never happens – the well-known ‘myth of return’ (Anwar 1979). The family narrative of return is also discussed by King et al. (2011a) in their study of Greek-Germans; they note that, ultimately, it is often the second generation who make the actual return, leaving their parents in Germany where they can be close to their other children (and perhaps grandchildren) and where they can benefit from better social services and healthcare in their retirement. The results of these studies are that, more often than not, the second generation ‘returns’ to the homeland independently of their parents. Sometimes the parents might follow their children back to the homeland, but the case where the actual return move takes place *en famille* seems to be the exception.

In the Turkish-German case, however, the pattern of return *is* characterised by whole-family moves, which account for half the return moves in our sample (which, of course, is not necessarily representative). Returning as a family unit often brought the second generation back to Turkey whilst they were still teenagers, either still at school or at the end of their school years. Usually, their opinions were not asked; they were simply obliged to return with their families. Whilst some were happy to go along with the family decision (perhaps remembering enjoyable childhood holidays in Turkey), most were not, and said that they would have preferred to remain in Germany. Whilst we heard about a few cases of sons who were allowed to remain in Germany when the family returned, daughters were rarely given this option: girls, in particular, were expected to live with their families, wherever their families were, until they got married. Participants also described how it was nearly always the father’s decision to return that prevailed over the views of other family members.

Within the family return model, there were several mechanisms relating to particular reasons for return. We pick out four of these as the most recurrent. First, there is the notion that it was always the intention to return to Turkey, and therefore *the return is simply the fulfilment of the original plan*. In the interview extract that follows, the original idea was to accumulate enough money to buy a house in their home town. Note the dominant role of the father in the decision, and the brief reference to the difficulties that ensued – these difficulties will be discussed in more detail in the next subsection of the paper, about return as a traumatic event.

It was my father’s decision and my opinion wasn’t asked. The reason was that my parents had reached their goal of being able to buy a house in Tekirdağ; so they thought that they had spent enough time in Germany […]. I don’t think it was a good decision at all… it had a bad impact on our family life. The happy family life we had in
Germany became a problematic one when we returned to Turkey because we were all struggling with the new environment (Erhan, M43, returned to Turkey when still a teenager).

The second narrative subtheme talks about ‘returning before it is too late’ and is related to specific family discussions over the timing of the return, often following a sequence of postponements. In Didem’s (F24) account below, the timing issue concerns her and her sister’s educational landmarks. She came back with her family at the end of her schooling and her Turkish was good enough for her to enter university in Istanbul, even though she had difficulty getting her German school-leaving diploma recognised.

The idea of return had always been there. They [parents] always had plans to settle back in Turkey, but they didn’t want to interrupt my education. Most of the time, they’d change their mind and postpone their decision because of that reason. Also they had some worries about where to live in Istanbul, how to earn an income, which schools to send me and my sister... The first years of us living in Istanbul, my father kept his restaurant in Germany. I guess that was his back-up plan, his plan B... If things didn’t go well in Istanbul, he could still go back to Germany; it was our insurance back-up. When we did finally return, it was when I graduated from the high school and my sister was going to start secondary school, so they thought it was the perfect time because if they stayed longer, they thought, they would strike deeper and deeper roots. If I had stayed a few more years, I probably wouldn’t have come back to Turkey; I would stay there. And adapting here [Turkey] would be much harder. So it was good timing.

The third subtheme comprises returns triggered by family events, such as a daughter or son’s marriage to a Turk from Turkey, or the illness of a family member. Some of these returns took place a long time ago, in response to events beyond the family’s control. In the case of Berna (F48) it took place in 1978, because of the illness of her grandmother:

It was a family decision. My grandmother [mother’s mother] was sick and my mother wanted to be with her. They were planning to go back to Turkey anyway; they did not want to stay any longer. First it was me, my sister and my mother who returned; my father came back four years later.
For Sevim (F47), who was also obliged to return as a teenager, it was her mother’s terminal illness that drove the return:

My mother was so sick... She had cancer but there was no advanced treatment back in those days. So we returned to Turkey because it was my mother’s wish... to die in Turkey. She went back to Germany for a couple of therapies but nothing worked... and my mother died a year later... My father had to sell the house [in Turkey] to cover the cost of my mother’s medical treatment... he tried everything but he couldn’t save her [crying]... My mother died of lung cancer; she had not smoked one cigarette in her life [...]. It was difficult for me. I asked my father if we could go back to Germany; the change [the return to Turkey] was too much for me. But he didn’t want to because it would be very hard for him to work and take care of five kids at the same time in Germany.

Finally, the 1983 ‘Law for the Promotion of Readiness to Return’, which offered immigrants 10,500 DM to return to their country of origin, was a financial incentive that attracted some to return at that time. Fatoş (F43) was one of a group of participants whose families took advantage of this scheme.

We returned in 1984; many families returned then because the German government offered money to families [to return]. When I came here I was nervous about studying in Turkey – we knew that the system was different. But I was lucky because they opened a high school in Istanbul for students coming from Germany due to the mass return... But the teachers weren’t able to fulfil our needs... because the education we had in Germany was far more advanced than the one in Turkey. So they brought teachers in from Germany who could understand us and give us the education we deserved... We were lucky because they gave us the opportunity to continue a similar education system as we had in Germany. Also, all the students were from Germany so we felt safe together, we had similar backgrounds and we understood each other... So I am glad I graduated from that school. If I had gone to a regular Turkish school perhaps I wouldn’t have been so successful... I might have become very depressed.

In the latter part of her extract, Fatoş describes the favourable schooling she was able to receive back in Turkey, but this was a minority experience. As she herself hints in the last sentence of her quote, most of those who returned in their mid-teenage years were traumatised by the sudden change in educational system and standards.
Return as a traumatic event

As revealed in some of the quotes above, there is a considerable overlap between the family return model and the notion of return as trauma. Many of the narratives of family return segued into a litany of complaints and regrets, which usually focused around the abrupt change in school and university system, the sudden loss of German friends, and tighter family pressure to adapt their behaviour and modes of dress to conform to the expectations of relatives and neighbours, especially for teenage girls and young women. We can divide the ‘narratives of trauma’ into two groups depending on the age at which the return took place. The first group represents the continuation of the previous theme and consists of teenagers’ accounts of the different school system. The second group consists of those who returned as adults and whose initial reactions of shock and having to confront a new social and workplace system link to the second main ‘results’ section of the paper, which is about the post-return experience and its various satisfactions and challenges.

The first narrative extract is a long one which we have selected because of the large number of themes that it covers. It is also a kind of blueprint for what was usually the long-term reaction of these teenage ‘forced returnees’ who, faced with dramatic life-changes in their early years back in Turkey, eventually adapted and now feel settled there, having overcome, to a large extent, their initial feelings of displacement and disorientation. The narrator is Pınar (F44), who had been born in Krefeld following her parents’ economically-motivated migration in the early 1960s. The family returned in 1983, when Pınar was 16. After a difficult but eventually successful passage through Turkish high school, she has been working for 20 years in a tourist agency which deals with a lot of German-speaking clients. She is married, with two children.

My father decided to return; it was a surprise for me and also my siblings… After he retired, he just decided one day that he wanted to live in Turkey. I must say that was a very tough time for me. I wasn’t prepared for this decision. I was afraid of starting from zero in Turkey. The future in Turkey seemed so unknown… I didn’t want to leave my friends behind, I didn’t want to be taken away from my social environment in Germany. My older sister and brother immediately disagreed with the idea of returning. They were both starting to work in Germany and didn’t want to risk their careers. So they stayed in Germany. I was 16 years old when we moved to Turkey. I cried every day for a year. I became depressed, I wasn’t able to enjoy anything. I was constantly dreaming of a way to get back to Germany. I didn’t have any friends in the beginning – OK, I had my relatives, but what
can you do with relatives? I needed to have a social life but I didn’t have one. So, the first year was horrible. After that, I started getting used to living in Istanbul… I slowly made friends at the high school and in time I worried less about living here.

[...]

You know, gymnasium education in Germany is very advanced; it is for students who are capable of continuing their education at university. Compared to the high school education here, I was way more mature in school subjects. First of all, I had critical thinking, I was able to discuss topics while students here could only memorise information. I was helping my new friends with their courses and they were helping me to integrate. Everyone was very helpful to me; they had the best intentions for me and tried to make me feel at home. I am lucky that I ended up with such nice people. Through them my two years in high school eventually passed easily.

[...]

We settled in Beşiktaş [district of Istanbul]. Beşiktaş wasn’t crowded then as it is now… The roads weren’t asphalted yet; it was actually a long way behind German standards. It was a shock for me because in Germany we had good roads… our town was very organised, there were pretty buildings. Istanbul on the other hand was an eyesore, they were building ugly apartment blocks everywhere, the roads were bad… it was like a giant village. There was no infrastructure; actually there is still no proper infrastructure.

[...]

Finally after living here, experiencing more, becoming more advanced in Turkish etc., I could feel that I was happy to be living here. But it took me a long while to discover such feelings, to feel that Turkey is nicer than Germany, to feel that in the end it was my motherland.

Both Pınar, immediately above, and Fatoş (earlier quote) had been eventually lucky in their high school experiences in Istanbul. Others were much more negatively affected, repeating the kind of criticisms about militaristic discipline, rote-based learning, crowded classes, and intolerant and violent teachers that we heard much earlier from Oktay when he was describing the ‘Turkish lectures’ that he attended at school in Germany. Here, then, are a couple of the more negative reactions which represent the majority experience of those who had to complete their final years of education in Turkey:
In Turkish school, we were supposed to wear uniforms, it was very irritating, I didn’t want to wear that jacket and tie and shirt. I became a very lazy student…. Turkish teachers were dictators, they were very tough… I was hit by the teacher a couple of times… In Germany I wasn’t a lazy student because I had my freedom. After school I could go outdoors, play with my friends… In Istanbul the school was like a jail, there were no sport activities… I wasn’t able to channel my energies in the right direction… it made me aggressive… the tough discipline in Turkey turned into a rebel (Fatih, M41).

I hated my school in Istanbul. The toilets were so dirty, everywhere was dirty! Do you know, there was no toilet paper in Turkey in those days?… We got infected with lice every year because the school and the students were dirty […] In school in Germany, we were not treated like soldiers: you could sit as you wanted, you could go to the bathroom when you wanted, without having to ask… Discipline in Turkey is about obeying other people’s rules… Turkish school doesn’t teach you how to be independent and critical; they just give you a hundred pages every week to memorise (Sevim, F47).

Moving away from schooling problems, we now examine the initial reactions of participants to other aspects of life in Turkey. Once again, we start with a longish extract, chosen both for its intrinsic interest and because it covered a number of points relevant to an older generation of returnees. The interviewee this time is Oktay (M51), whom we have quoted from before. Aged 17 on his ‘forced’ return in 1978, he came back to a Turkey which was still underdeveloped and on the threshold of the 1980 military take-over. Moreover, Oktay had never visited Turkey on holiday. The reason for the family’s return (understandably he did not want to go into detail) was that his father was imprisoned in Germany and then the family was sent back to Turkey. On this, Oktay remarked bitterly: ‘My father changed my destiny forever with his actions. This decision [to return] is the worst thing that my father did to me in his life’. Given Oktay’s poor command of Turkish (remember his earlier quote about quitting the ‘Turkish lectures’ at his German school), it was a tough adaptation.

So when I came here, not only was my life turned upside-down but also my soul. I was asking myself ‘Where have I come to? What is this place?’ I was going nuts, I was close to losing my mind. Especially during the first few years… Two different worlds [Germany and Turkey]… there is not even one thing in common.
My first few years were horrible... My father didn’t have any money... I did not have any money for myself... so I went into the army... and served my army service in Cyprus. After that I was more adapted. The army taught me everything but in the most cruel way. I had difficulties but I coped [...] They would call me Almançı or gavur (foreigner)... they used to make fun of me all the time, especially at the beginning when my Turkish was really bad. I used to laugh at jokes randomly because I couldn’t really understand. I was like a polar bear taken from its natural habitat in the north and put into a jungle in Africa. How can a polar bear survive in Africa? Psychologically it was very difficult for me. I got over all this eventually. I don’t know how but I got over it...

When I came here, it was 1978, years of turbulence, I was shocked... Back then, Turkey was very backward in many respects... And just imagine, I came to this place from the Germany of social democracy, the period of Willy Brandt. Germany had its golden years in that period. [...] In 1980 there was the coup d'état in Turkey: I woke up one morning and there were tanks everywhere. There were huge clashes between rightists and leftists; they were killing each other on the streets. There were such people [ideological and political opponents] in Germany too, but they would discuss things around a table, they would not kill each other. But of course people in Turkey realised they had been tricked... Then, later, Özal was elected as Prime Minister and he opened Turkey to the world. He brought the liberal economy. Then life was better in Turkey.

Oktay could benefit from this ‘better life’ too, as he was able to capitalise on his German by working as a guide and interpreter in the tourist trade. But nowadays there are many others who can offer German and also English which is more important for the tourism industry. Currently Oktay is semi-retired and struggling with debts but nevertheless he insists: ‘Today I am fine, I am comfortable here... I have no problems living here now’.

Other themes picked out by interviewees, especially those who ‘returned’ after completing their education and perhaps also some work experience in Germany, related to the working environment in Turkey, characterised by a network-based system, lax discipline, low salaries and exclusion by colleagues. A typical account was given by Öykü (F34), who had moved to Turkey in 2004, after graduating in dentistry from a German university.
I graduated from the university in Germany... with a double major in dentistry and dental technology. After graduation I worked in the university hospital for two years, but I wasn’t happy. I was bored with Germany. I decided to come to Turkey. It was quite a quick decision. My mother was already here, so I thought I would try it out. The first year wasn’t easy, even though it was my own choice to come here. The Turkey that I had experienced on holidays and the Turkey that I lived on a daily basis were quite different. In the beginning I tried to keep the same standard of living that I had in Germany, but I couldn’t manage it. The salaries which were offered to me were ridiculous. I wasn’t able to work as a dentist because I had to have the Turkish accreditation. Luckily my second diploma could work, so I started work as a dental technician. I found the job through a friend of my mother, otherwise I would be forever unemployed in Turkey! [laughs]... In Turkey you have to have a network, you have to know the right people to get a job or be promoted to a higher position. If you don’t know the right people, you will work your ass off but will earn less than your colleague who is on Facebook all day long – Why? Because he is the nephew of the boss’s wife.

These work-related problems were one of the main features discussed, often passionately, by participants who reflected on their longer-term experience of living in Turkey. We return to these issues later in the paper.

Return as ‘escape’ and a ‘new start’
Narratives of escape leading to a ‘new start’ are of two main types: escaping from an individual or family situation, usually connected with some kind of family rupture, and moving to Turkey as a reaction to the anti-Turkish discrimination in German society. Previous research on Greek-German second-generation ‘returnees’ revealed that the ‘escape’ narrative was a mainly female discourse, reacting against patriarchy within the family (usually an over-dominant father, but recognising that often mothers were also complicit) and against the social claustrophobia of the inward-looking Greek communities in German cities, which were seen by the second-generation ‘escapees’ as too tradition-bound (reflecting their Greek village origins) and gossipy (King et al. 2011a). Our interview data suggest that the Turkish-German situation is a little different. Since most of the parents originated from Istanbul, not rural Turkey, and many settled in smaller German towns, not big cities with Turkish enclaves, the heavily ‘ethnic Turkish’ background was generally not perceived as an issue. Rather, as
we have seen, most interviewees were at pains to point out how ‘open’ their parents were to German cultural influences, how they generally lived in ‘German’ neighbourhoods, and how, at school, they were surrounded by German fellow-pupils. Hence the ‘escape’ narrative was articulated by only a handful of participants, each related to rather specific individual circumstances.

For instance, Özlem (F33, Istanbul) came to Turkey in 1996 in order to distance herself from a mother whom she perceived back then to be dominating and controlling. Her escape-route was to persuade her parents to let her go to a boarding high school in Istanbul which catered for ‘German-Turks’. Here are some elements of her story:

We were supposed to speak Turkish at home but I almost always spoke German... especially with my brother, we used to whisper to each other in German so my parents wouldn’t hear... I was getting impatient with my parents, I would tell them ‘It’s time for you to learn German!’... To be honest, I wasn’t really communicating with my parents... I was mostly at school and then in my room spending time on my own... My brother was the same. The difference is he stayed in Germany, I came to Turkey.

[...]
My mother is a very dominant character; she was constantly taking the opposite side and arguing with me. I wanted to escape from her and her constant complaining... That summer, when I came to Turkey, I was able for the first time to communicate with people, I felt comfortable, I was able to find myself... There was a girl I knew from Germany, she was our neighbour in Germany but she studied at a high school in Istanbul... She told me ‘Everyone in my school comes from Germany. It is great fun! You should move to Istanbul and study with me!’ I brought this idea up with my parents; they immediately opposed it. But I was fixed on the idea of moving to Istanbul, I felt the need to escape, to be away from my mother. I didn’t have any problems with Germany, but I couldn’t live there as long as my mother was beside me. She tried to talk me out of the idea [of going to Istanbul]... my father stayed neutral as usual, he was always the open-minded one... I convinced them in the end, my mother that is. I arranged a meeting with the parents of the girl who studies in Turkey. They told my parents about the school; they had a good influence on my parents. Then, everything happened so fast. After two days, I started studying in Istanbul.
The ‘escape from racism’ mechanism was very much a minority experience. Reflecting their urban-origin parental backgrounds and their generally ‘integrated’ status within German society, most participants maintained that they had no experience of discrimination in Germany. A small number did, however, and in these cases such discrimination was a major ‘push’ factor leading them to ‘escape’ to Turkey. We illustrate this with two examples, representing rather different case-histories.

Kübra’s parents are from Zonguldak on the Black Sea coast: they emigrated to Germany in 1971, following some relatives and other people from the same place of origin. Kübra was born in Gelsenkirchen in 1982. At the interview in Istanbul in 2012 she was wearing a headscarf and was cautious in her replies to questions; she particularly did not want the name of the organisation she worked for mentioned. She came to Turkey to get married and was expecting her first child. Her parents and siblings are still in Germany. Reflecting on her life in Germany, she said:

Most of the time, Germans are not friendly. They look at you as if you were a monster. Germany is a good place to live if you are a German. My parents have had a hard time here. OK, they are doing fine now… [but in the past] Turkish people, Turkish workers, were treated so badly. We did not have our own mosques for years. I always wanted to come back to Turkey: at least in this country I am respected.

In contrast to Kübra’s humble background as the daughter of provincial guestworkers, Fatih (M41) came from a professional family. His parents were both graduates in dentistry from Istanbul and moved to Germany to pursue the same career. They started as dental assistants and, with time, had their own practices. However they returned to Turkey after 15 years. Both Fatih and his mother felt that they had been victims of acts of discrimination.

I spent the last four years of our stay in Germany at a boarding school… and there were many incidents against me because I was Turkish. I was beaten up many times because of my nationality, I experienced xenophobia… Even though my parents weren’t guestworkers, even though I came from a wealthy family, and my German was as good as a German’s, these things didn’t matter, I was a Turk and some people in the school didn’t like it. My hair is dark, my eyes are dark, my skin is darker than theirs. These things are enough reasons to hate me… It was like the US in the fifties when black people were discriminated no matter what.

[...]
So we returned to Turkey because of racism… my mother especially was really worried about it. A couple of times they threatened us saying they were going to burn down our house… So my mother persuaded my father and we returned to Turkey. They opened their own dental clinics there… The only problem is that now we were Almancı because we dressed differently. But overall people are nicer than the Germans.

[...]

When we started living in Turkey, I found myself, I didn’t want to live anywhere else… it finally felt like I had returned to somewhere I belonged to. It’s funny because my parents raised me in a completely different way, in a more sophisticated way let’s say, more Western, more European. But somehow it didn’t work on me. I really feel like I am the child of this soil, the Turkish soil.

Fatih’s rather essentialising self-ascription as a ‘child of the Turkish soil’ is interesting as it replicates many Greek second-generation accounts of how having a fundamentally Greek identity can only be achieved by returning to the Greek ‘soil’ and ‘air’ and becoming embedded in the ‘true’ Greek landscape and culture (cf. Christou and King 2010). This sense of achieving self-identity in the ancestral homeland is less evident in the Turkish case, although it is still there in several narratives, such as Fatih’s. It is also interesting to contrast his powerful statements about ‘belonging’ to Turkey with his earlier rant about his bad experiences in the Istanbul high school he was transferred to when the family returned.

Return as self-realisation
This narrative type is related to a sense of achievement and maturity, and overlaps in some respects with the previous narrative theme – a connection which can be appreciated by a glance back to the final paragraph of Fatih’s extract above. Likewise, in an earlier extended quote from Pınar (F44), we learnt how, after the initial trauma of a sudden ‘forced’ family return from the peaceful town of Krefeld to the chaos of Istanbul in 1983, a gradual ‘settling down’ process eventually led her to declare that she was (to reprise some typical nationalist phrases) ‘happy to be living in Turkey’ and that Turkey is her ‘motherland’. This self-realisation is something that a number of the older participants expressed, often after a difficult and prolonged adaptation process in Turkey. Pınar’s eventual contentment was closely related to her job satisfaction, for in addition to raising two children, she had been working in the same tourist bureau for 20 years.
I got this job because I know German… and our customers are mostly Germans, sometimes Austrians and Swiss… They hired me because I can find common ground with German clients. I am punctual, organised and disciplined. I work effectively, I do things on time, I don’t postpone things. I do today’s work today, I don’t put off until tomorrow. It is rare for someone to work in the tourism sector for 20 years – believe me, it is very uncommon. But I am an exception because I have always been very dedicated to my work. I take my responsibilities seriously and I use my full potential to achieve the best results. I believe I gained these qualities in Germany, in the German education system which is based on discipline and continuous self-assessment. They taught us to work effectively… to be open to improvement and be critical of ourselves… I believe that this is the only way to be successful. In Germany you learn to question things, in Turkey they teach you to accept things as they are. In my professional life… I always tried to find ways to improve techniques, find alternative solutions. This is the reason why the same agency kept me for 20 years. They approve of my way of working and they like my character.

Pınar’s self-congratulatory account thus moves from a traumatic uprooting from Germany (hence our inclusion of an earlier extensive quote from her under ‘narratives of trauma’) to an eventual conclusion of self-realisation in Turkey, which is achieved via a deployment into the Turkish work context of the ‘good qualities’ of her German education.

Another potential route to self-realisation comes via university education. The Erasmus student exchange scheme is a bridge to Turkey for young ‘Euro-Turks’ to test the water, so to speak, and decide whether they want to return to Turkey for a longer-term stay (cf. Sardinha 2011 on Portuguese-French second-generation students who take the ‘Erasmus route’ to Portugal). One such case was Akasya (F24) who came to one of the many Istanbul universities for an Erasmus term in 2009, partly to connect with her Turkish roots and partly for the more academic motive to study Turkish history and politics.

I came here to study. First I was an Erasmus student, I wanted to study Turkish politics and history. I wanted to continue with a Master’s here because I always dreamed of experiencing life in Turkey… It was somewhere in my heart, I knew I had to come here… I got accepted, and so I am living here since 2011… I chose to do my Master’s in cultural studies, since I wish to concentrate on ethnic and cultural
topics in Turkey... I like my studies here... and I actually want to work here... It would also be nice if I had my own place [to live]. But my family preferred that I stayed with my uncle and his family; they feel more comfortable this way. But for next year I am really planning to rent a place for myself with some flatmates [...]. Turkey has always been special for me. I like Turkish music, Turkish food, I like the weather, the Bosphorus, nice beaches... Turkey has great potential. [...] What I really want is to experience working life in Istanbul. I see Istanbul as a place of many opportunities. I know unemployment is a big problem in Germany now. It’s the same in Turkey but somehow I feel there are more chances here, and more interesting chances... There is a big market in cultural issues... and in recent years dealing with immigrant issues...

In Akasya’s case, her personal project of self-realisation is still a work in progress. She has taken the first two steps: tested the water through the Erasmus exchange and then committed two more years for the Master’s degree, the latter still in progress. And she has a clear idea of her self-realisation pathway – a place of her own and a fulfilling job in a field connected with her ethnic studies specialisation. These are demanding steps to overcome, for she has to detach herself from her family’s supervisory network and then, equally challenging, find a job that satisfies her and pays her enough to be self-supporting.

Return and the ‘Turkish way of life’

The fifth and final return narrative theme filters through some of the others already considered, notably the quest for self-realisation and the notion of return as escape and a desire for a fresh start, as well as memories from childhood holiday visits. Thus, several snippets from earlier-quoted interview evidence allude, either directly or indirectly, to certain attractions of life in Turkey. However, there is still much more to be said, especially about the following subthemes:

• the warmth and family values of Turkish human relations;
• the relaxed attitude to rules and regulations, so that ‘anything is possible’; and for those who return to Istanbul,
• the lively and cosmopolitan atmosphere of the ‘city on the Bosphorus’, with its cultural and seaside attractions.

These have to be counterbalanced the many negative and frustrating aspects of living in Turkey (and Istanbul) that interviewees brought up. These more
critical perspectives are covered in more detail in the next section of the paper which deals with accounts of the ‘post-return’ experience.

With the exception of a few participants who were still so angry about their ‘forced return’ as teenagers that they saw only negative things about living in Turkey, virtually all interviewees made reference to what they saw as the attractive features of the Turkish way of life. These included the strength of the family and its values of togetherness and hospitality, and the lively outdoor life in the streets and cafés. The following two quotes exemplify these qualities of life in Turkey:

Turks are sharing, hospitable and friendly…. If you visit a Turk, they will offer you tea, food or dessert and they would be so sincere in their welcome that you would feel as if you were at your own place. They make you feel immediately at home. Such manners are less visible in the big cities of Turkey nowadays, but still, compared to Germany, Turks are so much more hospitable (Pınar, F44, Istanbul).

When I visit Germany, I really miss Turkey! It’s so alive here. I miss going out, just going out randomly; to take a walk and a glass of tea by the sea, the bagel-seller shouting his wares… everything is so alive and kicking here… You really miss these things when you are away (Didem, F24, Istanbul).

Some interviewees used their impressions of summer holiday visits and their encounters with the Turkish way of life then to help explain their subsequent move to Turkey for good. The story of Nilgün (F50, Istanbul) is interesting in this regard, and for other aspects too. Nilgün was born in Germany of guestworker parents from Giresun, a Black Sea town in eastern Turkey. She grew up in Heilbronn, a medium-sized town north of Stuttgart. Educated to university level (though she did not complete her degree), she worked in an architect’s office, got married to a fellow German-Turk, but then divorced. She ‘returned’ to Turkey in 2000 when her six-year-old daughter was due to start primary school, leaving her ex-husband (who also had an older daughter from a previous marriage) in Germany. In terms of our ‘types of return’, hers was an escape (from a ‘difficult’ husband) and a fresh start, timed in the educational interests of her daughter. Her parents had already returned to Giresun, whilst an older sister is married and living in Germany. Nilgün and her daughter lodge with the sister on their regular visits to Germany.

We used to come to Turkey every summer for four weeks… Those summer holidays were so much fun! We used to go to my father’s
village; we had many relatives there, then good food and great family atmosphere. I have really nice memories of Turkey from those visits, and that’s why I wanted to move and live in Turkey… I was happy with my life in Germany, but if you ask me where I would prefer to live for a lifetime, I would say Turkey because it’s more lively, the people are warmer, and I felt better here.

[…] I came here mainly because of my daughter, I thought it was better to keep her away from her father [earlier in the interview Nilgün explained how ‘Turkish men’ react badly to divorce and want to ‘use’ the children as ‘tools’ in subsequent dealings with their ex-wives]. The second reason was economic. I thought it will be easier to find a job in Turkey. Well, if I moved to my father’s town, Giresun, I would need not pay rent, so I could stay there for free. But I didn’t want to live there because I was way too educated for a small place like that. I thought that I wouldn’t be happy there because people are more conservative and life is boring… Can you imagine a divorced woman with a kid living alone in Giresun? It wouldn’t work there; I would have a very limited life and people would gossip about me… So the best place for me was Istanbul, where I needn’t worry about such things, and also I think Istanbul is a better place for my daughter’s education. I am free in Istanbul: I can come home at midnight or even three in the morning, and no one can have a say in it. But I wouldn’t be able to have this lifestyle in Giresun – even though my family would not interfere, other people would criticise me.

[…] My most important goal was to give my daughter a good education, and I think I was successful in reaching that goal. She is studying Management Informatics and German at university here in Istanbul now… Since I moved her to Turkey, it wasn’t her decision, she was only six, so to compensate this undemocratic decision I have always led her to German-related things so that if she decides to live in Germany one day she could. I didn’t want to close that door for her… Now it’s up to her, if she wants to stay here she has the equipment and the education to do so; if she chooses Germany, she knows German, she studies in German and she can easily build a career there since she has the citizenship as well. I will tell you something interesting. She wants to continue in Germany, she wants to study two years here and the last two years in Germany but… she told me she wants to come back to Turkey and work here because she wants to do something for Turkey. She likes Turkey, she wants to be a good citizen and contribute to the development of the
country. This is great! Unfortunately we are suffering a brain drain because educated people don’t want to stay in Turkey, but they should because this is the only way to develop the country.

This quote is so full of great insights and observations that it is difficult to know where to begin. Let us pick out four points from it, two of which are reinforcements of what we have said already, and two of which are new observations. First, the opening paragraph is evidence of an explicit linkage between childhood visits to the ‘homeland’ and a later decision to settle there. Second, the first few lines of the second paragraph provide a good example of a narrative of escape. Third, the latter part of the second paragraph draws a distinction between ‘returning’ to a small provincial town or to a metropolis, and makes some specific points about the attractions of Istanbul which we will develop further below with quotes from other informants. Fourthly, and perhaps most interesting of all, Nilgün talks about her daughter’s developing ‘reverse transnational’ links back to the country of her birth, Germany; replaying thereby some of the feelings and dilemmas that Nilgün felt about her own transnational childhood. We pick up this important point about ‘future’ generations in our concluding discussion.

For now, we close off this part of the paper with a couple more quotes on the attractions of Istanbul for second-generation returnees; mainly these portray the pleasant aspects of everyday life there, but not for everyone.

I love Istanbul and also Izmir [where she briefly worked when she first came back to Turkey in 2010] because they are cities of the sea. In Munich [where she was born and grew up and lived until age 21] there is no sea. The weather here is much nicer than the German weather. Now I live in Taksim, in the middle of the city. It is such a lively place; you see all types of people, it is so colourful! Don’t get me wrong: Munich is a beautiful city too, but Istanbul is better. Even just for the view of the Bosphorus, I would spend my whole life in Istanbul (Eda, F23).

By contrast, Şükrü (M40), whose parents emigrated to Germany from Ereğli, a small town on the Black Sea east of Istanbul, and who was brought up in a small industrial town in Germany, drew a different picture:

I don’t like crowds or noise. I come from a peaceful place in Germany, I am not used to living in chaos. Ereğli is so much more peaceful compared to Istanbul… I don’t like Istanbul. I mean I like it when I go there for a few days, but I wouldn’t like to live there.
Clearly Şükrü’s priorities are different from those of Nilgün, above, who made a different kind of comparison between Istanbul and her parents’ provincial hometown. But Şükrü also hints at problems of living in Istanbul that other ‘returnees’ also faced, even those whose family origins were there.

**Post-return experiences**

An interview of an hour or so, whatever its form (free narrative, semi-structured etc.), is an inter-subjective encounter and a ‘performance’ (also on the part of the interviewer) in which facts, impressions, attitudes and recounted behaviours cannot be considered the ‘whole truth’. Multiple layers of meaning are conveyed, varying from ‘face value’ to the hinted at or partially hidden, to the ‘silenced’ or omitted. The five narrative tropes which we have described above should be viewed in this light. We give credence to them because of their repeated articulation across many interviewees, but we cannot (ever) be sure to what extent they correspond to the ‘truth’ since, even at a collective level, post-hoc rationalisations are possible and stereotypes become diffused and hence ‘believed’ by large numbers of people.

These cautionary remarks about the use and interpretations of interview data in qualitative research apply with equal force to our participants’ accounts of their lives in Turkey since relocating there. We also need to stress the time-variability of these accounts. Some of the older participants who were brought to Turkey as part of a family repatriation when still in their teens have three decades of life in Turkey to look back on. Some have – eventually – adapted well, and their earlier, ‘German’ lives are but a fading memory. Others, more numerous in fact, and including some who have adapted well, look back on the first phase of their lives in Germany as hugely formative and proclaim strongly German-influenced identities still today.

Younger participants, naturally, have moved to Turkey in more recent years, as recently as one year ago (the minimum we set to ‘qualify’ for inclusion in the study) – like Akasya who was part-way through her Master’s programme in Istanbul having also been in the city three years earlier as an Erasmus student. For such recent ‘returnees’, the resettlement and ‘integration into Turkey’ process was still at a relatively early stage.

We also need to remember that this time-variation of return confronts the second generation with different Turkish realities. Those relocating in the late 1970s and early 1980s were coming to a country which (even in Istanbul) was still regarded as backward in many respects, with limited choice of imported food and consumer goods, a fragile infrastructure, traditional values (especially outside the big cities), not to mention a tense political situation. From the mid-1980s on, Turkey ‘opened up’ to a more ‘globalising’ or ‘Europeanised’ set of values and influences; although the ‘Islamist turn’ of the current government was regretted by many participants.
With these contextual remarks in mind, what were the key themes that participants brought up when asked to reflect on their lives in Turkey since their ‘return’? To re-use a phrase from King and Christou’s (2010) study of Greek second-generation ‘return’, to what extent is the relocation a ‘welcome embrace’ or an experience of ‘disappointment and disillusionment’? The evidence from the Greek research was that the latter prevailed, and in a series of articles by Christou and King there are many examples of the frustration and rage articulated by their research participants about the trials and tribulations of life in Greece, especially in the two major cities of Athens and Thessaloniki where they carried out most of their fieldwork (see Christou and King 2010, 2011; King and Christou 2010; King et al. 2011). By contrast, Teerling’s (2011a) research on Cyprus revealed a much more ‘satisfied’ second-generation ‘returnee’ population. In Cyprus access to employment had been relatively easy, small businesses were flourishing, especially those related to tourism, and the quality of life (climate, education in international and private schools, relaxed outlook, sociability etc.) was seen to be superior to that available in Britain, where the second-generation participants had been born and brought up. This generally positive experience of return was also the main interpretive message from the research carried out by Potter and Phillips in Barbados (see Phillips and Potter 2009; Potter 2005; Potter and Phillips 2008; also Reynolds 2008 on Jamaica). These authors found second-generation ‘returnees’, most of whom (like our German-Turkish sample) were well educated, enjoying a satisfying work experience and a relaxed style of life, although some were surprised at the survival of the colonial legacy of racialised class categories (Potter and Phillips 2008). Throughout all of these case-studies, from Greece and Cyprus to the Caribbean and also including Portugal (Sardinha 2011), we read of the same narrative tension between, on the one hand, the relaxed and informal way of life, the café and bar culture and friendly sociality; and on the other hand, the frustrating laxity in time-keeping and reliability that are the flip side of the relaxed lifestyle.

Moving now to our Turkish data, we highlight four dominant narrative themes that emerged as recurrent, sometimes almost omnipresent, in the accounts of our participants. These are:

• the lower economic standard of living and, linked to this, the difficulty of accessing the labour market;
• the widespread culture of ‘networks’ and nepotism, especially in access to employment;
• the specific problems of living in a huge city like Istanbul with its traffic chaos and insufficient infrastructure;
• the problems of the Turkish education system, both for those who returned as teenagers and those who currently have children in school.
We take each of these in turn, and round off with a brief analysis of how participants compared their earlier lives in Germany with living now in Turkey.

Employment and economic aspects of post-return
Most participants were either in work or looking for a job. The exceptions were those who were university students, engaged in full-time family and homecare duties, or retired, although even those who were retired were wanting to work but stressed how difficult it is to get a job in Turkey in your 40s and 50s. Experiences in the labour market were extremely varied, making it hard to generalise across our admittedly, not extensive sample. A few ‘returnees’ had walked into jobs almost the day they returned (or had jobs lined up beforehand); others, the majority, had found the task of looking for a job more challenging; and many of those who had a job complained about low pay, poor working conditions, and exploitation at work. They compared the lack of a proper ‘work culture’ in Turkey with the seriousness and professionalism with which the whole field of work was taken in Germany.

Those who found jobs most easily tended to be those who could capitalise on their German language skills, and so they were in sectors like tourism, offices with business links to Germany, translating and teaching. This had been Oktay’s experience when he was a tour guide but now, at 51, demand for his German-language services had fallen in the face of increased competition and more demand for English, which he was not fluent enough in. Another ‘forced retiree’ is Figen (F45, Istanbul), whose story reveals early rapid progress but then redundancy and a reference to the power of networks – negative in her case. Figen now lives with her airline pilot husband and their daughter in a gated community on the European side of Istanbul. She ‘returned’ to Turkey in 1988 aged 19.

I returned to Turkey with my mother. I had applied to [names airline company] in Germany but because I was under 21 they didn’t allow me to start. So I applied to [names another airline] and I soon became chief hostess – I was the youngest chief hostess in Turkey, people didn’t take me seriously in the beginning... I was made redundant earlier this year [2012]. I had a quarrel with one of the managers; he was new and I had a problem with him and so I was kicked out. He is such a mean guy that he told other airlines not to hire me. This is Turkey! It’s all about personal relations, networks.
Stories of lack of professional work standards, abuse of workers (especially younger females) and workplace scams were abundant in the ‘narratives of work’ section of the interviews. Here are two typical extracts:

In Turkey, it is hard to work in a professional environment. The companies either have a corrupt system or no system at all. Companies which have foreign partners introduce new systems from abroad, but they don’t work under Turkish conditions. Turkish workers are lazy, they don’t work effectively. Instead of finishing off their daily work they surf the internet. They mostly come to work late and take long lunch-breaks, so they try to do less but get their full salary. In Germany a worker works eight hours straight, very efficiently...

In Germany meetings are important to plan and organise, and to process projects, also for evaluation and for future targets. In Turkey there is no culture of meetings, no project planning; things are done randomly and people don’t brief each other... In Turkey things work like ‘you scratch my back and I’ll scratch your back’. If you don’t have a good network, it is hard to do business here (Özlem, F33, Istanbul, works for a German airline company, previously for a Turkish one).

I always make the mistake of sacrificing myself too much in Turkey. I work more hours and harder than my colleagues; I take my job seriously. In Turkey people are more easy-going; they count the hours to the end of their shift. The bosses here abuse you when they realise that you are keen to work hard. They put more and more responsibility on your shoulders without paying you overtime or increasing your salary. I am rather naïve at such things. From Germany I am used to a fair system where you get back what you put in. If you are good at something, they will value your talent and hard work and reward you accordingly. In Turkey it is exactly the opposite: they exploit the goodwill of people (Öykü, F34, initially dental technologist, now customer-service chief in a furniture company).

In contrast to the mostly non-working-class ascription of the ‘returnees’ to Istanbul, the family background and work experience of Şükrü (M40, Ereğli) was closer to the classic Turkish Gastarbeiter model. He had been born in Duisburg, socialised mainly with other Turkish youngsters, and gone through the Hauptschule because he was not academically strong enough to enter the Gymnasium. His work plan seemed, in the first instance, designed to follow in his father’s footsteps:
I miss my school years in Germany; they were so much fun. I started with kindergarten and finished with Hauptschule... My father was an electrician, so perhaps that's why I chose to study this in the vocational school. I graduated from the vocational school when I was 19 and started work in Germany as an electrician.

But then his life-path changed: he followed his parents back to Ereğli, where he married a local woman with whom he now has two small children.

I never planned to move to Turkey. I always thought I would stay all my life in Germany. It was unexpected, a complicated story. I came here six years ago. My parents moved back to Ereğli in 2002. I stayed a few more years in Germany, but I am attached to my family, I wanted to be close to my parents so I moved to Turkey in 2006.

Şükrü continued his electrician’s work in Ereğli, but found the standard of living very different:

True, Ereğli is cheaper compared to Germany... the rents are higher in Germany. But I realised how well-paid I was in Germany when I moved here. Here I work for longer hours, from 8 in the morning until 6 in the evening and my salary is ridiculously low. I am not earning anything like what I earned in Germany... In Germany the system is fairer, you get what you deserve... the working environment was more professional and more disciplined... I’ve got used to Turkey now but it was hard in the beginning... I think I am good at what I do, thanks to German education and training, but all this experience doesn’t make any difference or a higher salary in Turkey. I am an electrician at the end of it all, and they won’t promote me to anything higher.

Quite the opposite experience happened to Eda (F23, Istanbul). Her case also illustrates the role of serendipity in migration decisions. Remember that Eda was trained in Germany as a make-up artist.

My return story is a funny one. I was on my way to start work in the Bavaria Film Studios as a make-up artist for a short film. I took the subway to go to my first day at the studio and I lost all my make-up kit which was worth thousands of euros. It just got lost, I don’t know how it happened. I started crying, I was angry and sad at the same time... I had built up that make-up set over two years and all of a sudden it was lost... and I was sad that I was going to lose the job. But then my
mother said to me, ‘Don’t be sad, let’s go to Turkey, the change will do you good’. It was planned as a holiday but somehow we thought we didn’t want to come back to Germany… Then my mother told me to send my CV to TRT [Turkish Radio and Television Company], and so I did. I wasn’t expecting any positive answer, but TRT called me for an interview the same day I sent the CV. They directed me to a film production agency who called me and asked me if I could work for a TV series in Izmir… I moved to Izmir and started to work there. After the series ended I moved to Istanbul. I am happy with my life here. So, my return was very spontaneous; an unfortunate event in my life led me to move to Turkey… Now I work in another production company… I am the head of their make-up department.

Of networks and nepotism
Against the background of these contrasting experiences of the world of work, a common theme running through several narratives was an acknowledgement and a critique of the culture of networking and personal contacts in Turkey. Even some of the participants who had jobs in Turkey mentioned, sometimes in a matter-of-fact way as if it were a normal, unimportant piece of information, that ‘I got the job through a relative of mine’. This normalisation of the syndrome of nepotism is part of its entrenched position in Turkish society. Other interviewees took a more openly critical stance, referring – as in some of our earlier quoted examples – explicitly to the ‘corrupt system’ or the fact that somebody got a job because ‘he is the nephew of the boss’s wife’. In the following quote Nurten (F38, Istanbul) uses the standard condemnation of the culture of networks and bribes to then launch into a wider critique of the standard of public services in Turkey.

In Turkey you will only get a job if you have a network, or if you bribe the right people. If your father knows the right man. It is horrible. […]
I find it hard to deal with the bureaucracy in Turkey. Once I received an official letter through the post. I went to the Internal Revenue Office to collect the document – it was something for my father. The official there didn’t want to understand me, he didn’t want to help. He only wanted money; he wanted me to bribe him. But I didn’t, I could never do that! […]
When I have some business to do in the bank, I hate waiting in the line… It’s the same at hospitals… And in the end when it is finally your turn, the person who is supposed to help you is rude or impatient. It is not like that in Germany.
Others commented on the lack of a proper welfare system in Turkey and on the wide gap between rich and poor. A typical statement, this time from Fatoş (F43, Istanbul):

Another problem in Turkey is the gap between rich and poor. Even in the same town you can see this gap. One street you see luxurious restaurants and cafés, and on the parallel street you see shanty houses. In Turkey there is a high class and a low class: in Germany it is mostly middle class. When my cousins come to Istanbul, they are surprised at how luxurious Cadde is [Cadde is the short name for Bağdat Caddesi, one of the ‘posh’ districts of Istanbul]. When they see all the luxurious cars and people sitting in cafés they say ‘Look at how rich people are here!’ They don’t realise it’s not expensive to drink a coffee… but in Germany you don’t see crowded cafés.

A final and highly trenchant critique is contained in the way that Sevim (F47, Istanbul) blows away the myth of the harmonious and self-supporting Turkish family, takes a sideswipe at teachers and policemen, and ends up condemning the whole system as corrupt:

There is no mutual respect between people; everyone attacks the other’s private spaces and personalities... Turks are not sharing – everyone says Turks are sharing – but I don’t think so... Turkish people think that the family is so important: that is not true either, it’s just the father ruling the rest of the family and the mother and the children obey him; he just exploits his authority. Kids don’t really respect their father; they just obey him because they are afraid of him. There is so much bullshit about Turkish people that they themselves make up – being sharing, being caring, caring for the family, caring for others etc. They want to believe in all this, and that’s why they keep saying these things, but reality shows the opposite. In Turkey parents beat their children; they make their daughters marry at a young age; teachers are not idealistic, they just care about their salaries; the policeman are liars and are rude. Everything in this country is corrupt!

Life in Istanbul
As stated in the methodological notes earlier in the paper, 26 out of 35 interviews were carried out in Istanbul, and so the attractions and challenges of everyday life in this huge metropolis featured prominently in many narratives. Earlier, briefly, we heard from Eda who compared life in Istanbul with her
experience of living in Munich (‘Even for the view of the Bosphorus, I would spend my whole life in Istanbul’) and from Şükrü, from the Black Sea town of Ereğli, who liked to visit Istanbul but would not want to live there because of its sheer size and chaos. In fact ‘chaos’ seemed to be the key word in any description of life in the city, particularly when referring to the traffic nightmare.

The biggest downside of living in Istanbul... is the traffic... it is horrible, complete chaos... The city is very crowded; sometimes you can hardly breathe on the buses (Erman, M26).

In Germany I had a car but it is not possible in Istanbul because petrol is so expensive; I can’t afford to have a car when you consider how much time you spend stuck in traffic jams every day. Life in Istanbul is very expensive and the quality of life is low. I get so tired every day from going from home to work, and from work to home (Nilgün, F50).

Those with longer memories – either having lived in Istanbul for many years post-return, or comparing earlier visits to Istanbul when in Germany with how the city is now – contrast the city of ‘then’ and how it is today. Some of these comparisons are over quite recent time periods, showing how fast the city is changing. Selin (F29), although one of the younger participants, had spent some of her childhood in Istanbul, and made the following observations:

When we moved here the first thing that caught my attention was how poor the people looked. I think the society was very conservative and religious back then... people dressed poorly in villager-like clothes... There is no doubt that Turkey has developed a lot in the last ten or twenty years. Today Istanbul can offer you anything you want as long as you can afford it. Back in the days it wasn’t possible to find things that we already had in Germany. When my father was visiting Germany I was asking him to bring stuff from Germany. I remember he brought a bag only for me filled with chocolate and clothes... Today Turkey has everything that Germany has. But Turkey is lacking other things: education system, healthcare system, human rights, infrastructure... all these have to be improved... It is a beautiful country, so much potential, and it is sad to see that it is so corrupt.

Selin’s and Nilgün’s remarks about the cost of living in Istanbul were echoed by several other participants, for example Sevim (F47), who also remarked
about the conservatism of people in certain outlying areas. Sevim lives in Ümraniye, an outer district on the Asian side of Istanbul.

I want to play tennis but it is so expensive to pay the membership of a tennis club. In Germany there are free public tennis courts. I want to swim but there is a high entrance fee to the pool. There is a pool close by but the men’s and the women’s pools are separate! The women wear costumes like the astronauts wear!... I want to live with modern people [...] Üsküdar, Ümraniye, these are conservative districts. In Istanbul there are certain places where you can dress as you want, but most places you can’t. I can’t go to my landlord to pay my rent wearing a blouse because I know where he will be looking... I was exercising at the playground and my husband came to me and said ‘People are looking at you from the windows’. I looked up and saw guys staring at me from the windows of the flats, I felt like a prey for the wolves. I want to be able to wear my shorts, I want to be able to go for a run without people looking at me... I don’t know when such things will change in Turkey.

Education
Previous sections of this paper have already thrown the spotlight on the Turkish education system, especially for those participants who came back at an age when they had to complete their final years of high school in Turkey. Contrasts were drawn between the German education system with its emphasis on problem solving and critical thinking, and the militaristic approach of Turkish schools where the main pedagogic method consisted of memorisation. However, we also came across a few participants who had the benefit of being sent to private or international schools where the style of learning was more ‘German’ – such as Özlem who ‘escaped’ to boarding school in Istanbul and Fatoş who was enrolled in a school set up especially for ‘returning’ German-Turkish pupils.

Some of the older ‘returnees’ had children in Turkish schools and were thus able to compare the current situation of Turkish state education with their own earlier experiences of the German system. Sevim had a three-way perspective on this comparison: her own schooling in a small German town, her final years of schooling in Turkey when her parents returned, and her son’s education experience in Turkey more recently.

My son couldn’t have the opportunities I had during my childhood in Germany. Education was free in Germany; we had so many services for free. I couldn’t send my child to kindergarten in Istanbul because
it was too expensive. I couldn’t give the same [educational] standard that I had had to my own child. You see, things are still horrible in Turkey. In the 1970s in Germany we had everything… In 2012 in Turkey I am not able to give one quarter of the things I could have in my childhood to my own son. Turkey is following Europe from 50 years behind. The state school I went to in our shitty little town in Germany was more modern and better equipped than the private schools of today in Istanbul. We had a big pool, library, sports area, huge garden, English courses, social events… We had separate desks – in Turkey when I was in school here, I had to share my desk with two other students. The classrooms were packed! We were around 50 students in one class. And I hated wearing those uniforms… I was writing with joined-up handwriting in Germany and the teachers here were pushing me to change into writing the letters one by one, like a typewriter. One day there was a new teacher who arrived. When she discovered that I was doing joined-up handwriting, she asked me: ‘Where did you learn to write like this?’ I told her that I come from Germany. She smiled and said that she was also born and raised in Germany. She was a very young teacher: I loved that woman!... I finally had a teacher who could understand me.

Another view, extended to university education, is from Nurten (F38, Istanbul), who returned to Turkey in 2000 to get married to a Turkish man who is actually her relative (she dropped her voice when saying this). She has two daughters. Like some other interviewees who talked about Turkish education, she likened Turkish pupils to racehorses who constantly had to jump hurdles (exams) in competition with others in order to progress and get into university.

In Turkey the students are like racehorses. There are so many exams they have to pass; they are pushed to be in a tough competition. They don’t have time to enjoy their childhoods. I think the German system is better – the student’s future is not based on one exam. Also in Germany you don’t have to go to university to get a job: there are so many different options. You can go to a vocational school to be a technician. In Turkey you need to study at university to become a technician. That’s how stupid the system is. There are so many graduates in Turkey who are unemployed. Turkey is wasting its potential. We are a young and dynamic country; the government should care so much more about a real functioning education system. If you waste the potential of your young population, who will carry
the country forward?... In Germany there is an internship system, they train you while you are studying, so you can get experience before going into the employment market. In Turkey you graduate and you realise that you have no experience. Then you apply for jobs that require two or three years of experience in the field. The result is depressing. You don’t get any job. This is the sad truth about Turkey and its education system.

Turkey and Germany compared
Participants constantly compared their earlier lives in Germany with their more recent lives in Turkey: this was apparent ‘at face value’, so to speak, in their narratives, but also at a deeper ontological level in their life-courses and self-identities. Several interviewees remarked that they were constantly making comparisons subconsciously and could not avoid living their lives in Turkey without making references to ‘how it was’ in Germany. Hence their life in Germany – usually around the first 15, 20 or 25 years – was either explicitly or implicitly used as a mirror for them to reflect on how things had changed and, above all, how different things were between the two countries.

What we also found remarkable was the consistency of the themes and topics, even the very phrases, used in this comparative discourse. At times it almost seemed as if participants had memorised the same key phrases when either volunteering, or being asked to, comment on the comparison. The danger here, of course, becomes one of stereotyping and of respondents internalising the stereotypes without thinking or realising it, or indeed without having much direct experience of the stereotypes they are describing. On the other hand, it is also true that the vast majority of the participants had not lived their lives in Germany separated off from German society in Turkish enclaves; on the contrary, as we have repeatedly noted, they mostly lived in ‘German’ neighbourhoods, went to schools where nearly all the pupils were German, and experienced socialisation with German friends, neighbours and workmates. Hence we cannot allege that the stereotypes derive purely from a lack of familiarity with or a distancing or separation from the German ‘other’. Whilst it is probably true that most Germans do not have intense social interactions with Turks in Germany, the same is not true the other way round, at least for our sample of second-generation participants and their families. Indeed, for many of them, the main ‘other’ was not so much the Germans of the host society, but the ‘other’ Turks who came from Anatolia and other parts of rural Turkey, who lived in ‘Turkish districts’ of German cities, and who were criticised for making no attempt to integrate.

Many were the themes raised in these cross-national comparisons. Most of the themes interlocked with one another in various ways, and most
have been raised in previous sections of this paper, either explicitly or in the sidelines of the foregoing analysis. Nearly all respondents drew a similar contrast with regard to general national behavioural characteristics between the Turks as a typical ‘Mediterranean’ people and therefore similar to Greeks and Italians etc., and the Germans as a ‘North European’ people, similar to Swedes and other Nordic nations. To be more specific, and to quote a string of key words that resonated through so many narratives, Turks were generous, hospitable, sociable, spontaneous, warm, sharing and live for the moment; whereas Germans were seen as cold, aloof, unsharing, careful with their money, friendly at a formal level but not hospitable, and keen on planning for the future.

Germans’ financial prudence was illustrated through several examples. Berna (F48), for example, said ‘A German sometimes uses the same teabag twice’, and Figen (F45) remembered always sharing her sweets with her German fellow-pupils in school, but never being offered anything in return. Ali (M33) maintained that Germans were ‘tight-fisted’: ‘As we say in Turkish, Alman hesabı’, which means paying 50/50 in a restaurant (the English phrase for this is ‘going Dutch’). In contrast to Germans’ parsimony and reluctance to spend lavishly, Turks ‘live for the moment’; they enjoy spending money in cafés, restaurants and family parties and celebrations, as well as on smart and fashionable clothes, whereas Germans are often dressed casually if not shabbily, and are cautious in their entertainment habits. Eda (F23) gave her observations on this as follows:

Turkish people are more generous, they always offer to pay the restaurant bill for you. Germans on the other hand won’t even ask for the bill, they just pay their share... Germans are very careful with money; they don’t like spending it. Turkish people like spending money, especially for luxury. You can see that all the cafés and restaurants in Istanbul are full. Even poor people enjoy a glass of tea by the Bosphorus... it is not expensive. But for Germans in the same economic condition it would be an unnecessary expense. A German would take a walk by the Bosphorus and then have tea at home.

Much the same kind of contrast was made with regard to hospitality in the home. Interviewees described how visitors to a Turkish home would always be offered tea, coffee, sweets and cakes, and if you happened to arrive at meal-time you would immediately be asked to join in. If you turn up at a German’s place when they are eating, everyone is either embarrassed and apologetic, or carries on regardless. Fatoş (F43) gave some other examples:
Germans… don’t know about hospitality. When you visit a German at their home, they sit in front of you and eat and drink without offering you anything. They are not sharing people… Turks enjoy helping people, they care about good neighbour relations. In Germany, neighbourhood is not so strong. People try not to get involved in each other’s lives. They say ‘hello’ to each other and that’s all. Turkish people see their neighbours as if they were family. For example, if you are out of sugar, you ask your neighbour – I am talking here about Turkish culture. Germans wouldn’t do that, or if they did, they would try and pay for it. If you offered money to a Turkish neighbour for a cup of sugar, they would be offended. But for Germans it is the natural thing to do.

A second key area of comparison was in attitudes and practices in the sphere of work, which we have already referred to in some detail in a previous subsection – see in particular the quotes from Özlem and Öykü. Just to recapitulate, Germans are viewed as well organised, reliable, punctual, but also rigidly bound by rules. Turks, on the other hand, are not punctual at all, yet are better at working under stressful or chaotic situations, have a more creative, practical intelligence, and are skilled at doing things at the last minute. Turks are also, however, liable to look for short-cuts and, allegedly, to scam and cheat within the workplace (and outside too). Turks tend to be more arrogant and stubborn, and to respond badly to criticism, especially men. Turks often promise more than they can deliver, whereas Germans will only promise what they know they can produce. Just one, very typical quote, to bring these generalisations into a more specific context. The speaker is Selin (F29) who works in university administration in Istanbul:

In terms of work discipline, the Germans are way out ahead. Turks are more easy-going, they have a relaxed attitude towards work… A German will make a schedule and then do parts of the job from morning till evening. A Turk on the other hand will immediately start doing it, getting help from friends and finding short-cuts to finish it earlier. Turks have a different intelligence, they always look for the easy way round and they are very cunning. Sometimes to the level of scamming.

A third area of common debate focused on contrasts in the upbringing of children. This was another area where there were remarkable similarities in narrative phrases and impressions. According to the participants, Germans raise their children on the one hand according to firm rules, and
on the other to be independent and self-sufficient. By contrast, Turks spoil and indulge their children, pampering them so they cannot think or act independently. In German families, it seems, all children leave home at 18, sometimes even earlier, never to return; whereas in Turkish families children, especially daughters, stay with their parents until marriage. Below, Eda (F23) elaborates on these and other aspects of child-rearing in the two countries.

Germans raise their kids with rules... my German friends are very rational as parents. When their kid cries they say, ‘Well she will cry but at some point she will stop. I can’t do everything she wants in order to stop her crying’. Whereas Turkish friends spoil their kids. When the child cries they give it hugs and buy something that the child wants to stop it crying... Another thing is, Turkish families allow their children to live with them for as long as they want. Germans encourage their kids to leave home at 18, sometimes earlier, because they think that is the best way to teach them to survive on their own... Moreover, Germans don’t interfere in the lives of their children as much as Turkish parents do. German youngsters are free... Turkish parents are protective, they forbid certain things... Turks care too much about what others think – ‘What would my neighbour think about this?’ Turks live by the rules of other people. German young people do what they want, they don’t feel the need to explain.

Beyond these three main areas of ‘narrative confluence’, there were some other topics that were discussed in a cross-national perspective, but not with enough consistency or narrative evidence to make generalisations. These related more to issues connected to personality, national identity, gender relations, marriage and ‘honour’. We signal these as potentially important areas for further investigation, with a larger sample of participants and perhaps too with more targeted interview questions.

Concluding discussion
At this point we return to our two main research questions, and their various subquestions, in order to reflect on the answers and insights that our interview evidence has brought to bear on them.

Research question 1 was about the nature, mechanisms and motivations of the second generation’s ‘return’ to Turkey. We saw that in around half of the cases in our sample of 35 research participants, this was a ‘family return’ which usually involved the ‘forced’ return of the subjects whilst still in their teens. Many were aged around 16 at this time, and therefore needed to
complete their final high-school years in Turkey. Another time-specific return variable was the wish of some families to take the financial incentive of the ‘return bonus’ offered by the German government in 1983. In the other half of the cases, the modalities of ‘voluntary’ return were variable, including marriage, divorce, going to a Turkish university, wanting to live and work in Turkey, and the general attractions of the Turkish way of life. Whilst the relevance of the home-country way of life and the variety of motivations for return are features of this research which resonate with other studies cited earlier (Christou and King 2010, 2011; King and Christou 2010; King et al. 2011a; Philips and Potter 2009; Potter 2005, Reynolds 2008; Sardinha 2011; Teerling 2011a, 2011b), the key difference in our study was the greater importance of the phenomenon of whole-family return.

One of the hypotheses set out earlier, which seems plausibly logical, was that the propensity to return to Turkey is functionally related to the degree of (non-)integration into German society. In other words, Turkish individuals and families that lived in isolated ethnic enclaves, and those who had experienced discrimination and marginalisation at the hands of members and institutions of the host society, would be more likely to return to Turkey. By the same token, those who were most integrated into German society would be less likely to return. Our evidence contradicts these propositions. Whilst there were two participants where lack of integration and experiences of racism did play a role, the general view from our data is that return is not the result of lack of integration into German society. Indeed, what we found was the opposite: those participants who can be considered the most integrated, whose parents were most open-minded, and who were reasonably well-off by the general standards of the Turkish immigrant population in Germany, were the ones who had returned.

A third key finding was about participants’ general class background, and that of their parents. Most participants were educated to the end of high school or beyond, were bilingual, and had the skills, qualifications and initiative to compete on the Turkish labour market for at least reasonable jobs. This selectivity filter seems to connect across the two generations, in that their parents were drawn from the upper ranks of the working classes; indeed some were middle-class or even of elite status. The only exceptions were a few families from the small Black Sea towns subsample, who fitted more closely to the standard rural-origin, uneducated Turkish Gasterbeiter model.

This differentiated social, educational and occupational class profile of the second-generation participants and their parents is what lies behind the specificity of their lives in the host country – i.e. not living in Turkish ‘ghettos’, not working in the lowest-paid jobs (although many parents did this in the beginning as this was the only kind of work on offer) and,
instead, establishing good neighbourly and workplace relations with Germans. Where the first generation opted to live, and their socio-economic integration with local Germans, had enormous implications for the lives of the second generation growing up in Germany. Most of the participants did not go to ‘sink’ schools populated by immigrant-origin pupils, but to ‘mainstream’ German schools where the vast majority of their fellow-pupils were Germans. Time and again, different participants said things like ‘I was the only Turk in the class’, or ‘In our school there were very few Turkish kids’. Nearly all participants remembered their school years in Germany in highly positive terms, not only for the social environment but also for the progressive and successful style of teaching and learning, which meant that many were able to access the academic-stream Gymnasium high school, traditionally denied to immigrant-origin pupils.

Despite their rather complete integration into German society, returnee participants experienced two important spheres of ‘ethnic’ and ‘transnational’ Turkishness which were important in framing their ‘return’ moves to Turkey. The first of these concerns the maintenance of Turkish ethnicity within the family/household sphere. Although most participants stressed the ‘openness’ of their parents compared to the attitudes of the majority of Turkish labour migrants in Germany, they also acknowledged that their parents preserved Turkish customs at home including use of the language (vital for relocating to Turkey), Turkish food, and in many, but by no means all cases, keeping to religious celebrations, notably Bayram.

The second aspect of transnational behaviour was the practice of regular childhood or teenager visits to Turkey for the long summer holiday. These visits were certainly instrumental in facilitating return in the sense of familiarising the second generation with their relatives and the Turkish way of life, but they were rarely direct causal factors as such. Indeed several participants stressed the difference between visiting Turkey on holiday and living there all-year-round and on a longer-term basis.

Research question 2 referred to the participants’ experiences after their move to Turkey. It asked whether they enjoyed a smooth and successful relocation, or if their post-return lives were fraught with problems and disillusionments. A key distinction in answering this question was between the initial reactions to the ‘return’, and surviving and settling down long-term. The initial reactions, especially for those taken back without being consulted, were often traumatic and these experiences and feelings formed part of the ‘return narratives of trauma’ that we documented as part of the analysis under the previous research question. Plunged into a different educational system, schooled in a different language, as well as being brusquely removed from their lifelong peer-group in Germany, many of the
‘family-return’ interviewees took a long time to recover; one or two never did, remaining bitter to this day. Most ‘forced returnees’, however, eventually resolved the challenges of the transition, and are now more or less happily settled in Turkey, even if a good number of these remain nostalgic for their German childhood and school experiences.

For those returning voluntarily, different challenges had to be faced: employment first and foremost. Many of this subgroup were able to get jobs where they could use their knowledge of German to their advantage. For those who work for a German company, or who remain in contact with friends made at one of the German or international schools in Istanbul, there is an element of staying partly within the Turkish-German social circle in Turkey/Istanbul. Most participants, however, were not part of such specific social networks, and socialised mostly with Turks. Hence the predilection of second-generation Greek-Germs and Greek-Americans to ‘hang out’ mainly with other hyphenated Greeks in Athens and Thessaloniki (Christou and King 2011; King and Christou 2010) was not replicated to the same extent in this Turkish case-study.

Where they return to in Turkey also has an important bearing on post-return reactions and experiences. This geographical differentiation shows up in our research data in various ways: different range of employment opportunities, different social environment, and the different social-class backgrounds of the first-generation immigrant parents. Here, then, we contrast cosmopolitan Istanbul where returnees can be anonymous in such a huge metropolis (unless they are subject to control mechanisms in the more ‘conservative’ parts of the city), with the more restrictive social contexts of a small town where, not only are employment openings more limited, but also the freedom to express a modern style of dress and comportment, or be a single or divorced woman, faces the scrutinising and judgemental gaze of the local population.

Next, we collected a lot of narrative data in which the participants compared different aspects of the two phases of their lives – the German phase of childhood and (for half of them) early adulthood, and the Turkish phase of ‘post-return’. Some participants conveyed the view that this comparison was a constant and inescapable element which thoroughly structured their everyday lives – they just could not help making the comparison. Whilst such spatial migratory comparisons are often subject to the ‘grass is greener’ syndrome, the consistency of the narrative tropes was high, with a lot of positive emphasis put on the German *forma mentis* of the earlier part of their lives. However, we must also remain alive to the danger of internalised stereotypes, and here we remember back to Sevim’s devastating deconstruction of what she saw as the myth of Turkish ‘happy families’.
Finally, we highlight some parts of our analysis which are incomplete or overlooked, either because the data are there in the interviews but we do not have space to analyse it in this already long paper, or because we need further research with more targeted questions. First, we have said very little about identity. How do participants see themselves? As Turks, as Germans, as hybrid German-Turks, or as something else? There is some data in the transcripts to be excavated on this, but a full exploration probably requires a more in-depth self-reflective style of engagement on the part of the research subjects. Second, there are issues of gender and patriarchy which we have hardly touched on here. The situation with the source data and the need for further in-depth investigation is the same as for identity. The third dimension for further research is the geographical comparison between Istanbul and small-town, provincial Turkey. Three-quarters of the interviews were administered in Istanbul. In order to explore the homeland-location question more thoroughly, more interviews would have to be done in non-metropolitan Turkey. And finally, we have said little about participants’ future plans. Very few were contemplating moves back to Germany, or elsewhere to another country, although most engaged in what we might call ‘reverse transnational links’ back to Germany, especially if they had close relatives (parents, siblings) still living there. An intriguing final coda is what will happen to the ‘next’ generation – by which we mean the children of the second-generation returnees. Will they want to ‘reconnect’ to the Germany of their parents’ birth and where, perhaps their grandparents and cousins still live?
Notes

1 There are 11.6 million Mexicans in the US and 3.3 million Bangladeshis in India. Excluded from the ranking of Turks in Germany (2.7 million) as third are Russians in Ukraine (3.7 million) and Ukrainians in Russia (3.6 million) as these took place as internal migration within the Former Soviet Union (World Bank 2011: 5-6).

2 The other southern European countries, meanwhile, had seen some growth in industry, tourism and other services so that returning migrants faced better prospects than when they originally left their home countries (see King 1986 for an overview).

3 One implication of the current German naturalisation law is that Turks who have German citizenship cannot vote in Turkey and cannot be elected to political office there.

4 The term *gurbetçi* derives from *gurbet*, which refers to the historic practice of going away, or being absent in another country, usually for reasons of work to sustain the family back home.

5 On the other hand, the preceding study of Greek-German returnees showed that, despite the village origins of their parents, the second generation overwhelmingly returns to big cities like Athens and Thessaloniki where a much wider selection of jobs is available – at least until the recent deep Greek economic crisis (King et al. 2011a).

6 Oktay is his real name: he specifically asked for us to use his real name.

7 There were also two cases of ‘part family return’, where daughters returned with their mothers, leaving their fathers in Germany.

8 This overlooks the more ‘subtle’ or ‘hidden’ racism contained in many remarks that participants made about their dealings with German society – such as when Germans would say things like ‘You don’t look like a Turk!’ or ‘I can’t believe you’re Turkish, I thought you were German’.
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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Russell King is Professor of Geography at the University of Sussex and Founding Director of the Sussex Centre for Migration Research. He has also been Dean of the School of European Studies at Sussex and Head of the Department of Geography. Prior to Sussex, his previous posts were at the University of Leicester and Trinity College Dublin; at TCD he was Professor of Geography and Head of Department from 1986 to 1993. He has held visiting appointments at the University of Malta, Ben Gurion University of the Negev, and the University of Trieste. In 2005 he was Luigi Einaudi Visiting Professor of European Studies at Cornell University. Professor King has been researching migration its various forms for more than 35 years. In recent years he has led or co-directed research projects on return migration to West Africa, migration and development in Albania, counter-diasporic migration to Greece and Cyprus, international retirement migration from the UK to the Mediterranean, and international student migration. Many publications have resulted from these research projects.

Amongst his more recent books have been: Sunset Lives: British Retirement Migration to the Mediterranean (Berg 2000), Out of Albania (Berghahn 2008), The Atlas of Human Migration (Earthscan 2010), and Remittances, Gender and Development (I.B. Tauris 2011), all co-authored with various research collaborators. He is also Editor of the Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies since 2000. Russell King was Guest Professor in Memory of Willy Brandt at MIM for the period January 2012 to June 2013.

Nilay Kilinc is a graduate in International Relations from Istanbul Bilgi University and is currently completing an MA in European Studies at Lund University. During the period September 2012 to May 2013 she worked as an intern at MIM, working as a Research Assistant to Professor Russell King. This paper is an outcome of that collaboration. Another outcome, distinct from the present paper, will be her MA thesis, entitled ‘Turkish-Germans return to Turkey: gendered narratives of (re-)negotiated identities’.
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