UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

Producing Culture, Producing Practice: Iranians in Sweden and Canada

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Anthropology

by

Amy Malek

2015

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Producing Culture, Producing Practice: Iranians in Sweden and Canada

by

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Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology

University of California, Los Angeles, 2015

Professor Sondra Hale, Co-Chair

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This dissertation is an examination of the relationship between cultural policy and practice among diasporic Iranian communities in the Global North. State-supported multicultural programs aimed at fostering inclusion of immigrants are often criticized for shallow and essentializing displays of culture that constitute what some have called "feel-good multiculturalism." But these programs and the policies that produce them also must be analyzed for what they often produce off-stage, including practices of citizenship, participation, and belonging, both in local communities and across diasporic spaces.

In this ethnographic account, I consider diaspora as a category of practice and query the roles of culture and culturalism in relation to multiculturalism policy. The largest or wealthiest Iranian diasporic populations are not found in Stockholm or Toronto, yet these multicultural cities host the biggest Iranian arts festivals in the world. Through comparative ethnographic fieldwork and policy analysis, I examine the national, institutional, and community conditions that have enabled the growth of these large, perennial productions and investigate their impacts on diasporic Iranians.

After a brief review of relevant literature and background in Chapter 1, I outline in Chapter 2 the political histories of immigration and multiculturalism in Sweden and Canada to demonstrate the ways in which states and municipal bodies have taken up ideas of culture and belonging in the pursuit of immigrant integration. In Chapters 3 and 4, I analyze the production and after-lives of two large international Iranian arts festivals in Stockholm (Eldfesten) and Toronto (Tirgan) to examine the relationship between them and the proliferation of practices like democratic debate, teamwork, leadership, volunteerism, and cultural, civic, and political activism in these Iranian communities.

The link between cultural policy and immigrant participation is not simply the promotion of ethnic art and culture on festival stages; it is a promotion of practice. Using the term *practice* to mean more than behavior, Iranian diasporic leaders argued that culture is the realm where Iranians should rehearse the skills of democratic life, absent 'back home' and yet critical to diasporic practice and a future they envision for Iran. Thus, these citizenization impacts of multiculturalism on immigrant practices are not only evident in Stockholm or Toronto: state-sponsored multicultural programs are also enabling the growth of diasporic citizenship.

The dissertation of Amy Malek is approved.

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2015

DEDICATION

To Agha-ye Seyedzadeh and Khanum Aziz.

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NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

The transliterations of Persian words in this text follow the style recommended by the U.S. Library of Congress. In cases where different transliteration styles are common (e.g., place names, personal names, holidays), I have elected to use the more common transliteration in place of the Library of Congress recommendation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I feel immense gratitude towards so many people who have been a part of this work; whether or not their words are here, they each appear in these pages.

I count myself lucky to have a committee of scholars who have been wonderful mentors. This dissertation would not have been possible without the encouragement of my tireless co-chairs, Sondra Hale and Susan Slyomovics. Since my first days at UCLA, they have offered endless guidance and support, while also encouraging me to pursue research avenues and creative opportunities that nourished my intellectual curiosity. Thank you, Sondra, for pushing me to think and re-think research questions, for banishing the term "unique," for standing by your principles, and for asking how I'm doing before all else. Thank you, Susan, for not only supporting but also enabling my creative interests, for setting an example of an ethically-oriented and prolific scholar, and for never failing to surprise me. My co-chairs are phenomenal individuals and they made for a great team. I am forever grateful to them for taking on the task of co-chairing and the untold set of negotiations that comes along with it. I have certainly been the fortunate recipient of their shared wisdom, humor, and insights.

Jessica Cattelino has been an extraordinary mentor; she is a source of great inspiration to me in thinking through who I want to be as an educator, scholar, and colleague. Her feedback and energy have been invaluable and she has a knack for knowing just when I need to hear her enthusiastic, *Go go go!* Aparna Sharma's eye for cinema crosses theory and practice in the most inspiring ways and I am thankful to her for her filmmaking as much as for her scholarship, but even more so for her friendship. Ali Behdad encouraged me to examine photography's history and theory and his incredible seminar in Orientalism and photography at the Getty Research Institute remains one of my most treasured experiences in graduate school.

Since the first time I read Hamid Naficy's work many years ago, he has remained a source of intellectual inspiration for me. What a joy it has been to learn that his depth of work is matched by his depth of spirit. I am grateful to him for his years of support and for his excellent feedback, but perhaps most of all for his contagious joie de vivre.

For their generous institutional and financial support of this research, I am grateful to the Swedish Institute, the American-Scandinavian Foundation, the Anthropology Department at Stockholm University, the UCLA International Institute, the UCLA Center for Near Eastern Studies, the UCLA Institute for American Cultures, the UCLA Graduate Division, the UCLA Department of Anthropology, and the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology. For their critical feedback and clarifying questions on portions of this work, I thank Lok Siu, Lieba Faier, Nitasha Sharma, Miriam Sharma, Viranjini Munashinghe, Mohan Ambikaipaker, Anastasia Panagakos, and audiences and co-panelists at the 2012 and 2014 AAA, 2014 ISIS, and 2014 MESA conferences. In the Department of Anthropology, I am grateful to Hannah Appel, Aomar Boum, Alessandro Duranti, Nancy Levine, Sherry Ortner, Joan Silk, Mariko Tamanoi, Jason Throop, and Suzanne Wertheim for their guidance and support over the years. I especially thank Ann Walters and Tracy Humbert for their tireless efforts, endless encouragement, and care for students. We would be lost without them. I also must thank my dissertation writers' group at UCLA for countless words of wisdom, moments of comfort, and much needed laughter.

Over the course of the last several years, I have been privileged to work on a project that introduced me to Iranian immigrants and their children in multiple communities of the diaspora. I am so appreciative of each and every one of them for their friendship, warmth, and support. A million thanks to those who shared their time and their experiences with me in interviews; to those who invited me to join them in their planning meetings, rehearsals, openings, conferences, and performances; and to those who have encouraged me in this work, whether by introducing me to friends and colleagues or by being steadfast in their care and friendship.

I arrived to Toronto with just a name and a phone number in hand – I am forever indebted to the incredible Somy Kim for sharing with me that name, and to the incomparable Ali Bangi for introducing me to more or less the entire city of Toronto. Special thanks to Mehrdad Ariannejad and the Tirgan family for welcoming me with open arms and for the incredible festival you all have created. Thanks also to Ida and Afrooz for welcoming me in their classrooms and sharing their insights; and to Mr. Tabrizi and Mr. Tajdolati for sharing their important work at Parya. The summer of 2011 was an incredible time thanks in no small part to Kiana, Ehsan, Behdad, Pouria, Ida, Golbarg, Maral, Tara, Farnam, Behrooz, Grace, Ghazaleh, Poorya, Farhang, Sarah, Sima, Araz, Arash, Siamak, Nargol, Hoda, and so many others. They made the Toronto Iranian community feel like a second home to me, as they had done and still do for so many young Iranians. *Sharmandam*.

In Stockholm, it is to Shahram Khosravi and Farnaz Arbabi that I owe a deep gratitude. Not only did Shahram enable my institutional support at Stockholm University, his collegiality and mentorship made my research possible. Thank you, Shahram, for sharing your insights and for inviting me in for so many engaging evenings among friends and colleagues. At Stockholm University, my sincere thanks go to Johan Lindquist, Bengt Karlsson, Helena Wulff, Ulf Hannerz, and the CEIFO research group for providing a rich intellectual community; and to Fernanda Soto and Mona Hajinejad for being warm rays of sunshine on many cold Swedish afternoons. Farnaz Arbabi was my first glimpse into the world of Swedish theater and cultural production and I cannot thank her enough for the work that she does and for introducing me to so many phenomenal artists in Stockholm. Very special thanks to her and to Shima, Nasim, Bahareh, Shebly, Pedram, Moshtagh, Marall, and Behrang for their friendship. I am supremely grateful to Mansour Hosseini, Rostam Mirlashari, Tomaj Keyvani, Massoud Mafan, Rani Kasapi, Nasser Yousefi, and the 2012 Eldfesten Committee for their openness, dedication, and willingness to share their experiences with me. Mansour and Tomaj were particularly helpful during fieldwork and I am most grateful for it. And, of course, sincerest thanks to Katja Antoine and Magdalena Löfström for providing a roof over my head and a laugh in my heart.

For their incredibly kind support and for leading the way in the study of the Iranian diaspora, I must thank Persis Karim, Babak Elahi, Nina Farnia, Nima Naghibi, Amy Motlagh, Manijeh Nasrabadi, Nasrin Rahimieh, and particularly Shiva Balaghi, who was an exceptional mentor to me at NYU and who continues to inspire. For their collegiality and camaraderie on this long dissertation road, I especially thank Donya Alinejad, Beeta Baghoolizadeh, Kathy Foody, Maryam Kashani, Neda Maghbouleh, Amir Moosavi, Behzad Sarmadi, Pardis Shafafi, Sahba Shayani, and Azadeh Sharifi. The prospect of having you all as colleagues in Iranian Studies makes this adventure all the more exciting.

To my IAAB family: I started this exploration of diaspora – and self – through you. I never imagined such a life-changing mix of friendship and inspiration – or such an unlimited world of possibility – could come from working on what was, at the time, just a cool project two dear friends had dreamed up. Thank you to everyone who has been a part of IAAB for making me a better person, and for contributing so much to the Iranian-American community. I am particularly appreciative to my crew from the way back: Narges Bajoghli, Nikoo Paydar, Ramin Bajoghli, Shirin Hakimzadeh, Mana Kharrazi; you all are simply wonderful people.

To Los Angeles: there are not enough words to thank all the colleagues, friends, and loved ones who have kept this ship afloat. Thank you all for keeping me sane and occasionally well-dressed, but most importantly for embodying true friendship. I am indebted to Katja Antoine for her generosity of spirit, to Jessica H. Costello and her whip-smart humor, and particularly to Sepideh Saremi, my laugh factory and confidante who doesn't know how wonderfully brilliant she is. I think I owe Rachel George and John Gahbauer over 20 dinners and a million laughs by now, but I know they aren't counting; they are quite possibly the kindest people I know. Thanks especially to Rachel for sharing the struggle, for keeping my eye on the prize, and for helping me walk the dog, drive the car, get the pages, and sprinkle the saltiness whenever needed. I am forever appreciative to Bailey House for being a tireless cheerleader throughout graduate school. Thank you for knowing what songs to play and what pies to bake to make this dissertation sing when I needed it most. Finally, Narges Bajoghli is my beautiful sister-bird I turn to for big ideas and big laughs in equal proportion. I am enormously grateful for her wisdom, for insisting on playing roses and thorns, and for making the miles disappear every time we speak.

To my family, near and far, this work is for you. Thank you to *maman-bozorg*, who made me truly believe I could be and do anything, and to *baba-bozorg*, whose clever Persian puns I only fully understood as an adult, but leave me in stitches 20 years later. I am especially appreciative of my parents: my mother for her bottomless well of patience and fierce loyalty; and my father, whose laugh is contagious and support endless. Thanks to all of you for teaching me our histories from a young age and for indulging my endless interest in Iran. I am forever grateful for your sacrifices, support, and enduring love.

VITA – Amy Malek (March 2015)

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Introduction

As I crouched at the foot of a large festival stage in Toronto in July 2013, I recognized the familiar sensory overload I often experienced during my fieldwork. Anthropologists have argued that such sensory onslaught is quintessential to the festival genre, but in my case, mixed with this festive sensorium was the ethnographer's imperative to observe sensorially (Bauman and Sawin 1991; Pink 2009). In the heat of the afternoon, my eyes darted rapidly from the performance on stage to the audience's reactions, to the volunteers backstage, and back again, while my body, aching to dance along with the rest of the crowd, fought my ethnographic impulses to observe and document. I clutched my camera closely as I rehearsed the familiar debate with myself: to continue shooting the performers on stage – in this case, a group of dancers in bright costumes – or to turn the camera to the audience behind me.

Figure 1. Looking on stage and off at Tirgan 2013 in Toronto, Canada. Photos © Amy Malek.

I had been in this same position in the same spot just 2 years before during fieldwork, when I volunteered at the 2011 iteration of this same Tirgan Iranian festival, fulfilling dual roles as volunteer festival photographer and ethnographic fieldworker. At that event, my assignment on the Operations team had been to document the work of the volunteers, the audience line-ups, and the organizers' successes and failures at crowd control. My 2011 photographs thus mixed this assignment with my own self-imposed ethnographic assignment: to visually capture the experience of the festival as I could, both on stage and off. In this follow-up trip in 2013,

however, I was no longer responsible for taking photographs for the organizing committees and was therefore free to document what I wished. Yet, I felt a lingering obligation to photograph the event in ways the media and official photographers likely would not do. So I turned around. As I photographed the large crowd of families, tourists, artists, and volunteers who had filled the seats and surrounding standing-room only areas on the Harbourfront boardwalk, I noted cheering teenagers, middle-aged men chatting with one another, and grandmas dancing in their seats. It was a typical festival crowd, to be sure, but a predominantly Iranian one.

Scanning the audience, my camera passed familiar faces: there was Nima, one of the five directors of this large festival, quickly greeting well-wishers on his way to the next event; there was Shari, a supporter and producer of cutting-edge Iranian music and art performances in southern California; and there were Mansour and Tomaj, Iranian-Swedish producers of concerts, plays, and festivals, including Eldfesten, an innovative annual celebration of Iranian new year that has expanded to five Swedish cities. I had met each of these individuals in the course of my fieldwork in Toronto and Stockholm between 2011 and 2012, and during my studies in Los Angeles, so to see them now all in one place among thousands of diasporic Iranians made my heart skip a beat. I quickly snapped a photo of my Swedish friends in this Canadian setting, documenting what felt like a rare moment of geographic congruity.

Figure 2. Swedish attendees at Tirgan 2013 in Toronto, Canada. Photo ©Amy Malek

Of course, those moments are not quite as rare as I had imagined before beginning fieldwork; the public nature of this event and the sheer number of these producers present was perhaps the more rare, palpitation-causing occurrence. Otherwise, producers from Los Angeles, representing Iranian performers in diaspora, travel frequently between cities like London, Stockholm, or Berlin promoting their artists, just as Swedish or Canadian producers look to Iranian artists in the Bay Area, Los Angeles, and Paris when scheduling their performance and exhibition calendars. These diasporic networks of arts and culture are easily traceable: the same casts of characters (musicians, dancers, producers) appear in the various festival venues available in the diaspora's urban centers. Dancer Shahrokh Moshkin Ghalam, musician Said Shanbezadeh, folk band Kiosk, musician Mohsen Namjoo, and musician Hamed Nikpay each perform regularly and in multiple cities and venues of the Iranian diaspora. It is no coincidence that among them, the same handfuls of producers either represents these artists on tour or are responsible for bringing them to perform in their cities regularly.

In the past decade, these artists and others like them have been supported by cultural policies that encourage and financially enable the production of intercultural performance and hybrid artistic genres. The producers of large international festivals like *Tirgan* (Toronto, Canada), *Eldfesten* (Stockholm, Gothenburg, and other cities in Sweden), *New Sounds of Iran* (Cologne and Hamburg, Germany), *Iranian Arts Now* (Paris, France), and those like them[1] receive support from various levels of government and community partners with clear preferences for professional artists who blend genres and "national cultures," and who perform internationally but do not otherwise regularly appear before any mainstream audiences.[2] These

[1] Smaller festivals like the *TabestoonFest* (Calgary, Canada), the Quinzaine Culturelle Iranienne (Strasbourg,
[2] See Jenny Burnam (2010) for a discussion of the problems with the term "mainstream" in analyses of diasporic arts and culture. I use it here in quotes, aware of these concerns, but as yet without a suitable alternative.

free or subsidized events thereby create opportunities for artistic and cultural performances that could not exist if left solely to the free market.

Figure 3. Posters and logos distributed by *New Sounds of Iran* (2013), *Tirgan* (2013), and *Eldfesten* (2012).

Rather than analyzing or evaluating these public cultural performances for their cultural, religious, or ethnic representations, a rich avenue that has been pursued fruitfully in other contexts (e.g., Slyomovics 1996; Guss 2000; Malek 2011), in this dissertation I examine the relationship between policy and practice among diasporic communities in the Global North through analysis of the production side of arts and cultural programs – what takes place off-stage and in the afterlives of these events.

What motivates Iranians in diaspora to undertake these large public productions? In my interviews with Iranian cultural workers, producers, volunteers, and community leaders in Toronto and Stockholm between 2011 and 2013, the question of motivation led to what I felt were some of my most ethnographically interesting field moments. During one of my first meetings with Mehrdad Ariannejad, an Iranian-Canadian computer engineer and project leader for IBM who also happens to be the co-founder and CEO of Tirgan, the largest Iranian arts and cultural festival in the world, I had to ask *why*: Why should a computer engineer put so much

time and energy towards leading three-hundred Iranian-Canadian volunteers in planning a biennial four-day festival of contemporary Iranian art and culture?

Ariannejad listed an array of familiar goals for immigrant public performance: the maintenance of cultural heritage for Iranian families in exile, taking (back) control of the representation of Iranian culture and identity offered by the media to mainstream Canadian audiences, and the public celebration of ethnic solidarity that demonstrates the community's presence in multicultural Canada.[3] While these motivations contributed to his drive to work for free at what amounts to a second full-time job every two years, Ariannejad's extended answer revealed a long-term goal that was much, much bigger than these, subsuming those goals in his larger intended purpose:

> Ariannejad: Between 3-5 million Iranians now live outside of Iran. If you put them all together, it's a country itself. …We now can create a virtual country. It doesn't have to be a country as in a nation-state, but in terms of culture. [We] have some connection to each other, feel close to one another. And we have, for example, L.A., [Toronto], Sweden — they are like small islands that have strayed far from each other and we can…it's possible that we can connect them.
> Malek: How?
> A: Like this! Organizing Tirgan, organizing cultural events. Because we thought (and we still think) that cultural work is the only thing that the Iranian people [*mellat*] — everyone, without exception — will not argue over. You know?[4]

In articulating his goal of developing teamwork, Ariannejad echoed Iranians in multiple parts of the diaspora who expressed similar sentiments to me, that 1) Iranians argue with each other about everything: "we just don't work well together"; and 2) only art and culture – whether framed as Nowruz (holidays/Iranian New Year), kabob (food), Hafez (classical poetry), or Googoosh (music) – are considered above disagreement. This belief lay at the heart of why a producer of another large Iranian festival, Eldfesten in Stockholm, chose to create a cultural festival organized by a committee of Iranian organizations. Mansour Hosseini, a professional

[3] These motivations, common among Iranian organizers of cultural events, are elaborated in Malek 2011.
[4] Mehrdad Ariannejad, interviewed by Amy Malek, August 18, 2011. Translation mine.

theater producer who works for the national touring theater of Sweden (Riksteatern), offered the following answer to my question of *why*: As a professional theater producer by trade, why commit hundreds of hours to recruiting and consulting with a committee of local Iranian association representatives (themselves neither artists, producers, nor cultural workers) to put on an annual three-hour festival?

> If I want to make a show, it's my job everyday. I just call an actor, just call an artist and make the show. It's what we do, we produce theater here. And I've done it for 27 years. It's nothing strange for me. But the good thing [to do] is to involve the civil society. Of course, I could choose [the artists] and it would have been much easier. But to just discuss with [the committee], to respect [them]…. You know, democracy is not something you just bring overnight. … you should build up the democracy. I think it's [important] just to listen to each other – **and culture is the best way to rehearse democracy.**[5]

The strength of culture and cultural belonging was a theme I heard frequently when speaking with individuals engaged in producing Iranian diasporic cultural events. Ariannejad, Hosseini, and others like them view culture as a potential source of belonging and identity that is stronger than that felt towards nation-states (also suggesting the two are separable). What these producers usually meant by *culture* were those presumably innocuous forms typically found in festivals: dance, art, music, theater, cuisine, etc., an understanding I problematize in this dissertation. Nevertheless, their sense of cultural belonging, or what we might call *cultural citizenship* (Rosaldo 1994, discussed below), also feeds into the vision of what Ariannejad called "a virtual country" – or what we might term *diasporic citizenship* (Siu 2005, also discussed below). This is necessarily paired with an expressed desire for the unity it entails. Since Iranians seem to argue over everything else, the argument goes, "cultural work" may be the only thing that can bring Iranians together, making it a potential gateway on the path towards building teamwork, rehearsing democratic practices, and, ultimately, creating some form of group unity.

[5] Mansour Hosseini, interviewed by Amy Malek, May 8, 2012. Emphasis mine.

Despite these claims, these same cultural producers experienced extensive community contestation over issues of cultural representation, artist selection, and perceived political subtexts in their festival productions. Of course, contestation over the representation of cultural groups in public events is in no way exclusive to the Iranian diaspora community. Indeed, David Guss argues that this type of contention is particularly common to cultural performance, diasporic or otherwise: "Whose reality is it that is being reflected? … Cultural performances will remain both contentious and ambiguous, and while the basic structure of an event may be repeated, enough changes will be implemented so that its meaning is redirected" (Guss 2000: 9). These contestations form the context of the very democratic practices Hosseini envisions, as discussed in Chapter 3.

In light of continued frictions between the Iranian state and North American and European countries where Iranians reside, diasporic experience and practice is a useful way to understand the ways in which Iranian diasporic subjects in multiple global sites render their identities. Iranians who have emigrated in the last 30-40 years have scattered to nearly every continent, comprising a global diaspora estimated to be over 4 million strong (Vahabi 2012). They have tended to concentrate in several key urban centers, including Los Angeles, the San Francisco Bay Area, Vancouver, Houston, Toronto, New York, Washington, D.C., London, Paris, Hamburg, Berlin, Stockholm, Dubai, Kuala Lumpur, Sydney, and Melbourne. Given the often political and economic motivations for migration, many of these Iranians are either unable or disinclined to live in the Islamic Republic of Iran, though there has been a recent flux of return migration, particularly among young second generation Iranian Americans (Srebrerny-Mohammadi 2013).[6] Regardless of whether Iranians in diaspora travel to Iran regularly, strong

[6] The election of Hassan Rouhani in 2013 and recent signs of potential political rapprochement with the United States have fueled media speculation about diasporic Iranians' return migration, but it was in the 2000s that return

connections to Iran and Iranians are often maintained across generations, as the pulls of cultural nostalgia – inherited (Maghbouleh 2010) or otherwise – and continued social networks with family and friends in Iran and beyond are often reinforced by co-ethnic networks, cultural productions, and entrepreneurship, particularly in large population centers of the Iranian diaspora (Naficy 1991).

Alongside these more "positive" contributions to experiences of diasporic belonging, there have also been experiences and practices among diaspora groups and individuals that have hindered the building of communities in diaspora. Debates over questions of citizenship and the rights and responsibilities of immigrants continue to rage alongside a sharp rise in nativist sentiments and anti-immigration activism in North America and Europe, where growing popular movements have protested not only immigration, but the presence of Middle Eastern and Muslim immigrants in particular. The recent rise of UKIP in the United Kingdom, increasing support for Marine Le Pen's National Front in France, and the emergence of the Pegida movement in Germany each suggest an intensifying antagonism against immigrants and dissatisfaction with what is perceived to be their government's approach to immigrant integration. Even in countries like Canada and Sweden, with their reputations as defenders of human rights and progressive liberal democracies that take in the world's refugees, there are increasingly public signs of conflict. In Sweden, the Sweden Democrats, a far-right anti-immigration party, won Parliament seats in 2010 and again in 2014, making it the third largest party in Swedish Parliament

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narratives first became the focus of memoirs and documentaries by second generation Iranians. Mostly Iranian Americans, these authors documented their search for their roots in Iran and their struggle to situate their diasporic identities. Manijeh Nasrabadi (2011) has described this trend, which she calls "a new archetype of ethnic American literature," as a form of resistant melancholia. See, for example, Azadeh Moaveni's memoir *Lipstick Jihad* (2005), Tara Bahrampour's memoir *To See and See Again* (1999), Anna Fahr's film *Khaneh Ma: These Places We Call Home* (2006), Jason Rezaian & Nezam Manouchehri's film *A World Between* (2008), Marjan Tehrani's film *Arusi: Persian Wedding* (2009), Justin Mashouf's film *Warring Factions* (2009). See also Karim (2014) for analysis of memoirs on return.

(Riksdag) at the time, and pro-Nazi parties have held public demonstrations in several Swedish cities. In Canada, the Quebec Charter of Values was proposed by the Parti Quebecois in 2013 to prohibit conspicuous religious clothing, a proposition aimed largely at Muslim immigrants that enflamed tensions in the province.

In each of these countries, incidents like rioting (e.g., Paris in 2005, London in 2011, Stockholm in 2013) or acts of terrorism (e.g., Ottawa 2014; Sydney 2014; Paris 2015) re-ignite critics' attacks on policies of multiculturalism and provoke racial and ethnic discrimination. Among other outcomes, these flashpoints for injustice have resulted in what race scholars have termed "covering:" creating dis-identifications through attempts to hide behind claims to Mediterranean identities, Europeanized names, and non-descript or ancient ("Persian") origins (Spellman 2005; Tehranian 2009; Khosravi 2012).

Furthermore, many Iranian immigrants have admitted to making every effort to avoid other Iranians during their first years living outside of Iran. As one interviewee in Toronto recalled, the paranoia of living in an autocratic society had left him skeptical of other Iranians, anywhere in the world:

> When we came here, Iranians ran away from each other, they didn't want to speak to each other. …[W]e tried not to have anything to do with Iranians. And [we] were boastful of it, [saying]: "*I* don't have anything to do with Iranians. *I'm* only in the non-Iranian community."[7]

Yet, Iranians who fled from their co-nationals ten years ago are now the ones leading the largest Iranian cultural and arts festivals in the world. In this study, I examine these developments and trace the networks of individuals, groups, and communities that have proliferated within the global Iranian diaspora.

[7] Ariannejad, interview.

In his statement quoted earlier, Ariannejad compared Iranian communities dispersed in the world's capitals to islands that have floated apart over time, conjuring the concept of a supercontinent breaking into smaller landmasses through the gradual forces of continental drift. This metaphor presumes that geography and forces of nature primarily divide the diaspora's dispersed communities, rather than political, economic, or social causes. Though a relatively young diaspora compared to, say, the Chinese, given the stretch of time across which most Iranians emigrated from Iran — some 40 years, to date — shared experience is more often felt and recognized by immigrant cohorts (e.g., those who migrated during the same set of years) than generations (e.g., those who migrated at similar ages in their lifespan), though the latter is the term commonly used by Iranians, in both English and Persian (*nasl*). Regardless, in his metaphor, cultural work is the stuff of which bridges between these islands could be built. While the bridge metaphor is often employed in reference to connecting different ethnic, national, or cultural groups (Ong 1999), here Ariannejad invokes it to argue for the bringing together of peoples he views as part of the same cultural group: "Iranian." That this cultural category itself is fraught with historical and political contests of inclusion and exclusion along ethnic, linguistic, religious, generational, and national lines – often the sources of the disagreements to which he also refers – is commonly ignored in hopes of promoting expressions of cultural unity and (usually nationalist) pride in diaspora.

While all immigrant groups may wish for a greater sense of unity, it was consistently stated as a strong desire among the Iranian communities I studied in North America and Europe. As a relatively young diaspora, it is unsurprising that it has taken time for Iranian immigrants to establish diaspora networks, businesses, and institutions. But three related conditions may account for what may be viewed as continuing challenges to diasporic unity among Iranians: (1)

unstable geopolitical relations between Iran and North American and European states since 1979 have resulted in (2) persistent reports of discrimination in immigration, employment, education, and public spheres in multiple cities in the diaspora (potentially contributing to delayed institutionalization), and contributed to (3) a tendency, also found in other immigrant communities, for some immigrants to turn away from fellow co-nationals following migration. Along with internal community divisions along political, religious, and generational lines, these conditions provided an additional challenge to the formation of diaspora institutions and community-building and an internal barrier to the benefits of increased legitimacy, resources, and power that may have otherwise accrued in their diasporic cities (Burman 2010, discussed below).

Apart from a common view of culture as a potentially unifying force, these two producers also shared a fundamental desire to reach beyond both internal divisions and international borders to create avenues of cooperation between Iranian groups in multiple parts of the diaspora, as well as in Iran itself. This desire was present among some Iranian diaspora organizations and individuals before 2009,[8] but became a ubiquitous slogan after the 2009 Iranian elections, when wide-scale protests in Iran sparked otherwise politically dormant communities to participate in protests in nearly every capital of the diaspora. Though remarkable in its breadth, this community 'awakening' was short-lived, as organizations and groups formed in the heat of the summer reverted to inactivity not long after activism in Iran failed to bring about the changes desired and instead faced violent repression. Nonetheless, the events of 2009 had mobilized networks in unprecedented ways, forging new forms of activism, organizing, and

[8] For example, through international diaspora conferences, transnational exhibitions, and international summits organized by the U.S.-based non-profit organization, Iranian Alliances Across Borders (IAAB). IAAB's mission since its founding in 2003 has included building networks that cross the various borders of the Iranian diaspora through educational and leadership programming.

networking in Toronto, Stockholm, and beyond, and particularly among the 1.5 and second generation.[9] This political mobilization had important impacts on the organization of Iranian cultural events in diaspora in the years that followed.

As many like him, Ariannejad suggests he is trying to bring together or reconstitute what he views as a disintegrated whole. What he terms "the Iranian nation," describes an array of dispersed communities in North America, Europe, and Australia that have been increasingly cited in popular media for its successes in education, business, and professional fields.[10] These quantitative assessments of attainment markers are significant, but as with all statistics, do not offer a full picture. As much as Iranians are fond of celebrating diasporic successes, unsurprisingly they are less fond of publically acknowledging the challenges that persist (economic, social, medical, legal, and otherwise) within and across their communities. Nevertheless, the relative success of Iranians in diaspora has required access to social mobility and cultural capital that enabled them to participate in mainstream markets and segments of society.

This process of increasing participation in mainstream society is variously described as assimilation or integration and can result in a perception of "diluting" otherwise "pure" cultural forms and identifications.[11] As Iranian Americans increasingly become the first to welcome the birth of the third generation in diaspora, many first generation immigrants are aware of and concerned about the third generation "loss" of linguistic and cultural practices experienced by

[9] The sociological notion of immigrant generations holds that the first generation includes immigrants of adult age, 1.5 generation includes immigrants who arrived as children, and second generation includes the children of immigrants born in diaspora.

[10] This promotion of certain forms of success itself is contested by some Iranians in diaspora, and has featured most recently in the public debates surrounding Bravo TV's reality show, *Shahs of Sunset*. While some diasporic Iranians have argued that the show promotes an inaccurate depiction of Iranians as wealthy and materialistic (glossed as "successful" by some), others have argued that this image of success is at least favorable to the only other stereotypes of Iranians available on American television: the religious fundamentalist and the terrorist.

[11] There are racial undertones to these suggestions; for more on the racialization and "whitewashing" of Iranians in America, see Tehranian (2009) and Maghbouleh (2015, forthcoming).

other, earlier immigrant groups to the United States (Alba et al. 2002). They have created language schools, cultural festivals, summer camps, and youth organizations in an attempt to pre-empt this perceived loss and to encourage young Iranians in diaspora to learn and protect their cultural heritage. The festivals under study here are often viewed as integral to local understandings of what constitutes preserving heritage.[12]

Cultural work in the Iranian diaspora is a rich source for studying the ruptures of community and the various attempts at and challenges to building diasporic citizenship. That this cultural work is often viewed as apolitical, above reproach, and universally shared reveals an assumption about the relationship between art and politics that ignores plentiful evidence to the contrary.[13] Nonetheless, this worldview that allows for an apolitical approach to art permeates the planning of large cultural festivals, concerts, and art exhibitions in some diaspora communities. As stated above, Iranian diaspora communities, like other immigrant communities, are politically, ethnically, religiously, and even linguistically fractured. Built upon heavy political and historical baggage (literally and figuratively; some older first generation Iranians still claim to have their suitcases packed, ready for an eventual return to Iran), Iranian diaspora communities must rely on something besides recent history and shared experience (itself frequently disputed) to create a sense of belonging, unity, and identification. For Iranians, as for other immigrant groups, that 'something' has been what is glossed as "art and culture." It is perhaps not coincidental that a simplistic rendering of art and culture is also the focus of much of the debates surrounding multiculturalism.

[12] On Persian language maintenance in the U.S., see Modarresi (2001); on language shift in Sweden, see Namei (2012); on innovative strategies for Persian bilingual and cultural education using music, see Ajangzad (2013).
[13] In a 2014 interview with the BBC, Chinese artist Ai Weiwei argued that art and politics cannot be separated. This point was debated in a panel at Tirgan 2013, where Iranian artists Shoja Azari and Shirin Neshat stated that art is inherently political: there is no art that is apolitical.

State-supported multicultural programs aimed at fostering inclusion of migrants are often criticized for shallow displays of culture and ethnicity that constitute what some derisively have called "feel-good multiculturalism." Rather than dismiss festivals as guilty of perpetuating all the sins attributed to multiculturalism, I examine two such events in the Iranian diaspora, seeking not the redemption of the genre, but rather questioning its enduring attraction by examining what lasting impacts they may have, if any, beyond the festival grounds.[14] Are these events really only a state-supported venue for cosmopolitan consumption of sterilized third-world culture? (e.g., Ameeriar 2012) Or are there unexamined long-term consequences not only for artists and cosmopolitan audiences, but also for immigrant communities and their participation in multicultural societies?

Political sociologist Irene Bloemraad, in her study of political participation among immigrant groups in the United States and Canada, argued that, "multiculturalism provides material and symbolic resources to immigrants that they can use to make claims and access political debates" (2006: 122). In her chapter on the social nature of citizenship, she briefly suggests that multicultural polices and the programs they enable, including festivals, can have "important indirect consequences for political incorporation" as they serve as "schools" for immigrants to learn Canadian modes of participation and volunteerism (2006: 94). In the following chapters, I investigate this suggestion ethnographically in the planning, production, and afterlives of two major festivals in Toronto and Stockholm that offer examples of the forms and functions of participation among Iranian communities, including those that extend beyond

[14] Though beyond the scope of this study, the economic incentive of festivals is surely an important component to their enduring attraction for cities and states. Dragan Klaic argued this point in his posthumously published essays on arts festivals, *Festivals in Focus*: "The popularity of festivals is generated by the dominance of the economic perspective on culture, seen not any longer for its inherent value and as an investment in the quality of citizenship and vibrancy of the community, but for its earning potential. Economic impact studies aim to convince funders and sponsors that festivals create significant economic benefits, boost consumption and expand employment" (Klaic 2014: 31). See also Throroski and Greenhill (2001).

Canadian or Swedish borders. When I followed ethnographic leads and looked offstage, I found that these programs and the policies that produce them have important impacts on citizenship, practice, and belonging, both in local communities and across diasporic spaces.

Methodology

Drawing on Bourdieu's (1983) notion of the *field* of cultural production, in conducting fieldwork for this dissertation I aimed to understand the broader context in which the two festivals under study were produced, with particular attention to the governmental, entrepreneurial, political, and cultural actors jostling for position in the diasporic field of cultural production. Studying cultural production as a field *in diaspora* allows us to see the ways in which various and multiple regimes of power (among them, state, community, financial, transnational) are asserted among and upon related immigrant groups, influencing the selective representations and identity negotiations that occur within shifting geopolitical and transnational circumstances. Attention to this production opens a space in which one can analyze not only the spread of products, but also of ideas, concerns, and practices laterally across diaspora spaces.

In many ways, this dissertation is a response to studies of multiculturalism and migration, and to anthropology's uncomfortable position among them. What are anthropologists to do when the practices and policies of our interlocutors appear to be at odds with anthropological theory? How can ethnography contribute to renewed understandings of the intersections of multicultural politics, racism, citizenship, and migration?

In her 2012 critique of migration studies, prominent sociologist and migration scholar Peggy Levitt argued that the field had over-emphasized economic motivations and impacts, and that it was time for scholars to "take culture seriously" (498). She argued that a re-examination of 'culture' in migration studies is necessary in order to contextualize studies of theory, policy,

and demographics and to gain greater understanding of the everyday realities of migrants themselves. In taking up Levitt's call, I insert anthropology's demand for "ethnographic approval" (the close relationship between theory and what Peter Berger has called "ethnographic reality") in assessing the impacts of multiculturalism on immigrant groups (Berger 2012: 325). Recent and ongoing debates among political philosophers and sociologists have pivoted on the question of whether multiculturalism – as theory, practice, or "public ethos" – has had essentializing impacts on cultural minority groups (Phillips 2007; Kymlicka 2014). These debates have, as yet, only raged in the realm of the pen, policy, and index, and with little ethnographic research or analysis mobilized to support them, a curious absence given that these claims are presumably about the lived impacts of multiculturalism among immigrants.

Anthropology's ambivalence (if not outright contempt) for essentializing discourses has contributed to this state of the field, but as Vertovec, citing Nancy Foner, has argued, "anthropologists have much to contribute — particularly through their up-close ethnographic accounts of migrants' meanings, values, social relations and experiences — to large studies entailing surveys, questionnaires, and large datasets that are the staples of other disciplines" (2007a: 974). In his 2007 article on the anthropology of migration, Vertovec suggests that ethnographic research not only has much to contribute to other disciplines' methods, but that the reverse is also true. Citing Marcelo Suarez-Orozco: "The next generation of anthropological studies of immigration will be increasingly required to reckon systematically with the findings of our colleagues in allied disciplines and to continue making a case for the unique perspective emerging from the ethnographic process" (2005: 8, quoted in Vertovec 2007a: 974). I aim to contribute to this next generation of research, and thus draw on and contribute to debates in multiple fields of cultural anthropology (e.g. urban, transnational, political), but also to political

sociology, migration studies, transnationalism and diaspora studies, Middle Eastern Studies, Iranian Studies, and the newer fields of global studies and public humanities.

Multi-sited Research of Diaspora

According to George Marcus, ethnographers can be "impelled" to conduct multi-sited research if an aim of their research is to "empirically [follow] the thread of cultural process itself" (Marcus 1995: 97) and if the people, thing, metaphor, conflict or other subject of study is itself not single-sited. In these cases, he argues, the research does not just benefit from multi-sited research design, it may in fact require it. Such an approach or mode of ethnographic research is embedded in a world system that is attuned to circulation and movement of cultural products, meanings, and identities (Marcus 1995: 96; Appadurai 1996).

My goal in undertaking multi-sited fieldwork was to engage with what Clifford called the "lateral axes of communication" between diaspora groups (1994), and to trace the diasporic movement, networks, and ambitions of Iranians in multiple parts of the diaspora. I also wanted to undertake a comparative study, of a kind. Nancy Foner has argued that "comparative analysis can deepen our understanding of migration by raising new questions and research problems and help to evaluate, and in some cases modify, theoretical perspectives and formulate explanations that could not be made on the basis of one case — or one time period — alone" (2005:3). While this observation may seem obvious, it responds to a tendency for particularism among anthropologists who avoid the comparative – a holdover, perhaps, from the interventions of the *Writing Culture* (Clifford and Marcus 1986) and *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* (Marcus and Fischer 1986) influences in Anthropology, or perhaps, without having solved the culturalism problem, a fear of unwittingly committing the generalizing, flattening, essentializing sins of previous eras of the discipline (e.g. Ruth Benedict's *Patterns of Culture* [1934]).

Despite having similar reservations, in light of the comparative work being done in migration studies I chose to undertake a comparative project in order to investigate the ways a sense of diasporic citizenship is impacted by differing state approaches to multiculturalism. In an attempt to avoid the aforementioned constraints of comparative ethnography, I proceeded with caution, and without the self-imposed restrictions of setting variables of analyses in advance, or requiring my fieldwork in one site to "match" that of the other with any exactitude. That I have written analyses based on ethnographic research on two festivals that are, I would argue, well-suited to comparison, is the result of happy coincidence rather than a planned project investigating festivals.

Following Marcus and the many who have written on multi-sited research since, my research questions required a similar mobility as that which my interlocutors have embraced. Many of the Iranians I met while living in Toronto or Stockholm in 2011-2012 continue to live in those cities, but a sizeable number of them have moved at least once, if not multiple times, in the intervening years.[15] They have relocated to Los Angeles, the Bay Area, New York, Chicago, Tehran, Dubai, Kabul, and points in between. Many of those who have not moved officially are nevertheless among a cosmopolitan stratum of the diaspora who travel frequently; I have met friends and interlocutors from fieldwork during trips to Berlin, San Francisco, Washington, D.C., and New York, and watched from afar via social media as they travel to Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.

Ethnographic Fieldwork in Diaspora

With a goal of assessing connections between diaspora communities and analyzing diaspora culture in the context of the local environments in which they are produced, I conducted fieldwork in two major Iranian diaspora locations in which Iranian communities were established

[15] See Kelly and Hedman (2015) for a study of Iranian onward migration from Sweden.

in varying periods: Stockholm (six consecutive months in 2012, and follow-up in 2014) and Toronto (four consecutive months in 2011, and follow-up in 2012 and 2013). I implemented ethnographic methods of participant observation, photography, and interviewing. Engaging in various forms of participant observation was critical for this work, including observing and participating in planning meetings, volunteering with community organizations (e.g., festival organizing, youth Persian and English language classes), participating in Iranian university groups, documenting cultural performances, and joining musicians on national tours.

The use of photography and video in the field provided several opportunities beyond participation observation. While my interlocutors often viewed the camera as a useful recording device, for me, the camera prompted my attention to the sensory experiences of a variety of spaces in diaspora, from theater performances and coffee shops to living rooms and festival grounds (Pink 2009). It also became a source of relationship-building at community events, where I volunteered to serve as photographer for concerts, festivals, and celebrations, but also in private settings, where, upon request, I gladly filled the role of photographer for private parties and funerals, alike.

Through purposive sampling, I conducted over 100 in-depth and semi-structured interviews with artists, musicians, actors, dancers, writers, filmmakers, producers, theater directors, playwrights, comedians, authors, television personalities, journalists, educators/teachers, politicians, non-profit leaders, community activists, audience members, gallery owners, festival organizers, volunteers, and social service providers. These individuals were immigrants, refugees, and citizens; members of the first, 1.5, and second-generations; and were Canadians, Swedes, and Iranians. In addition to attending ethnic festivals (not only Iranian, but also South Asian, Taiwanese, Turkish, Swedish, Canadian, Chinese, Italian, and Caribbean)

and several months of festival planning meetings, I attended as many cultural events as I could find: concerts, plays, TV tapings, film screenings, community meetings, poetry readings, book signings, gallery openings, language classes (ESL and Persian), parties, conferences, and protests.

Over dinner, tea, and *fika* (Swedish afternoon coffee), I heard stories of refugees navigating the United Nations asylum system, of the jarring displacement of immigration, of the uncomfortable realizations of cultural difference in elementary school classrooms, of the isolation of exile, and of the struggle to find employment while learning a third foreign language as an adult. I also heard of personal triumphs, of breaking glass ceilings for ethnic minorities among the cultural elite, of successfully sponsoring family members' migrations during times of war, of re-creating support networks through friends rather than kin, of recording albums while holding down two jobs, of being selected by a national party as the first Iranian to hold public office, and of defying parents by taking artistic (read: risky) career paths rather than traditionally prestigious ones. While the content of only a handful of these conversations appear in the pages of this dissertation (all quoted by permission without use of pseudonyms), they each greatly informed my research and understanding of these communities in diaspora.

Site Selection: Sweden and Canada

When the United States –the choice destination for the first wave of Iranian migrants – greatly limited new immigration from Iran in the mid-1980s, Iranians who fled the Iran-Iraq war and concurrent forms of repression often did so via Turkey, Pakistan and other neighbors. They then turned to the United Nations to apply for asylum – an opportunity to find a new home anywhere that would have them. Sweden and Canada were among the few countries that accepted large numbers of these Iranian refugees (Vahabi 2012). Swedish government statistics

indicate that the majority of Iranians arrived in Sweden between 1984-1989 (Ahmadi Lewin 2001) and that the number of Iranians there continued to increase through 1991. When Sweden began restricting asylum cases from Iran, Canada remained open, leading to a rapidly increasing Iranian population, particularly in Toronto and Vancouver. The first wave of Iranian immigrants to Canada arrived between 1996 and 2001, five to six years after their Swedish counterparts, and well over a decade after what scholars have described as the first wave of post-Revolution migrants left Iran. Since then, the General Toronto Area (GTA), sometimes called "Tehranto," has become "the number one destination for people seeking to emigrate from Iran" and estimates suggest that the Canadian census has under-reported the upwards of half a million people of Iranian origin there (Moghissi et al 2009, Garousi 2005).

As discussed in greater detail in Chapters 1 and 2, the Iranian communities of Stockholm and Toronto thus represent successive, if overlapping, periods of heightened migration, with importantly diverse reasons for migration, experiences of living in and leaving Iran, and socio-economic characteristics of the Iranian immigrants living in these diaspora cities.

Scales of analysis – nation-states, institutions, cities

In focusing on the connections between production and practice in diaspora, in this study I take up anthropologist and migration scholar Caroline Brettell's suggestion that an anthropology of migration "should look at macro-social contextual issues, micro-level strategies and decision-making, and the meso-level of relational structure within which individuals operate. It needs to articulate both people and process" (Brettell 2003:7; see also Pries 2008). To address the macro-level, I interviewed representatives of state intermediaries and politicians themselves, and gathered policy data, policy analyses, and studies of policy implications. As Vertovec suggests, attention to policy is important because, "their conditioning structures directly affect

migrants' lives, practices and processes surrounding them" (Vertovec 2007a: 974). Thus, this study also aims to take up Ong's provocation that anthropology should work to identify the "regulatory effects of particular institutions, projects, regimes and markets that shape people's motivations, desires, and struggles and make them particular kinds of subjects" (Ong 1999: 5- 6).

As questions of scale in the study of migration are becoming increasingly common, British anthropologists, led perhaps by Pnina Werbner, have argued that studying the micro-level, the everyday experiences of multicultural life – coined "everyday multiculturalism" (Werbner 2013) and "multiculturalism from below" (e.g., Werbner 2005, 2012; Morawska 2013) as opposed to "multiculturalism from above" (e.g., Zincone 1998, Borevi 2013a) – are critical to understanding how state cultural policies produce experiences of inclusion and exclusion. The following chapters aim to offer this micro-level perspective through ethnographic attention to everyday interactions, interviews, and participant observation in community events and local spaces.

After addressing nation-state political and historical contexts in Chapter 2, Chapters 3 and 4 focus ethnographically on communities and individuals and their interactions with what might be called the middle scale (Brettell's and Pries's meso-level) – where community partnerships and non-profit organizations act as intermediaries between government policy and community groups. Thus, through interviews with artists and organizers regarding their interactions with government agencies, intermediaries, and policies, I investigate the interactions (and contestations) between individuals and institutional intermediaries of state cultural policy, examining the ways in which multicultural policies impact cultural production and practices, particularly in terms of motivations, decision-making, and identity. In this way, the present study offers a "multiscalar" approach, as advocated by Nina Glick-Schiller and Ayse Çağlar (2009),

wherein neither the city nor the nation-state is taken as singular – their relational positions requires this multi-scalar approach.

While Chapter 2 offers macro-level context, the ethnographic analyses of the following chapters are focused particularly upon *cities*. This is an intentional focus, drawing on Jenny Burman's conception of the "diasporic city" (2010), itself an elaboration of Avtar Brah's "diasporic space" (1996). In Burman's formulation, the diasporic city "is where cultural creolization is the most palpable" (9-10).

> The concepts of diasporic city and diasporic public sphere…decentre the nation while still allowing for however many nation-attachments people hold. They make room for imagined communities, beyond kinship networks, now greatly facilitated and in many cases generated by electronic communications. They also provoke us to reconsider the specific and usually urban environment — the site of overlapping diasporic public spheres — in relation to which every gesture toward the former home is made. There is an obvious but under-theorized dialectical relationship between migrants and their new dwelling-places, in which dweller and locale (including its non-migrant residents) are each transformed by the encounter. (74)

Indeed, in my reading, this inclusion of "non-migrant residents" is a critically important feature of studying the diaspora city. In her study of Jamaicans in Toronto, Burman argued: "all residents of Toronto are residents of a diasporic city, whether they consider themselves to be members of diasporic collectivities or merely spectators of cultural diversity" (79). This is becoming increasingly clear as advocates for interculturalism and nativism co-exist (uneasily) within, for example, European public spheres. Burman elaborates: "Obviously, lived histories of migration and levels of affective investment in other places vary, but every resident is surrounded by the iconography of other places and stands at a nexus of overlapping connections" (79).

Positionality: Insider-outsider or Outsider-insider?

Stances regarding the position of anthropologists as "native informants" vacillate between two poles: (1) of disdain for 'insider' perspectives that by necessity miss insights gained by 'outsiders'; and (2) of doubts and critical questioning of the ability of 'outsiders' to represent the perspectives of local 'native' understandings without inserting their own subjective opinions and positions (Narayan 1993). As an Iranian American working in Iranian diaspora contexts, questions of my positionality were frequently raised during fieldwork. My long-term presence in, study of, and collaborations with segments of the Iranian diaspora have offered networks and entries that enabled much of my work. However, my position as the child of an Iranian-born father and an American-born mother (making me a "halfie," as Lila Abu-Lughod might have it [1991: 137]) also placed me in a border zone in terms of ethnic, cultural, and national identifications. As a dual-citizen born in the American South, raised speaking English, and with limited experience with Iranians of my peer group before adulthood, I was an anomaly for most of my interlocutors and at times it felt I was being interviewed as much as I was conducting interviews.[16]

Because most of my interlocutors were first and 1.5-generation immigrants, and none were of "mixed" heritage (still relatively rare among adults in Sweden and Toronto, where the second generation is still quite small) the perceived rarity of my family background, life choices, and university-attained linguistic abilities made them the subject of frequent inquiry in Stockholm and Toronto. The novelty of my identity was often helpful in conducting research – I am confident that I managed to gain entry into some venues because of my ability to successfully navigate both Persian and English spaces; I am equally confident that at other times I was offered or denied entry based on assumptions of my ignorance as "only half." Most often, however, I

[16] I was indeed interviewed on more than one occasion for local Persian-language radio programs in Stockholm.

was welcomed warmly by Iranians in Sweden and Canada as someone deeply interested in the artistic production, cultural work, migration stories and everyday lives of Iranians in diaspora, a position that itself was perhaps as infrequently encountered by my interlocutors as other elements of my identity.

Any claim that my positionality has been one of a firm 'outsider' is unfounded, but my position as an 'insider' should also be challenged. Having neither personal experiences nor familial contacts in Toronto or Stockholm before pursuing this research, my position challenges easy classification and, I would argue, also suggests that distinctions of insider/outsider fail to account for the diversity of experiences, expectations, and realities of diaspora itself.

Outline of the Dissertation

Acknowledging that state support for multicultural programs rests on demands for migrant inclusion. In this dissertation, I offer an ethnographic account that queries the role of culture and culturalism on immigrant integration while examining the scope of multicultural policy impact on practice.

In Chapter 1, I present a brief overview of the relevant literature surrounding diaspora, citizenship, practice, culture, multiculturalism, and cultural production, and provide contextual remarks on recent trends in the Iranian diaspora. Chapter 2 sets the foundation for the ethnographic chapters as I outline the major debates surrounding multiculturalism and offers detailed historical and political contexts of Canadian and Swedish immigration and multicultural policy. I show the ways in which culture has been taken up by state and municipal bodies in the pursuit of immigrant integration in each country to highlight the importance of context in understanding multiculturalism's impact on immigrant communities.

Through multi-sited ethnographic fieldwork examining both the production and after-lives of two large international Iranian arts festivals, in Chapters 3 and 4 I examine the relationship between multicultural policy and the participatory practices of immigrants and their descendants. They specifically illustrate the roles that state support, multicultural policy, and community partnerships have played in the proliferation of diasporic practices like democratic debate, teamwork, leadership, volunteerism, and civic and political activism.

Chapter 3 is an examination of the Swedish case, specifically through a study of Iranian cultural producers involved in Eldfesten, a large Iranian arts and cultural festival that has taken place in Stockholm since 2010, and recently has expanded to five cities in Sweden. Anne Philips, Seyla Benhabib, and other scholars (all of whom Kymlicka calls "post-multiculturalist critics of essentialism" (2014)) have argued that multicultural policies encourage essentialist constructions of groups and thus form "cultural straitjackets" that serve to police cultural practices and prevent resistance. Through participant observation and ethnographic research with Eldfesten, I offer in Chapter 3 a case where multicultural policies and the programs it supports has enabled and even encouraged precisely the opposite; where Iranian-Swedes with culturalist motivations and anxieties (e.g. preservation, maintenance, border-guarding) are being challenged by Iranian-Swedes who have mobilized support of national institutions and multicultural policies to revise and experiment with cultural forms and celebrations. Furthermore, I show that these debates and contestations – themselves expected and even perhaps encouraged by Swedish multicultural policies and individuals who work to promote them – are framed by Iranian-Swedes as practices in democracy, both in learning the practices themselves and in their rehearsal. These rehearsals are key motivations for the organizers of Eldfesten, who see these democratic practices as

are key motivations for the organizers of Eldfesten, who see these democratic practices as contributing to diasporic citizenship through the development of democracy among Iranians in diaspora and, eventually, in Iran itself.

In Chapter 4, I shift ethnographic attention to Canada, where Toronto's Iranian community has mobilized community sponsorship and partnerships with state intermediaries to produce the Tirgan Iranian Festival, the largest Iranian arts and cultural festival in the world. Through ethnographic analyses of planning meetings, volunteer sessions, and organizer interviews, I show that multicultural polies in Canada have produced more than a thriving summer festival season in Toronto: it has also produced practices of participation, with important impacts on belonging both in Toronto and beyond, as the organizers of the festival consciously contribute to the growth of Iranian diasporic citizenship.

Finally, in the Conclusion I suggest ways that multiculturalism has impacted Iranians in diaspora and suggest directions for further research, particularly in the widely acknowledged capital of the Iranian diaspora: Los Angeles.

CHAPTER 1

Studying Cultural Production & Multiculturalism in Diaspora: A Review of Relevant Literature

> *"…any place that iranian [sic] gather and iranian activity takes place is 'iran.' – bahman (london)"*
>
> - Comment by user "bahman chahardehi" (Shahrvand 2014)

In the above comment posted on a 2014 online news article about an Iranian community center fundraiser in Toronto, an Iranian in London expressed his feeling that belonging and identity are no longer rooted in a place-based sense of nationalism-in-exile, but rather that place, belonging, and identity exist in the realm of practice. These practices are often marked as transnational, and what these practices are, how they come about, and what their potential impacts are across the Iranian diaspora form an ethnographic focus of this dissertation. Further, as Sondra Hale has posed it, "What does transnationality signify, and how does it manifest itself in diasporic practices?" (2009: 134) In this section, I offer an overview of the debates surrounding diaspora, cultural citizenship, and what has been termed diasporic citizenship, arguing for the importance of practice as an analytical focus.

On Diaspora

Early in his 1997 paper on the meanings of *diaspora*, anthropologist Steven Vertovec defined the term as "practically any population which is considered 'deterritorialised' or 'transnational' – that is, which has originated in a land other than which it currently resides, and whose social, economic and political networks cross the borders of nation-states or, indeed, span the globe" (1). He followed this definition with a warning that, "the current over-use and under-theorisation of the notion of 'diaspora' among academics, transnational intellectuals and 'community leaders' alike," risks the term becoming a "loose reference conflating categories

such as immigrants, guest-workers, ethnic and 'racial' minorities, refugees, expatriates and travellers …" (1). Vertovec, a prolific scholar in his own right, was neither the first nor last to level this warning regarding the term and its over-use and under-theorization. Yet it is noteworthy that despite his acknowledgement of this known problem, his own definition offered a largely unproblematized conflation of *transnational* and *diaspora* and an immense breadth of subject ("practically any population"). The subsequent article, outlining at least three meanings of diaspora, suggested the meanings were in fact so multiple and varied that they extended beyond the scope of his own paper.

Similarly, in his oft-cited article, "Diasporas" (1994), James Clifford argued that, in the face of its increasing usage, the term *diaspora* required greater definition to acquire or maintain any analytic utility. However, in so doing, he cautioned against the creation of "ideal types" (as scholars like William Safran had developed (e.g. 1991)), arguing that they invite a policing of an often inadequate list of qualifications to which few groups would adhere, resulting in fruitless judgments of groups as more or less diasporic. Furthermore, Clifford argued that ideal types seem to assume a fixed set of characteristics that do not allow for the changing circumstances to which groups respond (306).

Some years later, in 2005, Rogers Brubaker argued that *diaspora* has become analytically weak ("the category becomes stretched to the point of uselessness" (3)) due to its over-use — creating what he called a "diaspora diaspora" or "a dispersion of the meanings of the term in semantic, conceptual and disciplinary space" (1). As such, he argued, "If everyone is diasporic, then no one is distinctively so" and thus, "the universalization of diaspora, paradoxically, means the disappearance of diaspora." (3)

Given this, Brubaker argued that, instead of thinking of or analyzing diasporas as groups

or as a "bounded entity," it should be examined as an "idiom, a stance, a claim" (12). He argued that scholars should consider diaspora "in the first instance as a category of practice, and only then ask whether, and how, it can fruitfully be used as a category of analysis" (12). This notion of diaspora as a category of practice required a shift in attention from ideal typical definitions to analyses of what the term has been (and can be) used to achieve: "As a category of practice, 'diaspora' is used to make claims, to articulate projects, to formulate expectations, to mobilize energies, to appeal to loyalties. It is often a category with a strong normative change. It does not so much *describe* the world as seek to *remake* it" (12).

Around the same time, in his 2003 book *Diasporas* (published in English in 2008), French sociologist Stéphane Dufoix presented a concise, critical genealogy of this now ubiquitous term, prevalent as much in academia as in popular culture, journalism, policy, and among community organizations. Rather than aim to create another typology that defines diaspora as a catch-all ("open definitions") or as a private club ("categorical definitions"), Dufoix showed that both of these extremes "belong to the history of the word" and – despite Clifford's appeal – moved towards developing a Weberian ideal type (Dufoix 2008: 2). Citing the work of postmodern and cultural studies authors like Clifford, Stuart Hall, and Paul Gilroy (who themselves had challenged both open and categorical definitions of diasporas for their stresses on maintenance of identity despite dispersion and argued against centered, fixed definitions and ideal types [Dufoix 2008: 24]), Dufoix defended his decision: "Such a usage of 'diaspora', which is more conceptual than descriptive, makes it possible to stress a population's common characteristics without giving it a global definition as a 'true diaspora'" (Dufoix 2008: 33).

As opposed to describing migrant populations through an existing term or set of terms, only then to re-define them to fit the populations in question, Dufoix argues for the development of a "broader, more complex analytical framework that takes into account the structuring of the collective experience abroad based on the link maintained with the referent-origin and the community stance this creates" (Dufoix 2008: 2-3). Indeed, following Weber, Dufoix suggests that ideal types – when carefully constructed to allow for flexibility – over-lap, and that multiplicity can in fact offer a valuable tool for researchers in describing phenomena and processes, not as the "final goal of research" but rather as a way to "apprehend the real" (Dufoix 2008: 58).

Dufoix's proposed diasporic ideal type begins from the understanding, similar to Brubaker's, that, despite scholarly critique, the term 'diaspora' is a category of practice in which state-actors, academics, journalists, and collectivities themselves are self-conscious about their diasporic talk and actions. He offers a useful analytical framework through which scholars may describe diaspora without falling into the traps Clifford, Vertovec, and others have warned against, including resorting to center-peripheral models that flatten, in Clifford's terms, the lateral axes and networks that connect people across communities in diaspora (Clifford 1994: 321-322). Such a construction allows for a much more malleable expression of diaspora without losing analytical utility.

Four modes exist in Dufoix's ideal type, each structured by three axes of relationships: to existing regimes, to what he describes as "referent-origins" (distinct from states or an identity), and between individuals, groups, and communities, or "interpolarity" (Dufoix 2008: 64). Dufoix's modes are neither mutually exclusive, nor fixed temporally, nor do they necessarily aim to describe entire collectivities as unitary. The four modes include: (1) the *centroperipheral*

mode, which involves links that exist mainly between the home state and emigrant groups, potentially through official state institutions or community associations, but with little connection (positive or negative) between these emigrant groups themselves. Such connections across emigrant groups is also missing in the (2) *enclave mode*, in which there is also little connection between home states and emigrant groups, despite these groups drawing on common origin and organizing themselves locally in cities and neighborhoods. The (3) *atopic mode* similarly involves emigrants in multiple poles identifying with common origins locally, without interaction with the home state, yet here there exists an interpolarity, or "flows (of ideas, people, and resources)" across these emigrant collectivities not found in the first two modes (Waldinger 2008: xv, Dufoix 2008: 63). Dufoix describes *the atopic mode* as transstate, but without ambitions for physical territory – "this is a space of more than a place, a geography with no other territory than the space described by the networks" (Dufoix 2008: 63). Finally, in the (4) *antagonistic mode*, this interpolarity and common origin belief is employed to apply pressure or work against the home state, which diaspora members deem illegitimate (Dufoix 2008: 63).

The four modes formulated by Dufoix defy fixed definitions of diaspora through their possibilities for overlapping spatial, temporal, and collective characteristics. Dufoix insists that different class, regional, or generational groups within a common collective may simultaneously operationalize multiple modes, and that these positions are likely to change over time (though not necessarily in any pre-determined direction). This allows for inclusion and specification of the array of political, social, economic, and cultural experiences that were often elided previously as "diaspora." In this way, Dufoix offers a useful analytical framework through which scholars may describe diaspora without falling into the traps Clifford, Vertovec, and others have warned against, including resorting to center-peripheral models that flatten, in Clifford's terms, the

lateral axes and networks that connect people across communities in diaspora (Clifford 1994: 321-322). As Roger Waldinger argued in his introduction to Dufoix's text, through such a reconfiguration of the study of diaspora, "there are no diasporas, only different ways of constructing, managing, and imagining the relationships between homelands and their dispersed peoples" (Waldinger 2008: xvi).

Rather than disengage with the term altogether, I argue that Brubaker and Dufoix's apt descriptions of *diaspora* as a category of practice requires that we recognize it as both a tool of self-identification and of analytical utility. Not all immigrants or their descendants identify themselves with communities in diaspora, just as not all diaspora members consider themselves to be exiles or migrants. The concepts of identity and belonging cut across these distinctions and, given their close relationship to practice, are particularly relevant to questions of citizenship and participation.

Diasporic Citizenship: On Practice, Identity, and Belonging in Diaspora

In their studies of migrants, diasporas, and transnational practices, anthropologists have theorized concepts such as *global ethnoscapes* (Appadurai 1991), *flexible citizenship* (Ong 1999), *cultural citizenship* (Rosaldo 1994; Ong et al 1996; Siu 2001), and *long-distance nationalism* (Glick Schiller and Fouron 2001). Of particular relevance to this study, Lok Siu has expanded Michel Laguerre's (1998) concept of *diasporic citizenship* in her 2005 ethnography of Taiwanese and Chinese diaspora groups in Panama. Siu's central question examines "how diasporic subjects experience, negotiate, and articulate their sense of belonging amid intersecting cultural-national formations" (Siu 2005: 3). Contrary to previous studies of diaspora that emphasized center-periphery communications and connections between a homeland and those in diaspora, Siu insists that diasporic subjects do not imagine their own belonging within the

context of a single nation-state and in fact maintain connections "with their geographically dispersed co-ethnics" (Siu 2005: 10-11). It is this latter emphasis on those lateral axes, theorized earlier by Clifford, which forms the point of departure for Siu's project.

As operationalized by Siu, *diasporic citizenship* describes "the processes by which diasporic subjects **experience** and **practice** cultural and social belonging amid shifting geopolitical circumstances and webs of transnational relations" (Siu 2005: 5, emphasis mine). This notion of *experience*, or of "being" a diasporic citizen, often expressed in terms of belonging, relates to the emotional commitments and attachments of communities and individuals to more than one nation-state, but also to the diaspora itself – to the scattered communities of co-ethnics/co-supplicants/co-nationals, etc. Similarly, *practice* involves actions, contestations, discourses, and movements by diaspora members – the "doing" of diasporic citizenship. This being and doing are mutually constituting and reinforcing; they co-exist and motivate one another.

Two approaches to citizenship informed Siu's project most directly: Renato Rosaldo's 1998 study of Latinos in the U.S. that presented his formulation of *cultural citizenship*, and Aihwa Ong's studies of Hong Kong elites that produced her concept of *flexible citizenship* (1999) and with Cambodian Americans' dual process of self-making and being made "within institutional webs of power" (2003). Thus, Siu's examination of belonging and diasporic subjects is meant to bring together the study of cultural and social realms of everyday life that incorporates the agency of individuals (found in Rosaldo's notions of belonging: "one must consider the everyday cultural practices through which Latinas/os claim space and their right to be full members of society, a process I call cultural citizenship")[1] with the realm of subject formation through formal politics and governmentality (found in Ong's notions of citizenship).

[1] See Rosaldo, n.d.

In a move similar to Dufoix's insistence on the multiplicity of modes in temporal and geographic space, and following Nira Yuval-Davis (1997), Siu argues that citizenship is multilayered and that citizenship and the national are directly linked to the geopolitical such that, for her, localized treatment of citizens is shaped by geopolitical events and imperatives where, "the local …is thoroughly engaged in and part of the transnational" (Siu 2005: 9).

Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson have argued that the spacialization of others as "abroad" and us "at home" presupposes both a unity and fixed sense of oppositions that simply does not hold in "a world of culturally, socially, and economically interconnected and interdependent spaces" (Gupta and Ferguson 1992: 14). Rather, they argue for the study of the process of *the production* of cultural difference, such that cultural groups are made to feel, appear, and be defined as distinct from one another. Similarly, and echoing Gilroy's (e.g., 1994) and Hall's (e.g., 1990) understandings of diaspora identity and subject formation as rooted in difference and processes of the production of difference, Siu argues that her formulation of diasporic citizenship, "involves not only ongoing relationships with multiple communities (i.e., homeland, place of settlement, and the larger diaspora) and the continual production of a shared history, but also the production of difference and disjuncture in relation to those communities" (Siu 2005: 12).

In order to point out the flux of these formations, Siu consciously chooses the term 'diasporic,' a move I also take, resisting the suggestion of fixity or homogeneity she finds in the term 'diaspora' in favor of the "processual nature of producing diasporic subjectivities" (Siu 2005: 11). In her focus on the politics of belonging for "diasporic peoples," Siu suggests that "being diasporic" therefore requires an "ongoing formation of a consciousness, a positioning, a subjective expression of living at the intersection of different cultural-national formations" as

well as “active and conscious negotiation of one’s identity and one’s understandings of ‘home and community’” (Siu 2005: 4, 11).

Siu’s reading of Ong as solely interested in the state and governmentality may undervalue Ong’s strong articulation of the dialectical process wherein both state and agent play roles in a negotiation of citizenship and identity (Ong 1996). However, Siu nonetheless offers a grounded approach that incorporates multiple actors in this negotiation in relation to transnational, national, and local forces, an approach that I take up in this study.

Anthropologist Allen Chun has argued that, along with culture and identity, ethnicity is also a construct developed through various processes of production. Chun outlines paradigmatic contributions to understandings of culture, identity, and ethnicity in order to argue that they should not be regarded as “de facto autonomous entities in themselves but as part of a larger context of social or political interactions” (Chun 2009: 339). As such, he suggests that anthropologists should not only ask how these are constituted, but also “when and why they are invoked, especially why there are crises of perception that give rise to new identities or new forms of identification” (Chun 2009: 339).

In relation to Chun’s call for attention to processes of production of racialization, ethnicization, and nationalization, Siu’s definition of diasporic citizenship foregrounds the process of subject formation to include both the relationship between homeland and a local diasporic community and relationships among those communities across various nation-state boundaries (Siu 2005: 5). Additionally, following Ien Ang, Siu argues that the mutually constituted relationships of nation-states and diasporic subjects can be the site of “both support and oppression, emancipation and confinement,” (Ang 2001:12, 6). Thus, I situate Siu’s diasporic citizenship alongside Hamid Naficy’s formulation of exilic liminality (1993) and Homi

Bhabha's hybridity and third space (1994), as a concept that simultaneously marks marginality and difference alongside the possibilities of productivity, creativity, and innovation (Siu 2005: 6).

Siu's diasporic citizenship offers a methodological and an epistemological framework that highlights both a top-down process of cultural-national entities' determinations of diasporic belonging as well as a bottom-up process of diasporic subjects' own assertions and redefinitions of belonging (Siu 2005: 5). Critically, she acknowledges that living in diaspora is not always a choice, but emphasizes that subjects' selection of certain forms of belonging once in diaspora "implies both the recognition of contradictory forces at work and a willingness to engage those conditions" (Siu 2005: 6). Through this observation, Siu determines that "migration or displacement does not dictate an automatic adoption of diasporic practices, a formulation of diasporic sensibilities, or the development of a diasporic consciousness, which always already implies an engagement with multiplicity" (Siu 2005: 6). This important distinction – that not all immigrants choose to 'belong' to a diasporic group or thereby become diasporic citizens – highlights the importance of Hall's suggestion of the continual production of identity, as well as the complex subject positions inherent to a maintenance and negotiation of the lateral networks in diaspora so important to Siu's notion of diasporic citizenship. These lateral communications and the continual, processual production of belonging and identification therein form an additional focus of this dissertation, asking to what extent Iranians in different diaspora locations interact with each other and with Iran through their productions of culture.

Thus, in arguing that multicultural policies and programs are (perhaps inadvertently) producing practices that promote diasporic citizenship, I am suggesting that these programs offer opportunities for expanding and developing the being and doing of diaspora. Brubaker's and

Dufoix's focus on practice ("doing") is also important for Siu, as diasporic citizenship for her is itself processual – and this process of becoming, belonging, and identifying is neither singular nor cemented (as suggested in the much-maligned Canadian metaphor for cultural diversity: the *mosaic*), but rather shifts and develops with changing geopolitical circumstances and relationships.

In my use of diasporic citizenship in the Iranian context, then, *being* involves the feeling of belonging, connecting, and being a part of a diaspora community, while *doing* includes the practices that create these embodied experiences of being in diaspora, such as creating and participating in institutions (e.g., language schools (Shirazi 2014), religious organizations (Soomekh 2012)), organizing and participating in cultural events with fellow co-ethnics (e.g., large private holiday celebrations or public parades, concerts, and festivals (Malek 2011)), forging networks across local diaspora communities (e.g., online (Bernal 2005; Alinejad 2011), as activism (Ghorashi and Boersma 2009), or through youth programs (Maghbouleh 2013)), and communicating with co-ethnics wherever they may be (Khosravi 2000; Alexanian 2006). These practices may be overtly political or claimed as apolitical, but always involve culture.

Studying (Multi)culturalism

Steven Vertovec has defined *culturalism* as, "conceiving cultures as reified, static, and homogenous across bounded groups" and "the assumption of common beliefs and practices within a discrete ethnic group" (Vertovec 2011: 243). Vertovec describes culturalist assumptions within multicultural ideologies and policies as highly critiqued for its "implicit meanings of 'culture'" which he lists as : "discrete, bounded and integrated" as a set of traits, values, and practices "tied historically to one place," static, "deterministic of behavior," "transmitted between generations," totalizing, essentializing, and representable as a community of members

whose interests can be "represented by a 'leader'" (Vertovec 1999). His conclusion is that the "culturalism" of multiculturalism has led to "a society of communities keeping wholly to themselves except for interactions wrought by economic necessity," a pluralism model described by John S. Furnivall and reminiscent of the "parallel societies" claim of the now infamous 2001 Cantle Report (Vertovec 1999).[2] Vertovec argues that we must rethink cultural diversity and develop new models: "we need less emphasis on the 'culturalism' and more on the 'multi'" (1999).

Multiculturalism is a polysemic term that has come to refer to a wide set of related concepts: the demographic reality of multiple cultural, religious, ethnic and/or national groups living in the same polity; an ideology based on liberal notions of equality and protection of cultural diversity in pluralistic societies; and a set of policies and political theories aimed at realizing this ideological position in the face of aforementioned demographic realities (Faist 2013: 24). The breadth of theorization and description for which the term has been used led Stuart Hall to observe: "Over the years the term 'multiculturalism' has come to reference a diffuse, indeed maddeningly spongy and imprecise, discursive field: a train of false trails and misleading universals" (Hall 2001: 3; cited in Vertovec and Wessendorf 2010: 2).

The study of multiculturalism (in all of its meanings) has created a particularly wide range of theorizations, but political philosopher David Miller suggests that, when used in the literature to describe an ideological position, *multiculturalism* generally refers to, "an ideology that attaches positive value to cultural diversity, calls for the equal recognition of different cultural groups, and calls upon the state to support such groups in various ways" (Miller 2006: 326-327).

[2] John S. Furnivall was a British anthropologist credited with early theories of multiculturalism, particularly the notion of the plural society.

Critiques of multiculturalism have been leveled from all directions: by politicians and journalists as much as by scholars and policy makers. These critiques, elaborated more fully in Chapter 2, range from claims as to its encouragement of "illiberal" practices and encouragement of "parallel societies" (Cantle 2001), to its essentialization of cultural beliefs and groups that lead to celebrations of cultural diversity that are shallow, feel-good, and reductive while maintaining structural inequality and the hierarchical status quo. While multicultural policies usually require that immigrant communities, national minorities, and indigenous groups be given equal protection under the law, according these critiques, minorities in society become "separate but equal," living in isolated communities, maintaining "traditional" ways of life and preferences, and in the case of immigrants, actively resisting assimilation or integration.

Defenders of multiculturalism argue that the term has been used as a political scapegoat for social ills without any empirical support, let alone a common understanding of what is meant by the now-sullied "m-word." When the leaders of Germany, France, and the United Kingdom each pronounced the failure of multiculturalism in their countries in 2010-2011, they were not only using the term to refer to an idea without equivalent policy directives in their respective countries, they were also likely using it to refer to an ideology that itself is not considered singular in meaning. Thus, the multicultural policies of Canada and France, for example, are quite distinct – where Canada has an official federal multiculturalism policy, confirmed in its highest legal document, France has no elaborated set of policies of multiculturalism, or policy directives to guide politicians and lawmakers. Thus to proclaim the failure of multiculturalism, its defenders argue, first requires an elaboration of the meaning of term, and the absence of this definition reveals the political motives of a critique.

In light of the public disdain in many European contexts for the term *multiculturalism*, some scholars and policy makers have proposed *interculturalism* as an alternative. Debates continue as to the distinction between the two: for some, like Meer and Modood (2012), this is a false debate, for, not only has multiculturalism (properly defined) not failed, but it is not actually different from interculturalism in any meaningful way. For others, like Will Kymlicka (2012b), the political need in some countries to replace the sullied *multiculturalism* is so profound that 'interculturalism' becomes a way to proceed with the same goals, legal processes, and methods, but under a new name. And for still others, like Charles Taylor (2012), multiculturalism and interculturalism may appear similar (if not the same) in terms of policy, but the narrative accompanying the policy is what is of utmost importance, and is the more meaningful distinction between the two. When a cultural policy is explained or accompanied by a narrative that places a society's majority culture as the starting point for mutual and equal dialogue and eventual cultural evolution, he argues, then no one will feel their culture is being displaced, replaced, ignored, or denied. In this scenario, all have a stake in the future directions the majority culture takes, which requires dialogue, participation, and interaction — in other words, "true" integration. Taylor contrasts this narrative to the one provided by multiculturalism policies in Canada, which has been to remove the majority culture and to not replace it with anything else — all cultural identities exist together and none is given more ground than another, legally. Taylor argues that this does not, theoretically, require integration, Taylor argues, although, as demonstrated in the following chapters, it also does not foreclose it (Taylor 2012).

These debates and alternatives form the basis for Chapter 2, in which I outline the historical and political contexts for Swedish and Canadian multiculturalism and immigration.

Multiculturalism and Anthropology

While migration studies scholars, urban studies scholars, political philosophers, and sociologists have produced a large literature on multiculturalism (discussed below and in-depth in Chapter 1), both as political ideology and as a demographic reality, the need remains for assessments of the impact of multiculturalism – in both forms – on the cultural lives of migrants and diaspora groups (Levitt 2012; Bloemraad 2006). Ethnographic data and the study of cultural production are largely missing from sociologists' studies of migration, a notion confirmed by Peggy Levitt's 2012 critique of the field. American anthropologists were particularly attentive to multiculturalism in the 1990s and, although ethnographic methods would seem to offer a particularly fruitful way forward, critical evaluations of multiculturalism policies and its impacts on migrants have largely been missing from American cultural anthropologists' studies of migration in the last decade. Anthropologists such as Vertovec and his colleagues in Europe have been prolific in their evaluations of multiculturalism and other forms of "diversity management," yet there has been a surprising quiet among American anthropologists in this area. Indeed, this may be viewed as the second such disciplinary silence, the first having been highlighted by Terence Turner. Some have credited the alarm of his 1993 *American Anthropologist* article demanding an engagement with multiculturalism for the burst of research on it in American anthropology in the decade that followed.

Turner's intervention was rooted in the observation that a key source of the silence between anthropologists and multiculturalist activists (primarily in education in the U.S.) was due to how each used the term *culture* – and their motivations for doing so. He argued that anthropologists could contribute to "multiculturalist thinking and practice" both constructively and critically if there was a general recognition that multiculturalism was primarily "a movement

for change":

> Culture for multiculturalists, then, refers primarily to collective social identities engaged in struggles for social equality. For multiculturalism, culture is thus not an end in itself (whether as an object of theoretical research or teaching), but a means to an end, and not all aspects of culture as conceived by anthropologists are relevant to the achievement of that end. (Turner 1993: 412)

Turner described two forms of multiculturalism popular at the time: *critical multiculturalism* – defined as an effort to "use cultural diversity as a basis for challenging, revising, and relativizing basic notions and principles common to dominant and minority cultures alike, so as to construct a more vital, open, and democratic common culture" (Turner 1993: 413) – and *difference multiculturalism*, or "the multiculturalism of the cultural nationalists and fetishists of difference, for whom culture reduces to a tag for ethnic identity and a license for political and intellectual separatism" (Turner 1993: 414). According to Turner, there were several problems with difference multiculturalism – for example, that it risked essentializing culture as the property of those with particular ethnic identities and perpetuating identity politics, and that its proponents viewed cultural differences as the *source* of political and social problems, such that "equal representation in a multicultural educational program" could serve as "a cultural 'solution' to social and political inequities" (Turner 1993: 411-412). The direction of this critique was echoed in recent scholarly debates, particularly those sparked by neo-Orientalism following the 9/11 attacks in the U.S. and the ensuing cultural justifications levied for a political and economic war in the Middle East (Abu Lughod 2002, 2014). Lila Abu Lughod's work is a particularly effective example of the ways in which American anthropologists can engage with publics surrounding issues of culture, culturalism, and contemporary social and political issues – answering another element of Turner's call: to speak directly to the issues and criticisms of critical multiculturalism, much like current critiques of anthropology's relative absence in

popular and public discourses on an array of contemporary social and political concerns (1993).

The analytical rigor of "over-defined" terms like *multiculturalism* and *diaspora* (I would also add *cosmopolitanism*) has been extensively called into question and even accused of being 'zombie terms' (Meer and Modood 2014). Borrowing from Ulrich Beck, sociologists Nasar Meer and Tariq Modood define *zombie categories* as "those concepts that continue to do intellectual work even though the lived reality to which they refer, allegedly, no longer exist" (Meer and Modood 2014: 2). In Beck's words, "[z]ombie categories are 'living dead' categories which govern our thinking but are not really able to capture the contemporary milieu" (Beck 2001: 262). But Meer and Modood offer similar arguments about *multiculturalism* as those by Dufoix in regards to *diaspora* – that the utility of the category is in its practice: "…multiculturalism continues to have traction and purchase in language and politics" (Meer and Modood 2014: 2); so if it is not dead then it also cannot be a "living dead" zombie category: "while the appeal of 'multiculturalism' as a term is clearly declining, the category in Britain that multiculturalism denotes has in some respects been made more robust in being deepened and expanded, even though they have been joined and challenged by others." (Meer and Modood 2014: 2)

After decades of cultural critiques by anthropologists and claims by politicians as to its failure and subsequent "retreat," *multiculturalism* – as cultural policy and political ideology – still exerts significant power on the lives of individuals, often through their interactions with institutions and intermediaries implementing state and supra-state cultural policy. The continued use of these concepts by individuals, institutions and community organizations, particularly in discourse among immigrants and their descendants, suggests that they warrant continued social scientific attention. As Jonathan Friedman asked in 2002 regarding cultural critiques: "If people are doing this thing called bounding and closure and essentialism, should this not be recognized

as a real social phenomenon rather than shunned as a terrible mistake?" (Friedman 2002: 30, cited in Grillo 2003: 166) Or, as anthropologist Christoph Brumann suggested in 1999: "like it or not, it appears that people — and not only those with power — want bounded culture, and they often want it in precisely the bounded, reified, essentialized, and timeless fashion that most of us now reject" (Brumann 1999: S11, quoted in Grillo 2003: 167).[3] Grillo (2003) critiques Friedman's question as ahistorical, but doesn't disagree that we should trace the source of these beliefs — he argues that, "ethnography is needed to explain how these processes are refracted through national and local contexts and why a particular politics of culture emerges in specific situations" (Grillo 2003: 168).

Gerd Baumann's 1996 study of the notion of communities and their relationship to culture in London's Southall suburb offers a methodological model to anthropologists seeking to understand these beliefs. Rather than take for granted the anthropological understandings of culture and community, Baumann recognized a dominant and popular set of discourses around culture that his ethnographic subjects used in different settings. When they reproduced dominant discourses that relied on reifications of culture, like essentialism or culturalism, they may have done so as a way to, "explain themselves and legitimate their claims" using the hegemonic language required by state resource flows (1996: 192). Thus, far from erasing difference, these liberal state discourses encouraged minorities to adopt certain identities through particular forms of language as strategies for staking claims on the state. As Eriksen summarized: "the classificatory system characteristic of the modern, liberal state encourages the social construction of ostensibly stable, reified, ethnic or religious communities" (2010 [1994]: 184).

[3] A similar observation was offered by Parkin in 1996: "It is ironic that, while anthropologists have wished to remove the essentialism and exaggerated mutual boundedness implied by such terms as tribe and culture, the members and bearers of these same groups and concepts have themselves emphasized such qualities as being at the basis of their own beliefs and practices" (Parkin 1996: xxvii; cited in Guss 2000).

Yet, just as anthropologists agree that culture is neither fixed nor static, the ways in which people (immigrant and non-) engage with these discourses are both contextual and shifting. Susanne Wessendorf's 2008 study of culturalist discourses among Swiss immigrants found that "the content and the arenas of contestation in such culturalist discourses change over time," and that "culturalism can be instrumental in both anti-immigrant mobilisations and in the politics of recognition among migrants themselves" (188). Studying how and why various individuals or groups invoke culturalist discourses, attitudes, and practices require these kinds of ethnographic attention.

Thus, rather than take aim at politicians' assertions of multiculturalism's failure or retreat, or denying interlocutors' choices to self-identify as members of a diaspora with culturalist understandings, in this study I offer an ethnographic approach highlighting cases in which these concepts – of both culturalism and multiculturalism – do social work in the lives of Iranians in diaspora, and thus warrant anthropological attention.

Studying the Iranian Diaspora

As one of the earliest and most influential scholars of the Iranian diaspora, Hamid Naficy's work on exile cultural production remains fundamental to the study of the Iranian diaspora. In his earliest book, *The Making of Exile Cultures* (1993), Naficy outlined his understanding of Iranians outside of Iran, particularly in Los Angeles, as *exiles*, which he defined as: "individuals or groups who voluntarily or involuntarily have relocated outside their original habitus…[and] refuse to become totally assimilated into the host society…[but] do not return to their homeland, while they continue to keep aflame a burning desire for return" (1993: 16-17). His 2001 book, *An Accented Cinema,* revised this classification of exile over diasporic identifications, possibly reflecting the changes in Iranian communities and their self-

identification as part of a diaspora in the intervening years. Naficy's distinction between diaspora and exile in 2001 was articulated with regard to cultural production, particularly film: like the postmodernist diaspora theorists cited above suggested, Naficy also argues that, unlike exiles' cultural production, diaspora cultural production is based less on binaries of here/there and more on multiplicity and what Dufoix described as *interpolarity* (Naficy 2001: 14).

Early research on 20th century Iranian immigration often focused on enclave-oriented samples marking what Naficy described as two waves of migration: 1950-1977 and 1979-1986. These early studies viewed Iranian immigrants as a "transnational elite" with "an unusually high level of income, education, self-employment, and professional skills," revealing the class-defined and geographically and temporally limited nature of scholarship about the Iranian diaspora at the time (Naficy 1993: 27-28; 1999: 6; e.g., Bozorgmehr and Sabagh 1988). In 2012, French sociologist Nader Vahabi published *Atlas de la diaspora iranienne* (Atlas of the Iranian Diaspora), a publication that aimed to study the global migratory trends of Iranians after 1979, including not only the mass movements to Europe and North America, but also the lesser-studied but significant migrations to Iran's neighboring states and the Gulf region, as well as newer popular destinations such as Malaysia. While groundbreaking in its scope and global orientation, Vahabi's more European-focused field study largely ignores the early (pre-revolution) migration of students and others included in Naficy's, Bozorgmehr's, and others' research. Instead, Vahabi focuses primarily on post-Revolution refugees, as his data is drawn largely from UNHCR and other organizations handling asylum applications.

Nevertheless, based on his research, Vahabi theorized four waves of Iranian migration: 1979-1987; 1988-1998; 1999-2009; and 2009 - present. He suggests that 1988 marked the apogee of the first wave, with 47,000 Iranian asylum requests in that year alone (Vahabi 2012:

54). The following ten years (1988-1998) marks his second wave, notable in the relative decline in number of refugees and the diversification of causes of Iranian migration, including social, intellectual and cultural motivations. Vahabi also notes a shift from the often dangerous and clandestine nature of first wave migrations to more open and institutionalized forms in the second wave, made possible by the diaspora networks established by the first wave (55).

Vahabi's third wave (1999-2009) begins with the July 1999 student protests and subsequent repression at the University of Tehran that he argues marked the end of the hopes instilled by Khatami's reformist period. He argues that the political situation in Bosnia in the 1990s also enabled Iranians to travel without visas to the borders of the European Union, making Belgium a new "antechamber" for Iranian migrants looking to reach the United Kingdom, Sweden, or Canada. Indeed, according to Vahabi's field research in Belgium, this third wave was largely composed of economic migration by enterprising young, unmarried men, traveling alone with plans to use Belgium as a first stop en route to their intended destinations in Europe and North America (56). The frustration of those plans for various reasons led to a number of Iranians choosing to establish themselves in Belgium.

Finally, the fourth wave described by Vahabi (2009 – present) has been spurred in large part by the political activism and repression that occurred following the June 2009 elections in Iran. He describes Iranian migrants leaving Iran post-2009 as young people who were active in the protest movement (including journalists, bloggers, photographers, radio and Iranian television personnel, filmmakers, musicians and painters) but also those who have been frustrated by the high rates of unemployment facing Iranians under the age of 29 (Vahabi 2012: 56). These four waves of migration demonstrate the diverse motivations for migration over time,

and serve as a reminder that, although Iranian migration has experienced greater or lesser degrees, migration itself has remained a persistent feature for Iranians since the 1970s.

In addition to quantitative studies and research based on enclave-based samples, ethnographic studies that have been published have focused on local pockets of diaspora groups and on a variety of important migration issues, like the psychological and health effects of migration on the diaspora population, the roles of religion, sex, and gender in diaspora, and the identity negotiations of the second generation (e.g., Adelkhah 2005; Alinejad 2013; Farahani 2010; Gholami 2014; Ghorashi 2003; Graham and Khosravi 1997; Kelly 2011, 2015; Khosravi 1999, 2009; Lotfalian 2009; Maghbouleh 2010, 2013; McAuliffe 2007, 2008; Mobasher 2013; Sadeghi 2014; Spellman 2004). With few exceptions (e.g., Ghorashi, McAuliffe, Sadeghi), multi-sited field research in the Iranian diaspora remains rare.

Beyond anthropology, studies of cultural production in the Iranian diaspora have focused most attention upon Iranian diasporic literature (e.g., Elahi 2006; Fotouhi 2015; Karim 2009, 2014; Karim and Rahimieh 2008; Motlagh 2008, 2011; Nasrabadi 2011; Ostby 2013; Rahimieh 1993; Wagenknecht 2015), the Iranian blogosphere and internet production (e.g., Alexanian 2006; Alinejad 2011, 2013; Doostdar 2004; Ghorashi & Boersma 2009; Van den Bos 2006), and on transnational networks of Iranian music production (e.g., Hemmasi 2010; Kalbasi-Ashtari 2010; Breyley 2008, 2014). Ethnographic studies of Iranian diasporic cultural performance, however, have been relatively few.[4] As such, Naficy's studies on Iranian diaspora television, film, and culture (e.g., 1993, 1999, 2012) continue to represent the foundational literature in the study of the Iranian diaspora with regards to cultural production and performance.

[4] My own work on cultural identity performance at the New York Persian Day Parade is perhaps an exception (Malek 2011).

Cultural Production as a Field in Diaspora

Pierre Bourdieu wrote extensively about the field of cultural production, which he described as laying within the field of power, itself comprised of political and economic dimensions. It is defined as a field wherein agents struggle for positions relationally, seeking "the monopoly of the power to say with authority who are authorized to call themselves [producers]" (1993: 42). Bourdieu's concept of the *field* itself has been defined as an independent structured space "with its own laws of functioning and its own relations of force" that is "relatively autonomous but structurally homologous" with other fields (Johnson 1993: 6). Bourdieu argues fields are arranged hierarchically in social formations such that each field's structure is organized by the relational positions social agents occupy within it. Thus, a change in any position results in a change in the structure (Johnson 1993: 6). Within the realm of cultural production, Bourdieu includes literary, artistic, religious, and scientific fields of production, though he wrote most extensively about the literary and artistic fields. Within the latter, agents struggle for the "monopoly of legitimate discourse about the work of art, and consequently in the production of the value of the work of art" (Bourdieu 1993: 36).

Randal Johnson suggests Bourdieu's field of cultural production marks a "radical contextualization" requiring consideration of a given cultural product in relation to its "space of possibles" as well as to the producers of it and their "individual and class habitus " (1993: 9). This, combined with analysis of the structure of the field itself ("which includes the positions occupied by producers as well as those occupied by all the instances of consecration and legitimation which make cultural products what they are") should be viewed in relation to the field of power in which it is located (Johnson 1993: 9). In the field of literary production, for example, this would include analyses of the text itself in relation to other texts, of the author and

his/her trajectory, habitus, and position in the field, and of the structure of the positions occupied by "the public, publishers, critics, galleries, academies and so forth," all in relation to the field of power (Johnson 1993: 9).

In studying cultural production, Bourdieu expanded on his field model because he objected to both internal and external modes of analysis as reductionist. In the case of the former, only formal properties (themselves "socially and historically constituted") of a given product are considered to the complete exclusion of "the complex network of social relations that makes the very existence of the [product] possible" (Johnson 1993: 10). In the case of the latter, the "mechanistic correlations" that are drawn between the "writer's objective position in society and the type of writing he or she will produce" are considered to the exclusion of any agency on the part of the producer (Johnson 1993: 10). Thus, Bourdieu argued that cultural products must be "reinserted in the system of social relations which sustains them" in order to also take into account their production, circulation, and consumption. Concurrently, such studies must also ensure that agents are not reduced to their class positions or seen to 'reflect' that position in a "direct connection between art and social structure" (Johnson 1993: 14).

Thus, Bourdieu's model, as articulated in *The Field of Cultural Production,* offers a method that avoids internal and external analyses by incorporating what Johnson has summarized as three hierarchical levels of social reality: "the position of the field of cultural production within the field of power," the structure of the field of cultural production itself (literary, artistic, etc.), and "the genesis of the producers' habitus" (1993: 14). In this way, through his notion of the field, Bourdieu's model offers anthropologists an alternative theoretical strategy to understanding cultural production, one that "has to take into account everything which helps to constitute the work as such" (Bourdieu 1993: 36). This strategy includes those

individuals, groups, and institutions that have worked to produce the meaning and value of the product, including its symbolic production, or the "belief in the value of the work," as well as "the whole set of agents whose combined efforts produce consumers capable of knowing and recognizing the work of art as such" (1993: 37; see also Cattelino 2004, 2008).

Important particularly for anthropologists, Bourdieu warns against universalizing particular cases, arguing that different periods and locations will have different fields, the structures of which are relationally dependent upon the positions within them. Thus, methodologically speaking, researchers must attend to both the historical trajectories and social conditions of the particular social agents and positions they are studying, as well as the *historical* and social formation of the given field itself. Bourdieu's study of the 19th century French literary field offers an example of such a project, though he cautions that its details should not be universalized.

Finally, after outlining the lofty requirements of a full adherence to his proposed method, Bourdieu preemptively forestalls critiques of its practical application: "It would be quite unjust and futile to reject this demand for complete reconstitution on the ground (which is undeniable) that it is difficult to perform in practice and in some cases impossible" (Bourdieu 1993: 65). Indeed, it is difficult to conceive of the logistical, methodological, and otherwise practical measures needed to undertake such a project, let alone to complete it. Several ethnographies have attempted to do so, and while they have produced excellent studies, have suffered this "undeniable" limitation to varying degrees (e.g., Dornfeld 1998; Myers 2005; Winegar 2006). Yet, despite this and other limitations of Bourdieu's model, its warnings against structuralist, formalist and other reductionist methods of analysis are well taken, and its methodological insistence upon incorporating historical and social conditions of multiple levels of field,

structure, practice, and agents in analyses of cultural production offer an important intervention into anthropological practice. While taking seriously the limitations and cautions Bourdieu himself advised, through incorporation of multiple producers, audiences, state agents, and community actors, in this study I mobilize Bourdieu's methods to the extent feasible in order to account for the competing actors within the broad field of Iranian diasporic cultural production.

Festivals as Cultural Performance & Cultural Production

Although he did not cite Bourdieu, David Guss's 2000 ethnography of festivals in Venezuela was also attentive to these competing actors in the production of indigenous festivals, as he witnessed corporate, governmental, and political parties using these events for their own agendas while local forms struggled to emerge in a dialogical process "full of ambiguity and contradiction" (7). Thus, Guss observed, "Meaning…was not something that simply resided in an ideal model (or 'text') waiting to be released. It was something that was created with each performance, and to understand it meant comprehending the entire context in which it was produced" (7).

Across the various angles of critiques of multiculturalism, there is one feature attributed to these policies that is consistently maligned by virtually all critics: the ethnic festival. Vilified as shallow, pandering, and 'feelgood' in their celebrations of what has been called the 3Ss ("saris, samosas and steel drums" [Alibhai-Brown 2000, quoted in Kymlicka 2012a: 35]) or the 4Fs (food, fashion, festivals, and folklore [Banks 2002, quoted in Diaz-Greenberg and Nevin 2003]), festivals showcasing ethnic diversity in multicultural states are perhaps the one thing all critics love to hate. Critics are quick to dismiss the common outcomes usually offered in support of festivals, such as cultural performance as demonstration of group presence (Guss 2000), particularly in diaspora; identity-based bonding through inversion (Turner 2008 [1969]) and

mobilization of symbolic ethnicity (Gans 1979); or preservation of cultural identity and practices across generations (Burman 2010). As "feel-good" as these outcomes may be, are they shallow? What do they offer state goals of integration such that taxpayers should foot the bill?

In his book, Guss argued that festivals often become "symbols for a nation at large, a purpose for which they were never intended," and in order to do so, they must present a "superabundance of symbols and meanings," and "be shrunk as much as possible to a handful of quickly and easily understood ideas. At its most reduced, a festival is transformed into an icon of 'national tradition', a borrowed image of difference made to stand for the nation as a whole" (13). Although in this statement Guss was describing state appropriation of local festive traditions, "uprooted from the specifics of its local environment," his description is particularly relevant for diasporic communities and the ethnic and cultural representations they produce for public mainstream audiences, whether at the behest of state multicultural policies or independently as community celebrations, where declarations of unity or pride are as much stated goals as is the maintenance of tradition.

In the Iranian diaspora, attempts at maintenance of tradition and heritage are abundant, but there is a growing trend to protect tradition through revitalizing ancient Iranian traditions in diaspora – including traditions that have not been celebrated *en masse* in Iran for centuries. Likely related to a desire to distance the diaspora from the Islamic Republic while promoting pride in Iranian heritage, this tendency perhaps is best illustrated in the now common trend of producing festivals based on a revival of ancient Zoroastrian holidays and traditions. Prime examples include the celebrations of *Mehregan*, *Tirgan*, and *Sepandarmazgan*, three holidays that have taken on new significance and celebratory forms in diaspora.

In southern California, Washington, D.C., Toronto, Stockholm, and points in between, the festival form has been applied to Zoroastrian celebrations in ways that bear little to no resemblance to the rituals or religious significance of their originaries. Where Mehregan was traditionally an autumn harvest festival, it has been celebrated in the United States as a folk festival featuring didactic representations of regional traditions alongside concerts. Where Tirgan was traditionally a summer rain festival, in Toronto, this celebration's summer date became the impetus for its use as a large, three-day festival of Iranian art and culture, discussed in depth in Chapter 3. Where Sepandarmazgan was a Zoroastrian feast honoring love and loyalty, it has been celebrated in diaspora as a parade float in New York City, and through Valentine's Day parties in places like Stockholm University and Cornell University. While Mehregan is now celebrated in a number of diaspora cities, Tirgan and Sepandarmazgan are only beginning to gain traction in multiple sites; apart from Toronto, Tirgan has been celebrated in cities like Stockholm, London, and Brisbane.[5]

Figure 4. A public Facebook post celebrates Sepandarmazgan with images from the 2014 New York Persian Day Parade, captioned with a description of the festival, as it is likely unfamiliar to most Iranians in diaspora.

[5] Unlike Mehregan or Tirgan, Sepandarmazgan was revived in Iran and in diaspora simultaneously, most frequently (though not always) by young first-generation immigrants.

These events uniformly draw on pre-Islamic traditions that promote Iranian culture and history in selective ways, a process that Guss has described as canonizing tradition:

> Choices are guided, therefore, by the desire of certain dominant groups to impose specific versions of history and the past. The success of this hegemonic process is evidenced by the tenacity with which local groups have incorporated this authenticating discourse into their own festive vocabularies. Part of this is an economic strategy, as such valorization often leads to the procurement of government support and the attraction of tourists. (Guss 2000: 15)

This "procurement of government support," plays a prominent role in the case of Tirgan, where, one could argue, this procurement was itself the impetus for revival of the holiday in the first place (see Chapter 4).

Another case to consider is that of *Shab-i Yalda*, often referred to as *Chelleh* in Iran, which is a celebration of the winter solstice. Yalda is celebrated widely in Iran, but as an occasion to gather family and friends for poetry recitations, consume foods like pomegranate and watermelon, and share warm company during the longest night of the year. In diaspora, particularly in the last five years, Shab-i Yalda has become occasion for large parties and concerts in multiple cities of the diaspora and even of new greetings shared on social media (e.g. "*Yaldā mubārak*" is not a term used by Iranians in Iran but was shared widely by diasporic Iranians on Facebook in 2014, likely as an attempt by second generation Iranians to translate "Happy Yalda").

It is no coincidence that each of these diasporic holidays – Mehregan, Sepandarmazgan, Shab-i Yalda – are celebrated close to or directly in concert with Euro-American holiday traditions. Mehregan organizers in southern California proudly described the holiday as "Persian Thanksgiving," promoters of Sepandarmazgan in Sweden have called that holiday the Iranian Valentine's Day, families in cities without an Iranian market often send Nowruz cards featuring Easter bunnies, and Iranians in New York and elsewhere offer Shab-i Yalda as Iran's answer to

the Judeo-Christian holiday season.[6] Connecting these Iranian traditions to Euro-American ones enables diasporic Iranians to come together – as Iranians – in their local communities during festive times, but also to participate in the larger multicultural societies in which they now reside. By way of example, the organizers of the Tirgan Iranian Festival in Toronto selected Tirgan as the theme of their summer festival precisely for its summer date, to coincide with the popular Toronto summer festival season, where cultural communities of all stripes celebrate in the streets and parks of the city. But rather than focus on the traditions of the rain festival and/or Zoroastrian history and culture when considering themes of the festival, the Tirgan organizers strategically chose to highlight the classic story of *Arash-i Kamāngīr* for its connections to diversity, and selected "Exploring Diversity" as the festival's 2008 theme. This theme of diversity is closely tied to Toronto's own identity as a multicultural city, and the proclamations of pride in its diversity, to which the Iranian organizers looked to contribute.

Indeed, each of these holidays and celebrations incorporate "invented traditions" (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) and politically motivated shifts in traditions (e.g. *Hājī Fīrūz*, a jester-like troubadour who ushers in the Iranian New Year with song and dance has appeared without his traditional blackface in Stockholm and New York, and was performed by women in Orange County in 2013, an otherwise uncommon occurrence) as well as consciously syncretic forms (such as the "Yalda tree," which some Iranian Americans have started to call their Christmas trees in jest, combining Shab-i Yalda with popular Christmas traditions).[7] As happens

[6] This pairing of Shab-i Yalda and the Euro-American winter holidays was made clear in the *New York Times Magazine* in December 2014, when it ran a story called, "Diverse Holiday Feasts from Five New York Families." The lush pictorial with recipes highlighted the cuisines of the winter holidays, in which Shab-i Yalda was featured alongside a southern-U.S. Christmas Dinner, Jewish-Japanese Christmas, The Feast of Our Lady Guadalupe, and St. Lucia's Day. The dish featured was fesenjan, described (somewhat excessively) as "the Yalda classic" (New York Times Magazine 2014).

[7] A small minority claim the origins of the Christmas tree – and Christmas itself – is in fact Zoroastrian, making it more accurately called a Yalda tree. These individuals offer images taken at Persepolis featuring a relief of a tree to back their claim.

with other immigrant groups in the United States, Iranian-American Thanksgiving tables often offer roasted turkey with sides of Iranian dishes like *qurmih sabzī* and *lūbiā pulaw*. This mixing of cultural traditions common among immigrant groups is particularly significant in the Iranian case, in that this mixing often involves public celebrations of Iranian holidays that either are not celebrated "back home," or have not been celebrated publicly for generations. They are thoroughly diasporic, with intentions and affordances that are closely tied to their diasporic cities and global geographies.[8]

Another purpose of these events is the pursuit of unity described by Ariannejad discussed in the Introduction. One method of demonstrating this united "Iranian" culture has been through the display and celebration of Iran's ethnic diversity through festivals. The inclusion of Afghan, Tajik and Kurdish minorities, for example, in festival and parade settings can be read in several ways. For one, it is presented as a celebration of the diversity of the Iranian nation, much like efforts by both the Pahlavi and IRI regimes to demonstrate the unity of an Iranian nation-state through claims to common heritage and language (while also prohibiting the use of local linguistic varieties and certain forms of dress). Another way of reading the celebration of ethnic minorities is as an extension of the glorification of pre-Islamic Iranian history in the face of the Islamic Republic – in other words, to unify through shared presence in empire more than through some recognition of some common cultural specificity. In these cases, showing that Afghan Dari and Iranian Farsi and Tajiki linguistic varieties all have roots in the Persian empire, for example, is not presented as a quirk of history or even as the result of imperial power but rather as evidence of a primordial connection deserving of revival and celebration.

[8] Hamid Naficy offers an important observation about the locations of diasporic re-emergence of Iranian traditions in diaspora communities in the Global North. Because these holidays are aligned with seasonal conditions in this hemisphere, "Iranian diaspora populations in the global south might find that their festivals are out of synch with those of their host societies, say, in South America." Personal communication with author, March 17, 2015.

Distinct from Renato Rosaldo's *imperialist nostalgia*, Hamid Naficy has referred to tendencies like those described here as *imperial nostalgia*: "As the Islamic Republic attempted to forge a homogenous Shiite political nation, cultural producers, some of whom opposed the regime, attempted to revive an imagined multicultural multiethnic, multilingual, and multinational nation patterned after the ancient transnational Persian Empire" (2012: 233). The use of replicas of ancient monuments as photo-ops at the Mehregan Festival in Orange County (as seen in Figure 6) and the immense popularity of the U.S. tour of the Cyrus Cylinder in 2013 (reportedly the best-attended exhibit in the history of the Getty Villa in Los Angeles), are testament to the enduring attraction of this imperial nostalgia in certain parts of the diaspora.

Figure 5. A woman poses for a photo-op in front of a larger-than-life replica of the Cyrus Cylinder at the 2011 Mehregan Festival of Autumn in Orange County, California. Photo (c) Amy Malek.

Figure 6. A bumper sticker distributed by Farhang Foundation promotes the 2013 U.S. tour of the Cyrus Cylinder arriving at the Getty Villa. The sticker draws together the popular belief that the Cylinder is a symbol of human rights and the iconic "Got Milk?" advertising campaign.

In more recent events, in place of a perceived unity based on ancient Persian history, human rights have been offered as the source of unity in diaspora: as the argument goes, because the Islamic Republic treats all of us who have left – often due to ethnic, religious, political, or linguistic difference – as "*khas u khāshāk*" (riff-raff, *lit*. trash)[9] then let our common enemy unite us and let us strengthen those cultural bridges that this government has worked to destroy through the promotion of human rights.

Concluding Remarks

The study of the Iranian diaspora has largely focused on demographic studies of enclave samples, with emphases on entrepreneurial activities, literary production, identity, and gender and sexuality. In this dissertation, I offer a multi-sited approach that includes multiple diasporic cities and an emphasis on cultural production. The study of cultural production as a field, as suggested by Bourdieu, offers a particularly useful method for this study, and studying cultural production as a field *in diaspora* requires this multi-sited approach. My focus on practice as it

[9] "*Khas u khāshāk*" was the phrase used by Ahmadinejad in 2009 to describe post-election protestors who demanded to know, "Where is my vote?"

relates to Iranian diasporic belonging is integral to anthropological theorizations of cultural and diasporic citizenship, processes that were articulated by my interlocutors as key goals in their productions of culture in diaspora, particularly through the festival genre. This attention to practice is primary to the study of diaspora, as it is itself treated as a category of practice. Despite common criticisms of multiculturalism through critiques of festivals, in the chapters that follow, I offer ethnographic accounts that feature community-level challenges to the assumptions of culturalism and thus provide a view of the ways in which Iranians in diaspora have responded to multicultural policy through debates surrounding arts and culture that they view as rehearsals of democratic processes.

CHAPTER 2

Diversity Debated: Multiculturalism, Immigration, and Cultural Policy in Sweden and Canada

> Ontario is a province rooted in diversity. We speak many languages, embrace every culture and have links to every part of the world. And it is this wealth of global connections which gives us our character and our heart, and represents one of our greatest assets.
>
> – Kathleen Wynne, Premier of Ontario (2013)

In describing the breadth of meanings attributed to *multiculturalism*, Homi Bhabha has described the term as a portmanteau "for anything from minority discourse to postcolonial critique, from gay and lesbian studies to chicano/a fiction" (Bhabha 1998: 31). As described in the previous chapter, the polysemic *multiculturalism* reflects a wide set of related concepts, including the demographic reality of multiple cultural, religious, ethnic and/or national groups living in the same polity; an ideology based on liberal notions of equality and protection of cultural diversity in pluralistic societies; and a set of policies and political theories aimed at realizing this ideological position in the face of aforementioned demographic realities (Faist 2013: 24). David Miller suggests that, when used in the literature to describe an ideological position, *multiculturalism* generally refers "an ideology that attaches positive value to cultural diversity, calls for the equal recognition of different cultural groups, and calls upon the state to support such groups in various ways" (Miller 2006: 326-327).

It is perhaps not surprising that the study of multiculturalism (in all of its meanings) has created a particularly wide range of theorizations, with scholars making distinctions between "de facto multiculturalism" and "official multiculturalism" (Joppke and Morawska 2003), "critical multiculturalism" and "difference multiculturalism" (Grillo 2003), and "multiculturalism-from-above" (Borevi 2013) and "multiculturalism-from-below" (Werbner 2013). They have produced

studies of "everyday multiculturalism" (Wise and Velayutham 2009) and "banal multiculturalism" (Werbner 2013), as well as critiques of "boutique multiculturalism" (Fish 1997) or "neoliberal multiculturalism" (Hale 2005; Melamed 2011).

For the most part, these studies aim to understand migratory and settlement trends that emerged post-World War II as a result of post-colonial liberation, the spread of neoliberal economic practices and policies, and political and cultural revolutionary movements. As countries began to experience increasing flows of immigration and started to become demographically "multicultural," their governments enacted policies to manage cultural diversity that also have been referred to as multicultural. Yet beyond this common term, very little uniformity exists between states in their policy efforts to define minority rights and manage cultural diversity. The term means different things in different parts of the world, in different political circles and in different publications (Meer and Modood 2012:179).

One characteristic that does seem to repeat in multiple locations is the term's use in public discourses in ways that suggest the existence a unified set of policy directives ("a single 'doctrine'") where in fact only scattered and often-unrelated policies are in place (Vertovec and Wessendorf 2010: 6). The resulting cross-talk has contributed to the spread of critiques of multiculturalism in public media and political discourse that fail to make important distinctions between national, policy, demographic, and ideological contexts.

This is not to suggest that policies enacted under this wide multiculturalist banner have not earned any of the criticism leveled against it. Multiculturalism has been criticized from left and right, and as much by journalists, policy analysts, and politicians as by scholars. Among these critiques, attributions of blame have been leveled on multicultural policies for an array of social ills, including for failures in immigration policy. Left critics have asserted that

multiculturalism as enacted in many countries has focused on shallow celebrations of difference through cultural forms (food, dance, folklore, etc.) in order that politicians and citizens alike can 'feel good' about accepting difference (often problematically synonymized with *tolerance*) (e.g. Alibhai-Brown 2000). This celebratory focus, they argue, is "easy multiculturalism, multiculturalism light" (Stein 2007: 7) and fails to acknowledge real needs within immigrant communities or to implement policies that contribute to equal protections, representation, and assurances of the social inclusion of minority groups, leaving wide inequalities between minorities and the majority in terms of employment, housing, and socio-economic status (e.g. Bissoondath 1994). This has led some left critics to suspect official multiculturalism is nothing but "ticking boxes" or "lip service, a political strategy motivated by the neo-liberal agenda of 'selling diversity' and/or attracting votes from minorities" (Hale 2005; Winter 2011: 14, citing Abu-Laban and Gabriel 2002).

Critics from the right, on the other hand, insist that multiculturalism focuses on difference at the expense of national unity, such that majority needs are ignored (Goodhart 2004) while minority (usually immigrant) groups are encouraged to create "parallel lives" (Cantle 2001) and maintain separate communities in immigrant ghettos. First coined in The Cantle Report (2001) to describe the separation of "Asian" and "white" communities in the United Kingdom, "parallel lives" has been used to describe the separation of communities in social, cultural, educational, and other realms of public life. According to Cantle, "The separation of communities by ethnicity and/or faith meant that there was a lack of shared experiences, with little opportunity for the emergence of shared values" which led to "ignorance and fear of each other" (Cantle 2008: np). It is also similar to the German concept of *Parallelgesellshaften* (parallel societies), a common criticism of multiculturalism in that country (Vertovec and Wessendorf 2010: 8). These

parallel lives, the argument continues, leads immigrants to remain insular, resist adoption of mainstream linguistic and cultural norms, and continue to engage in practices deemed by critics to be illiberal (e.g. 'honor killings,' forced marriage, female circumcision, domestic abuse) in the name of minority rights and protection of cultural difference (Wikan 2002). In other words, these critics argue that multiculturalism ultimately fails to integrate or assimilate immigrants.[1]

Some critics on the right have argued that states should respond to cultural difference with what Nathan Glazer termed "benign neglect," such that the government "does not oppose the freedom of people to express their particular cultural attachments, but nor does it nurture such expression" (Glazer 1975:25, 1983:124; cited in Kymlicka 1995: 3). Connected to this claim is the common critique that universal human rights, including the principle of non-discrimination, sufficiently protect minorities, both from discrimination by the majority and from illiberal behavior or customs enacted against each other (Joppke 2003).[2]

Scholars have offered rejoinders to both the left and right critiques, particularly in the context of Europe, and these debates have been ongoing for over 20 years. While I am sympathetic to much of the left critique of multiculturalism, in this dissertation I focus on the 'feel good' critique and suggest that, through ethnographic attention, the role of festivals, food, fashion, and folklore goes well beyond self-satisfaction. In the following two chapters, I ethnographically examine the case of Iranians in Sweden and Canada and the production of the kinds of cultural forms critiqued by the left, asking whether they are in fact the shallow masks of

[1] Regarding the terms *assimilation* and *integration*, scholars have offered a range of definitions, with some using the latter to counter the negative associations with the former. While both terms are rooted in Emile Durkheim's notion of social integration, generally speaking, *integration* is the term favored in Europe, while *assimilation* (and recently, the rehabilitated new or neo-assimilation) tends to be favored in the United States. For a fuller discussion see: Brubaker (2001), Alba and Nee (2003).

[2] See Anne Phillips (2007) on the use of the "cultural defense" in criminal trials. Christian Joppke's critique of multicultural citizenship relies in part on the cultural defense; he argues that multiculturalism "denies justice to the immigrant women and children harmed by immigrant offenders" and that what he terms "multicultural criminal law" therefore "leaves unprotected the victims of immigrant crimes" (Joppke 2003: 254). The assumptions here, of who offenders are and who victims are, are most telling of Joppke's subject position.

underlying ills of which they have been accused.

But first, in this chapter, I present an overview of the multiculturalism debate as it relates to liberalism and citizenship, focusing on Canadian political philosopher Will Kymlicka's *Multicultural Citizenship* (1995), the alleged backlash to multiculturalism, and several critiques and responses to Kymlicka's theory relevant to this study. I then offer a discussion and comparison of the immigration histories and development of multicultural policies in Sweden and Canada. Both of these countries have been celebrated as multiculturalism success stories and, despite the presence of internal criticism, have maintained a public commitment to cultural diversity and the policies and ideology of multiculturalism despite other countries' experiences of "backlash" and "retreat" (Vertovec and Wessendorf 2010). How have internal politics, immigration policies, and history contributed to these countries' relative "success" with multiculturalism? Do the similar high scores earned by these countries on cross-national policy indices also reflect similar impacts of multiculturalism on immigrant communities? To answer this, I offer analysis of the Canadian and Swedish contexts, comparing the ways in which history and both domestic and foreign politics have been critical to the development of multicultural policies, showing how these contexts reveal differential impacts on immigrant communities.

Debating Multiculturalism

Liberal Democracies and Multicultural Citizenship

It is perhaps not coincidental that liberal democratic states were the first to enact multicultural policies. In the liberal view, individuals should have free choice in how to live their lives, but also access to new ideas about what constitutes a good life and the freedom to change course should they so choose (Kymlicka 1995: 80-82). It is this understanding of individual freedom of choice that scholars have suggested forms the positive value many liberals place on

cultural diversity. Justice, equality, and fairness are all part of this liberal conception and these are the abstract ideals upon which Will Kymlicka built his theory of multicultural citizenship.

In 1995, Kymlicka set out to theorize a liberal approach to minority rights for liberal democratic states. In response to critics who argued that liberalism and cultural diversity were in conflict, in *Multicultural Citizenship*, Kymlicka offered a comprehensive liberal approach to citizenship that not only viewed multiculturalism as part of the liberal project, but also advocated for the protection of minority rights in liberal democratic states within limitations that protected liberal values. In so doing, he argued fervently for supplementing basic human rights with "a theory of minority rights" that offers "certain group-differentiated rights or 'special status' for minority cultures." (1995: 5-6). To do so, he argued that "minority rights are limited by principles of individual liberty, democracy, and social justice" (6) but also that "minority rights can enlarge the freedom of individuals, because freedom is intimately linked with and dependent on culture" (75). It is Kymlicka's focus on culture that is of particular interest here.

Multiculturalism has been implemented differently in specific national contexts that more or less combine three areas of policy focus: cultural, economic, and political. In most cases, liberal democratic values of freedom and equality theoretically underpin these policies intended to guarantee equal recognition of all members within a given nation-state, including indigenous, sub-national (national minorities), or immigrant members. In practice, however, these attempts have taken many different forms, led to differing methods, and created a wide variation in results. To take just one example, the common liberal ideal of *equality* has served as the justification for distinctly different policy approaches to minority rights in different countries. In the United Kingdom and Canada, policies intended to guarantee equality have led to the extension of special rights for minorities, namely to be excluded from common law requirements

that conflict with religious or cultural values (e.g. in the United Kingdom, the exemption of Sikhs from motorcycle helmet laws that would require the removal of a religiously mandated headdress; or in Canada the permission granted to a Sikh high school student to carry the *kirpan*, a ceremonial dagger in his public school) (Borevi 2013). Meanwhile, in Sweden, equality has been the primary goal of policies that not only confirm the right to retain cultural practices (sometimes referred to as "special rights") but also to receive state funding in order to "maintain difference" in language, culture, and ethnic identity (Borevi 2013). In sharp contrast, while France never formally embraced multiculturalism (neither as an ideology nor in policy), equality was nevertheless used as the rationale for policies that totally disallow displays of religious and ethnic difference in public spheres (e.g. headscarves in public schools) (Laborde 2005, Bowen 2006).

These approaches reflect different political and philosophical commitments in each state. As noted above, the right-liberal argument against which Kymlicka argues claims that universal human rights like "freedom of speech, association, and conscience" sufficiently cover minority rights through equal protections to everyone regardless of group membership (e.g. Joppke 2003; Barry 2001). In such an understanding, minorities of any stripe are (always, already) protected against discrimination through individual freedom of expression and thus may do whatever they like, which includes maintaining heritage cultures, as long as those actions do not infringe upon others' universal rights, including those of the majority. Given these universal individual rights, in many post-war liberal societies, religion and ethnic identity were seen as group identities that individuals were free to enjoy in their private lives, but without any granting of special state support.

Kymlicka argues ardently against this idea of *benign neglect* (that the state should neither prevent nor encourage minority cultural expression). He argues that such a position is neither neutral nor benign, and cannot guarantee equal justice. To support this claim, he shows that governments are already implicated in cultural rights (what Kymlicka would also call "national")[3] through several "inescapable aspects of political life" that differentially impact minority and majority groups, for example "in the drawing of boundaries and distributing powers, or in decisions about the language of schooling, courts, and bureaucracies, or in the choice of public holidays" (1995: 194). Kymlicka argues that these decisions "give a profound advantage to the members of majority nations" and therefore if states ignore ("neglect") minority cultural practices they cannot then ensure that all are treated equally – a fundamental value in a democratic state – particularly when those decisions infringe on minorities' rights to participate in government (e.g. due to language) or to freely practice their religions publically (e.g. due to restrictions in public schools) (1995: 194).

As Kymlicka notes, one of the tools for accommodating cultural differences in liberal democracies is the protection of the civil and political rights of individuals (1995: 26). Thus, he argues for a kind of "differentiated citizenship" (Young 1989) in cases where "forms of group difference can only be accommodated if their members have certain group-specific rights" (26). He shows that individualist conceptualizations of universal human rights fail to acknowledge the necessity of group-differentiated rights, particularly as regards culture, and claims these minority rights must supplement fundamental human rights to achieve equal forms of justice:

[3] Kymlicka's use of *cultural* and *national* are interchangeable: "I am using 'a culture' as synonymous with 'a nation' or 'a people' — that is, an intergenerational community, more or less institutionally complete, occupying a given territory or homeland, sharing a distinct language and history. And a state is multicultural if its members either belong to different nations (a multination state), or have emigrated from different nations (a polyethnic state), and if this fact is an important aspect of personal identity and political life." (18)

> The right to free speech does not tell us what an appropriate language policy is; the right to vote does not tell us how political boundaries should be drawn, or how powers should be distributed between levels of government; the right to mobility does not tell us what an appropriate immigration and naturalization policy is. These questions have been left to the usual process of majoritarian decision-making within each state. The result, I will argue, has been to render cultural minorities vulnerable to significant injustice at the hands of the majority, and to exacerbate ethnocultural conflict. (Kymlicka 1995: 5)

Kymlicka relies on the connection of culture to freedom to articulate his theory of multicultural citizenship, and does this through a formulation of "societal cultures." He defines a societal culture as "a culture which provides its members with meaningful ways of life across the full range of human activities, including social, educational, religious, recreational, and economic life, encompassing both public and private spheres" (1995: 76).[4] Further, society cultures "tend to be territorially concentrated…based on a shared language," and are "typically associated with national groups" (75-6). His use of "societal" is intended to stress the inclusions of common institutions and practices – for example, schools, media, economy, government – such that societal cultures represent "a culture…embodied in social life" (76).

Since its original publication, scholars and critics have published widely on Kymlicka's approach to multicultural citizenship. The concept of societal cultures, in particular, has been criticized for its similarities to nation-states (e.g. the requirement of 'institutional completeness' and a 'one nation, one culture' view of nationalism) making it inappropriate for theorizing multinational or multiethnic forms of citizenship (Benhabib 1999: 53-6; Carens 2000: 66; Joppke 2003: 249). Joppke, in particular, is unconvinced of the possibilities of institutional completeness for many national minorities, "particularly the decimated and beaten ones," which would complicate the grounds for their special rights according to Kymlicka's theory (2003:

[4] Kymlicka's use of culture in this early text appears at odds with anthropological understandings, a point addressed later in the chapter.

249). Nevertheless, what Kymlicka offers is a starting point from which multiculturalism and the policies enacted in its name could be theorized within a liberal framework.

Because Kymlicka is interested both in national minorities (indigenous populations, Aboriginal groups) and polyethnic groups (immigrant minorities, diaspora populations), when describing societal cultures he is careful to distinguish between these groups and their relationships to the dominant societal culture in a given state. For example, he suggests that in the United States immigrants are expected to integrate by learning and speaking English in public life, becoming familiar with (some might say "fluent in") the dominant culture (itself polyethnic to a greater or lesser degree), attending public schools, and participating in public institutions. But because national minorities in the United States (e.g. Native American groups) had distinct societal cultures before their "incorporation" (i.e., through settler colonialism), they have sought to retain that distinction in the face of assimilation pressures and should be entitled to territorial autonomy and self-governance. Thus, for Kymlicka, integration forms a critical distinction between these two minority groups: civic integration is expected of polyethnic minorities (immigrants), but national minorities (legitimately) resist it, to varying degrees of success (1995: 79).

Yet, as Meer and Modood have argued, Kymlicka's distinction of two minority categories failed to account for post-colonial migration. In Britain, for example, those who migrated from former colonies were neither national minorities as Kymlicka defined them (e.g., they have no 'homeland' within Britain's current national boundaries) nor were they immigrants without any "historic claims upon Britain" (Meer and Modood 2012: 181). The case of African Americans has also been excluded from many multiculturalism theories, including Kymlicka's, because they too were considered neither national minorities nor migrants, but rather to be in a

"special situation."[5] These critiques, as well as the fact that many indigenous groups resist being lumped in with immigrants as though their claims were equivalent, has meant that "the dominant meaning of multiculturalism in politics relates to the claims of post-immigration groups" (Meer and Modood 2012: 181).

Indeed, years after the publication of *Multicultural Citizenship*, Kymlicka has argued that multicultural policies, often mischaracterized as merely celebratory, instead are reflective of a multi-pronged ideology that works towards integration in a diverse society through a combination of "cultural recognition, economic redistribution, and political participation" (Kymlicka 2012a: 8). Thomas Faist has argued that political, economic, and cultural life is each implicated in integration, and so multiculturalism should focus not only on cultural issues, but political and economic ones as well. He views the "core tenet" of multiculturalism as a way "to overcome social inequalities based on cultural markers (heterogeneities) by shaping cultural, civic, political and economic relations via public policies. In essence, multiculturalism emphasizes the protection of the rights of minority groups or immigrants as a means to increase their sense of recognition and belonging" (Faist 2013: 24-25). This "sense of recognition and belonging" is a key element of integration that is often overlooked; alongside the presumed responsibility of immigrants to learn and speak the majority/official language, and participate in civic and public life, in this view of multiculturalism, it is also the responsibility of states to recognize minority rights and protections.

[5] Ruud Koopmans also excludes "native blacks" in the United States in his cross-national studies of multicultural policy, arguing they are in a similar position to indigenous groups in that they "can make stronger normative claims for special rights and protection of their cultures than can immigrants, who have (mostly) voluntarily chosen to move from their ancestral homelands" (Koopmans 149).

Multiculturalism's Failures, States' Backlash?

According to Steven Vertovec and Susanne Wessendorf in their volume *The Multiculturalism Backlash* (2010), "the rise, ubiquity, simultaneity and convergence of arguments condemning multiculturalism have been striking" (1). While criticism of multicultural policies emerged in the 1980s and 1990s, the 2000s saw the development of fuller (and louder) criticisms from a wider and more diverse set of critics. Vertovec and Wessendorf offer a list of events in the first half of the decade that set the stage for backlash, including the 9/11 attacks, the 2004 French ban on Muslim veiling in schools, the 2004 Madrid bombings, the 2004 murder of Theo van Gogh, the 2005 London bombings, the 2005 Danish cartoon crisis, and 2005 Paris suburb rioting by migrant youth (Vertovec and Wessendorf 2010: 5-6). In each of these cases, multiculturalism was consistently put on the chopping block, and particularly in response to acts of terrorism or incidents highlighting Muslim difference.

In the early 2010s, critiques of multiculturalism became so loud that scholars declared a "backlash," where multiculturalism became a "poisoned term" in countries like Germany, France, the Netherlands, and Great Britain (Kymlicka 2012b). German Chancellor Angela Merkel's now-famous declaration of the failure of German *multikulti* in October 2010 (translated widely as "Multiculturalism has failed, and failed utterly" [Koopmans 2013: 148]) was met with praise and echoed. British Prime Minister David Cameron in a speech in February 2011 described the "doctrine of state multiculturalism" in the United Kingdom as a failure (despite Britain's lacking a unified set of state policies on multiculturalism [Vertovec and Wessendorf 2010]).[6] Soon after, French President Nicolas Sarkozy called multiculturalism in France a "failure" in a 2011 television interview (despite similarly lacking said doctrines at the state

[6] "Full transcript | David Cameron | Speech on radicalization and Islamic extremism | Munich | 5 February 2011," The New Statesman, February 5, 2011. http://www.newstatesman.com/blogs/the-staggers/2011/02/terrorism-islam-ideology

level).[7] Despite these declarations and scholars' claims of governments' "wholesale retreats" from official multiculturalism policies in Europe (Joppke 2004),[8] scholars like Kymlicka, Meer and Modood, Vertovec and Wessendorf, and Taylor have argued that, despite whatever the motives of these politicians, actual shifts in policy were minimal if not altogether absent. Thus Kymlicka has argued that the public backlash and claims of failure of multiculturalism have been largely rhetorical: "the retreat may indeed be more a matter of talk than of actual policies" and in the current situation have more to do with avoidance of "the m-word" in favor of terms like "diversity, pluralism, intercultural dialogue, or community cohesion" (2012a: 14). Furthermore, despite this alleged backlash, multiculturalism remains a core national policy in several countries, but perhaps most uniformly in Sweden, Canada, and Australia.

Pnina Werbner describes this troubled relationship with the "m-word" through a particularly useful account of the term as positioned, performative, and rooted in discourse:

> Multiculturalism is…always positioned, invoked in defence of rights (cultural, human) or in defence of communal solidarity, including that of the nation-state. It is a discourse characterised by constant seepage across academia, the media, politicians and ethnic-cum-religious public actors on whether multiculturalism is 'good' or 'bad', whether it has created 'bridges' (more solidarity) or 'failed' (and is thus divisive). Multiculturalism is in this sense often a performative utterance, played out in front of an audience hostile to immigrants, Islam or the West, or alternatively, 'liberal' or 'cosmopolitan', enjoying and embracing diversity. (2012: 197)

Indeed, as leading members of conservative parties in their respective nations, Merkel, Cameron, and Sarkozy won political points for their public disavowals of multiculturalism that met with support from their parties and allies (alongside pointed criticism from minority community

[7] "Sarkozy Declares Multiculturalism a Failure," *France24*, February 11, 2011. http://www.france24.com/en/20110210-multiculturalism-failed-immigration-sarkozy-live-broadcast-tf1-france-public-questions/.

[8] One could effectively argue this retreat has occurred in both rhetoric and policy in the Netherlands, but policy changes elsewhere have made suggestions of retreat almost entirely rhetorical in nature (Kymlicka 2014, 2012a; Kymlicka and Banting 2006).

leaders). So, if multiculturalism is rhetorically out, what have politicians, policy makers, and scholars offered in its place?

A Response: Interculturalism as the Not-Multiculturalism?

In response to this public and often performative debate described by Werbner, *interculturalism* has been raised as an alternative to multiculturalism. This concept has served simultaneously as a source of hope for some policy makers and as a source of contention among academics. Perhaps as ill-defined as its predecessor, interculturalism is often portrayed as a foil to multiculturalism: where multiculturalism is focused on group-differentiated rights, interculturalism focuses on individuals as "agents deserving policies" (Zapata Barrero 2013); where multiculturalism has created parallel lives and encouraged ethnic separatism, interculturalism aims to create synthesis, interaction, and dialogue (Meer and Modood 2012: 177; see also Cantle 2012). But for multiculturalists like Meer and Modood, the debate between multiculturalism and interculturalism is a null one: not only has multiculturalism (as they define it) not failed, interculturalism does not actually differ from it in any meaningful way, making for a false alternative based on unsupported claims of "multiculturalism-as-failure" (2012).

For others, like Kymlicka (2012b), the distinction between interculturalism and multiculturalism is primarily pragmatic: the political need in certain countries to replace the now-sullied *multiculturalism* is felt so profoundly that *interculturalism* has become a way to proceed with the same liberal goals and essentially the same policies, but under a new name – or as interculturalist Ted Cantle calls it, a new "brand" (2012).

For still others, like Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor (whose support for interculturalism is rooted in minority-majority Quebecois struggles described below, multiculturalism and interculturalism may appear similar in terms of policy, but the rhetoric or

narrative that is used to justify them —the "story we tell ourselves about ourselves," as Clifford Geertz might have it – is what is of utmost importance, and is in fact the more meaningful distinction between the two terms. This reasoning is not far from Kymlicka's suggestion that what interculturalism offers is "an enabling political myth…a story that can revive the flagging political commitment to diversity" though Taylor may not put it quite that way (Kymlicka 2012b). Taylor's interpretation of just what this intercultural narrative is and why it is preferable will be discussed in the final section on Canadian multicultural policies.

Essentialism, Culturalism and Citizenization

Another common left critique of multiculturalism, related to the charge of ethnic separatism, is the accusation that these policies propound an essentialist or culturalist view of ethnic minorities. Ralph Grillo has argued that, in these conceptualizations, human beings are "bearers of *a* culture, located within a bounded world, which defines them and differentiates them from others" (Grillo 2003: 158, emphasis mine). In this view, cultural traditions are not only fixed and timeless, but also felt to be owned by some and in need of protection from others (Turner 1993).

The essentialist critique claims that problematic policies result in parallel societies, where each cultural group (bounded together as similar individuals along some ethnic, national, or other criteria – the culture's "essence") lives side by side, separately, and often ignorant of each other. These minority groups, essentialized to a single, static ethnic identity, are then prevented from resisting, innovating, or hybridizing these proscribed cultural or ethnic identities. Anthropologists have particularly taken issue with this understanding of culture, and indeed, Kymlicka's theory in *Multicultural Citizenship* appeared to some to conform to this problematic approach. Whereas most anthropologists view cultural groups as fluid, porous, varied, and

subject to constant change, the notion of multicultural-as-multinational – as was argued in *Multicultural Citizenship* – seemed to require fixity of "essential" cultural forms within the nation state (Phillips 2007). Other anthropologists weren't so concerned – Thomas Hylland Eriksen described Kymlicka's perspective as one that "rejects a static or essentialist view of culture as fixed and immutable, and sees change as sometimes inevitable" (2010 [1994]: 180).

Indeed, against vocal critiques of liberal multiculturalism as essentialist or culturalist, Kymlicka has argued more recently that multicultural polices not only have viewed immigrant cultural groups as dynamic but that they have specifically encouraged this dynamic nature by creating openings for engagement among and between minority and majority communities, organizations, and neighbors, impacting their ever-shifting cultural and social lives in positive ways towards bi-directional integration (2012a). In a policy paper published in 2012, Kymlicka argues that the "feel-good multiculturalism" critique plays on a caricature of actual multicultural policies, "which have had more complex historical sources and political goals" (Kymlicka 2012a: 5). Among these critiques of this type of multiculturalism (what he calls *3S* multiculturalism, based on Alibhai-Brown's description of "saris, samosas, and steel drums" in Britain), is the claim that it "encourage[s] a conception of groups as hermetically sealed and static, each reproducing its own distinct practices." Kymlicka's response is that such a claim assumes its own form of essentialism, such "that each group has its own distinctive customs," and thus "ignores processes of cultural adaptation, mixing, and mélange, as well as emerging cultural commonalities, thereby potentially reinforcing perceptions of minorities as eternally 'other'" (2012a: 5).

Kymlicka argues that this criticism misrepresents multiculturalism "as it has developed over the past 40 years in the Western democracies" (2012a: 5). He argues that multicultural

policies should be viewed in the context of human rights movements (e.g. decolonization, fights against racial segregation, etc.) of the middle 20th century, themselves forms of democratic citizenization. When done so, he argues, multiculturalism also should be considered such a form. Thus, what he terms "multiculturalism-as-citizenization" is "a deeply (and intentionally) transformative project, both for minorities and majorities" that "requires both dominant and historically subordinated groups to engage in new practices, to enter new relationships, and to embrace new concepts and discourses – all of which profoundly transform people's identities" (Kymlicka 2012a: 9).

This concept of "citizenization" has been described elsewhere as processes of "the progressive building of a relationship between citizens and a political entity and among citizens themselves" (Auvachez 2009) such that individuals "generate a sense of belonging to and identification with the larger political society" so that "they become aware of their membership in a democratic society which provides the institutions for the free play of this democratic activity of disclosure and acknowledgment [of identities] over time" (Tully 2000: 480; Tully 2001). Indeed, beyond similar bi-directional understandings of integration, for Kymlicka, *citizenization* describes a shift from hierarchical relations (such as colonialism, racial segregation, and differential rights for migrants – including both between minorities and the state and between members of different groups) into "relationships of liberal-democratic citizenship" (2012a: 6).

Critically, like integration, multiculturalism-as-citizenization requires these hierarchical transformations be undertaken by *all* parties: for Kymlicka, multicultural policies must be structured such that the "historically dominant majority group in each country…is required to renounce fantasies of racial superiority, to relinquish claims to exclusive ownership of the state,

and to abandon attempts to fashion public institutions solely in its own (typically white/Christian) image" while also "equally transformative of the identities and practices of subordinated groups" who must accept "the principles of human rights and civil liberties, and the procedures of liberal-democratic constitutionalism, with their guarantees of gender equality, religious freedom, racial nondiscrimination, gay rights, due process, and so on" (Kymlicka 2012a: 9-10; this definition assumes certain characteristics of immigrant groups and their values, a critique of many multiculturalists' writings presented by Anne Phillips (2007)). As he summarizes: "subordinated groups can appeal to [multicultural policies] to challenge their illiberal exclusion, but those very policies also impose the duty on them to be inclusive" (2012a: 10). This requirement, he argues, reveals the fundamental role of cultural change in multiculturalism, as opposed to encouraging its opposite.

Contrary to critics' assertions that multicultural policy requires western states to tolerate cultural traditions and practices that contradict liberal democratic values (usually cited in this claim are those problematically thought to be "Muslim": forced marriage, female genital mutilation, veiling), Kymlicka thus argues that multicultural policy, when 'properly' viewed as multiculturalism-as-citizenization, is in fact a two-way commitment built upon a challenge to the hierarchical status quo and an understanding of culture as processual. Just as states and western cultures are required to respect immigrants' cultural and political rights, and to enforce anti-discrimination and other equality measures, so too are immigrants required to accept and participate in the liberal democratic process and system of values in place in multicultural societies (Kymlicka 2012a).

When viewed within historical contexts and as citizenization, then, multiculturalism for Kymlicka is more than a celebration of difference in an attempt at integration – it is a form of

democratic citizenization aimed at addressing persisting inequalities between minority and majority groups:

> Whereas the 3S account says that multiculturalism is about displaying and consuming differences in cuisine, clothing, and music, while neglecting issues of political and economic inequality, the citizenization account says that multiculturalism is precisely about constructing new civic and political relations to overcome the deeply entrenched inequalities that have persisted after the abolition of formal discrimination. (2012a: 8)

Judging policy – the pros and cons of indices

In the discussion above, perhaps one strategy critics and defenders of multiculturalism can agree upon is the need for policies attuned to "managing diversity." While scholars have suggested various strategies for determining 'what counts' as a multicultural policy and debated whether policies on the ground match theoretical positions, the aim of this chapter is neither to suggest an ideal type of multiculturalism, to stake a claim for any one interpretation, nor to make claims to the cause/effect of specific policies on "integration outcomes." Rather, by studying Canadian and Swedish policy contexts side by side, my goal is to tease out the distinctions between them in order to gain a deeper understanding of the development of diasporic belonging through multicultural policy.

By and large, comparative studies of policy have relied upon the method of the index. Two such longitudinal comparative studies have attempted to create cross-national indices measuring the effectiveness of multicultural policies (MCPs): Will Kymlicka and Keith Banting's *Multicultural Policy Index* (MPI) and Ruud Koopmans and his colleagues' *Indicators of Citizenship Rights for Immigrants* (ICRI).[9] While the ICRI focuses squarely on rights-based policies, the MPI offers assessment of the extent to which states and sub-state actors "declares

[9] The MPI is the focus of this section but, for purposes of clarity, the ICRI covers 14 countries and offers measurements at four points: 1980, 1990, 2002, and 2008 (Koopmans 2013: 154). The index measures policies that specifically focus on immigrants' individual equal rights and differential cultural rights, with the latter largely focused on religious rights.

itself to be multicultural" (Koopmans 2013: 153). For the purposes of this study, I focus on Kymlicka and Banting's MPI.

Kymlicka and Banting's *Multicultural Policy Index* (MPI) includes 21 countries and assigns scores at three specific years: 1980, 2000, and 2010. The index is an "attempt to measure the evolution of MCPs in a standardized format that enables comparative research" (Kymlicka 2012a: 7). They have argued that studying multicultural policies cross-culturally can give a more accurate picture of the effects of multicultural policies worldwide by comparing the different policies in terms of effectiveness. The MPI assesses state policies along eight dimensions, which they claim are "viewed the most common or emblematic forms of immigrant MCPs" (7). They are:

> 1. Constitutional, legislative, or parliamentary affirmation of multiculturalism, at the central and/or regional and municipal levels;
> 2. The adoption of multiculturalism in school curricula;
> 3. The inclusion of ethnic representation/sensitivity in the mandate of public media or media licensing;
> 4. Exemptions from dress codes, either by statute or by court cases;
> 5. Allowing of dual citizenship;
> 6. The funding of ethnic group organizations to support cultural activities;
> 7. The funding of bilingual education or mother-tongue instruction;
> 8. Affirmative action for disadvantaged immigrant groups.
> (Kymlicka 2012a: 7).

The MPI assigns 0, 0.5, or 1 for each of the 8 measures for each country. Canada received a 7.5 in both 2000 and 2010; Sweden received a 5 in 2000, and a 7 in 2010. Only Australia scored higher than either country in 2010 with a perfect 8 (Kymlicka 2012a: 26). As countries with incredibly high scores on the MPI for implementation of multicultural ideals in these eight key policy areas, Sweden and Canada offer particularly useful cases for studying the ways in which immigrant communities are impacted by cultural policy. Methods for assessing the successes and failures of multiculturalism are certainly contested, and although indices like

Kymlicka and Banting's offer certain advantages for understanding the breadth of multicultural policy internationally, ethnography provides important qualitative data that is largely missing from these forms of policy analysis. Indeed, Kymlicka himself acknowledges the "trade-off between standardization and sensitivity to local nuances" that was required to create a cross-national index (2012a).

These indices, while perhaps useful in ways Kymlicka suggests, lack more than simply "local nuances." Setting aside for the moment that such an index cannot measure or otherwise incorporate community experiences of policy, their function as analytical tools is nonetheless diminished by the interpretations imposed by the researchers. Koopmans offers several ways in which his ICRI index differs from MPI, but admits that they are nevertheless "highly correlated ($r = 0.81$), suggesting that by and large they measure the same underlying construct" (Koopmans 2013: 153). Yet, the analysis he then offers contrasts directly with Kymlicka's analysis of the results of the MPI. According to Koopmans, "both indexes show that the expansion of multicultural policies has halted in the early twenty-first century" (ibid.) But Kymlicka sees the results of the 2010 MPI measures quite differently, having argued, "the general pattern from 1980 to 2010 has been one of modest strengthening" (Kymlicka 2012a: 1).[10]

As a result, while Sweden and Canada appear to be similar as same-scoring countries on the MPI, they did not develop the same multicultural policies, nor did their path to multiculturalism necessarily follow similar trajectories. It follows that the impact of their policies on immigrants and other minority constituencies is also important to differentiate. Swedish and Canadian approaches to multiculturalism are situated in different histories, politics, and immigration trajectories and, as a result, what appears similar in a policy index often elides

[10] For a critique of policy indices focusing on the aggregation of scores assigned by the two indices discussed here, see Duyvendak et al. (2013).

important distinctions – and these distinctions can enable us to better grasp the ways different approaches impact similar immigrant populations.

In reference to studies of multiculturalism, Ralph Grillo has cited the value of ethnographic attention to larger processes that are particularly valuable in such work: "multiculturalism entails a politics of recognizing difference which must be contextually located in identifiable social and political processes, that is to say ethnographically" (Vertovec 2011: 248; citing Grillo 2002: 3). While acknowledging the value of cross-cultural comparisons, ethnographic insights offered in the following chapters provide important linkages across multiple scales: between social and political processes, cultural policy, and the practices of migrants and minorities in their everyday lives.

In the remainder of the chapter, I describe and analyze first the Swedish and then the Canadian models of multiculturalism, placing them in the context of each country's histories of immigration, national identity formation, and domestic and foreign politics. These separate discussions are not meant to suggest the development of policy in a vacuum. Because both countries developed multiculturalist strategies at the level of policy relatively early and around the same time (1970s), it is likely that Canadian and Swedish actions informed one another to some not-insignificant extent. Indeed, as Mats Wickström has argued, Canada may have been the first to use the word *multiculturalism* and thus earned global recognition for it, but Sweden had implemented similar policies and developed similar concepts in the same period. And, according to Wickström, Norwegian social scientist Stein Rokkan advised the Swedes that they had three options: "territorial division, [pillarization, along the Dutch model], and 'deliberate multiculturalism,'" a term used to describe the "Canadian alternative" (Wickström 2013: 131). Thus, he argues, when Canada adopted multiculturalism as official policy in 1971 it "became a

reference point for those advocating multiculturalism in Sweden" (Wickström 2013: 132). Wickström continues:

> The concept of multiculturalism was not, however, a Canadian import, even if the word multiculturalism, directly translated into *mångkulturalism* or *multikulturalism* in Swedish, was later adopted from the North American discourse. The concept that these terms nowadays refers to had already been introduced into Swedish public discourse by the middle of the 1960s and had been established by the beginning of the 1970s. It was politically expedient to refer to the Canadian policy when the ground was being laid for the new Swedish policy, but the idea of multiculturalism had already taken root in Sweden by the time the Canadian prime minister, Trudeau, declared it to be the concept guiding official policy on ethnic diversity in Canada. (Wickström 2013: 132)

Both Sweden and Canada have, therefore, been investing in the concept of multiculturalism (whether by name or otherwise) for over 50 years. The 1960s were a pivotal time for both countries' understandings of changing demographic realities (specifically, non-European immigration) and the need for a new approach to national governance in response. The approaches they took, however, differed in important ways that had to do with the specific contexts of history and politics in each.

Immigration and Multiculturalism in Sweden

Despite its liberal reputation and international promotion of democracy and equal rights, Sweden has nevertheless experienced increasing internal debates over its multicultural and immigration policies. This was perhaps highlighted during and directly after the disorder (what the media termed "riots") that shook Stockholm's suburbs in May 2013. Sparked initially by the death of a knife-wielding Portuguese man in Husby at the hands of Swedish police, during each of the following seven nights immigrant youth took to the streets of 20 of Stockholm's suburbs (as well as several other Swedish cities), setting fire to cars, schools, and police stations, and throwing rocks at fire-fighters and law enforcement officials. According to news reports, police arrested 30 of the estimated 300 youth involved in over a week of disruptions that resulted in

some 63 million SEK ($9.5m) in damages.[11] In the public media, foreign journalists expressed shock in headlines proclaiming the riots were "A blazing surprise," and in editorials that quoted both politicians and policy analysts who blamed "hooligans" for reacting to increasing social inequality, high unemployment, cuts to social welfare, police brutality, racism, and social segregation. Conservative analysts, however, leveled accusations towards their favorite scapegoat: "Swedish Multiculturalism Goes Awry," "Multiculturalism Failing," and even: "Sweden's Problem is Not Islam, It's Multiculturalism," the latter ranking the favored immigration-related punching bags (Islam, multiculturalism) of the far-right in Sweden.[12]

These critiques blamed multiculturalism for a litany of perceived failures in Sweden that they argued directly led to these riots. Asylum and immigration policies were rarely disambiguated from multiculturalism policy (which of course is not an immigration policy nor is its intended impact limited to immigrants), and multiculturalism was charged with implementing inadequate integration requirements, and approaching social welfare in ways that has resulted in self-segregation among immigrants and the high disparity between immigrant and 'native' unemployment rates.

Sweden's immigration history offers important context to these riots and, more importantly, the conditions that likely provoked them. After nearly a quarter of Sweden's population immigrated to North America following a series of catastrophic famines in the 1860s, the country shifted from an emigrating population in the 19th century to an immigration

[11] "Swedish riots spark surprise and anger," *The Guardian,* May 25 2013. http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/may/25/sweden-europe-news. "A blazing surprise," *The Economist*, June 1, 2013. http://www.economist.com/news/europe/21578725-scandinavian-idyll-disrupted-arson-and-unrest-blazing-surprise

[12] Soeren Kern. "Swedish Multiculturalism Goes Awry," Gatestone Institute International Policy Council, May 24, 2013, http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/3729/sweden-multiculturalism. "'Multiculturalism failing': Swedish PM pleas for order as riots engulf Stockholm suburbs," RT.com, May 21, 2013. http://rt.com/news/sweden-riots-multiculturalism-not-working-598/. Tino Sanandaji, "Torching Utopia: Sweden's Problem is Not Islam, it's Multiculturalism," *National Review*, June 4, 2013. http://www.nationalreview.com/article/350017/torching-utopia-tino-sanandaji

destination in the mid-20th century. Though Sweden had experienced smaller scale immigration from neighboring countries like Finland for centuries, the first major migration to Sweden began in the 1950s and 1960s when Sweden's "Middle Way" policies – bringing together state welfare and a liberal market economy – created a need for a large tax-base from which to build the public sector (Westin 2006, Ohlsson 2006). That growing tax-base and public sector required immigrant labor. This immigration (between 1950 to 1970) primarily involved labor migrants from Nordic countries – particularly Finland – as well as a number of laborers from southern Europe. Because Sweden didn't create a guest worker program, as did Germany and Switzerland, labor migrants in Sweden were from the outset considered future citizens and Sweden's strong labor unions ensured that labor migrants were paid the same wage and offered the same rights and unemployment benefits as native-born Swedes (Westin 2006, Saukkonen 2013).

A period of heavy flows of labor migration in the 1960s peaked at 80,000 arriving in 1970 alone (Government Offices of Sweden 2013: 23). Labor regulations were then changed in 1972 to forbid non-Nordic laborers (read: southern and eastern Europeans) from entering Sweden. After the cessation of non-Nordic labor migration, from 1972 to 1989, immigration to Sweden was comprised largely of humanitarian asylum seekers and their family members from Uganda, Chile, Argentina, Turkey, Iran, and Iraq. After 1990, the largest numbers of refugees admitted were from the former Yugoslavia. Thus, Karen Borevi has argued that this 1972 regulation shifted both the type of immigrants entering Sweden, and also the percentage of immigrants from non-European points of origin: the decades following the 1972 regulation saw an increase in non-European immigration from less than 10% during 1945-1972 to an average of 40% in the following decades, excepting the large number of migrants from the Balkans in the 1990s (Borevi 2014: 709-710).

According to the Swedish government's own statistics, by 2013, some 15.9% of the Swedish population was foreign-born (up from 12% in 2002), and another 5% were born in Sweden to at least one foreign-born parent, comprising a growing second generation (Government Offices of Sweden 2013). "Asians," an OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) category which comprises immigrants from the entire continent (including Turkey), make up the largest classification among the 20% foreign born and their Swedish-born children: 34% of the foreign-born population in 2012 were classified as "Asian," while 36% of the second generation were similarly classified. Nordic countries (as a group) formed the 2nd largest classification in both categories. In 2012, the single largest country of origin for foreign-born persons in Sweden was Finland, followed by Iraq, Poland, and the former Yugoslavia. Iranians came in 5th with 65,649 foreign-born persons (Statistiska centralbyrån 2014). As of December 31, 2013, that number had risen to 67,211 and, when combined with the second generation and those of mixed heritage (an all-inclusive SCB category: *utländsk bakgrund* (foreign background)), there are over 97,000 residents of Iranian heritage registered as living in Sweden in 2013 (Statistiska centralbyrån 2014). In other words, Iranian immigrants and their descendants comprise 4.9% of the total foreign-background population in Sweden and 1% of the total Swedish population (Statistiska centralbyrån 2014).

Importantly, Wickström reminds us that it was during the mid-1970s –when the immigrant population consisted primarily of white, European Christian or secular immigrants – that Sweden adopted its first multiculturalist policies (2013: 135). In 1975, Swedish Parliament passed an official immigrant and minority policy that marked the first legislation that can be described as "multiculturalist" in its motivations and implications. The policy listed specific goals of

1) liberal *equality* in both the political arena (e.g., allowing permanent residents the right to vote and run for local and regional political office) and in a cultural sense (e.g. affirming the right to retain cultural practices "*in the same way*" as the majority);

2) *freedom of choice* for immigrants and migrants to assimilate ("become Swedes") or to retain their home languages, cultural practices, and contacts (i.e., as opposed to forced assimilation practices found in other European states);[13] and

3) *partnership* between majority and minorities, particularly through the encouragement (i.e., funding) of the formation of ethnic associations that would contribute to the country's corporatist structure. (Saukkonen 2013: 187; Borevi 2013: 149) [14]

These policies, also guaranteed in a revision of the Swedish constitution in 1975, were multicultural in the sense that they were specifically aimed at creating equal opportunities for immigrants (newly classified specifically as minorities and disadvantaged), and were aimed at improving integration while providing opportunities for immigrants to choose to do so. This was intended to be a real choice: immigrants could choose to participate in improved state-funded Swedish language training but they could also choose to maintain their own linguistic and cultural practices, both in private and through publicly funded ethnic associations and mother-

[13] See Wickström (2013) for a history of assimilation and integration in Sweden. He argues that although it is assumed that policies prior to "integration" in Sweden were assimilationist (i.e. immigrants should "become Swedish"), there actually were no policies for handling cultural diversity in place at the time. Government bill 1975/76: 26 and SOU 1974: 69, both translated and cited in Borevi (2013: 149).

[14] Borevi describes "the typical Swedish corporative decision model" as the primary way for citizens to express opinions – i.e., through membership in associations or other groups where an assigned point person could channel members' opinions. Hence, integration into this model favored government support of ethnic associations for immigrants so that they could "[p]rovide effective channels to represent the immigrants' interest in contacts with decision-makers and authorities" (2013: 154).

language education in Sweden's schools. From the 1974 Swedish Government Official Report:[15]

> [E]qual conditions within the area of culture and education also mean that immigrants and their children, via efforts taken by society, are to be given real opportunities to retain their own language, develop their own cultural activities and maintain contact with their original country, in the same way that the majority population is able to preserve and develop its language and its cultural traditions. (Borevi 2013: 149)[16]

In what Borevi has called "the special Swedish version of multiculturalism" of the 1970s, an attempt was made to "combine active support of the immigrants' minority group identities with the integrative order of the welfare state" (Borevi 2013: 151). This policy, however, was revisited in the 1980s in the face of changing immigration patterns (i.e., refugees arriving from beyond European points of origin) and concerns that these two objectives were mutually exclusive. A 1985 government bill shifted the focus of immigration policies from groups to individuals and clarified the "freedom of choice" section of the 1975 legislation to clarify that it should not involve a "rejection of the Swedish language and the common interests shared by all members of Swedish society" (Borevi 2013: 155).[17] This limited the range of possibilities to within the bounds of the Swedish societal culture as Kymlicka's theorization of multicultural citizenship would suggest.[18]

Borevi and others (Soininen 1999; Joppke 2003) have argued that this measure and related changes marked an early retreat from multiculturalism in Sweden. But unlike Soininen or Joppke, Borevi shows that, like the more recent claims of retreat, Sweden's shift was also largely narrative (to borrow Taylor's term) rather than substantive:

> We may conclude that Sweden retreated from the previous multicultural approach understood as group-specific 'positive' right to compensatory state support for

[15] These reports, *Statens offentliga utredningar* (SOU), are issued by government-appointed committees to provide official analyses of proposed legislation.
[16] SOU 1974:69: 95, translated and cited in Borevi (2013: 149).
[17] Government Bill 1985/86: 98, translated and cited in Borevi (2013: 155).
[18] For a critique of this limitation on freedom of choice to the majority societal culture, see Triadafilopoulos (1997).

> immigrants to retain their ethnocultural identities. Important to note, however, this shift primarily concerned how the measures were justified, while most policy measures remained more or less intact as they were thought to promote immigrants' integration into the mainstream. (2013: 157)

The new Swedish goal of integration into a mainstream, noted by Borevi above, led to further amendments to Swedish immigration policy in the 1990s. A 1996 report from the Immigrant Policy Committee stated as its goal a "broader conception of Swedishness" such that all residents would be given "equal chance to identify themselves with Sweden and experience a sense of national solidarity" (Borevi 2013: 163). The official report stated:

> It is only when approaches and experiences are allowed to meet that the resources of a multicultural society are set free and that the framework for what can be considered "normal Swedish" can be expanded. (Borevi 2013: 163)[19]

This claim reveals a sense that 'insider-outsiders' existed in Sweden at the time, which was felt to be problematic. It is this period that Saukkonen has claimed marks "a conceptual shift from immigrant policy to integration policy" in Sweden, particularly through the passage of a 1997 bill that indicated integration should be "understood as a process which concerned both 'original Swedes' and newcomers" (Saukkonen 2013: 188). In the bill, the government stated:

> Immigrant policy, along with the particular administration that has been established to implement it, has unfortunately come to reinforce a division of the population into "us" and "them" and thus strengthened the emergence of the outsider feeling that many immigrants and their children experience. (Borevi 2013)[20]

Given this interculturalist position (though without mention of the word itself), it should come as no surprise that the terms "intercultural" and "interculturalism" are increasingly common in Sweden, even appearing in official cultural policy documents.[21] There are also several non-profit

[19] SOU 1996:55: 354, translated and cited in Borevi (2013).
[20] Government bill 1997/98:16: 17, translated and cited in Borevi (2013).
[21] See *Regeringens Propositions 2009*, pp. 22-24, section titled Diversity and Intercultural Cooperation; cited by Saukkonen (2013: 189).

organizations and associations based in Sweden that aim to promote interculturalism specifically over multiculturalism, particularly in the arts.[22]

Swedish Cultural Policy: Supporting Interculturalism

Sweden's shifting immigration and multicultural policies have had important implications for the promotion of cultural policy as a force for multidirectional integration in Sweden. Indeed, although Borevi has claimed that the 1990s revisions of multicultural policies marked a narrative retreat, it is important to recall that the Swedish government declared 2006 the Year of Multiculturalism (*Mångkulturåret 2006*). The Year of Multiculturalism was an effort to amend cultural policy to incorporate a wider audience and to present a wider array of artists' work. Saukkonen has described this effort as rooted in a need to address a "cleavage between people that were regularly involved in publicly financed cultural activities as practitioners and those that were rarely or never involved" and a belief that "publicly funded cultural institutions and organizations have a responsibility to address and to be inclusive towards the whole Swedish population" (2013: 188-189).

Although the Multicultural Year was criticized for its short-lived impacts, leaving artists and cultural workers to call for more permanent solutions to inequality in cultural fields, it did raise the issue in the public sphere. In 2009, the Swedish Parliament passed a new Government Bill on cultural policy. According to Kulturrådet (Swedish Arts Council), the Bill mandated: "Culture is to be a dynamic, challenging and independent force based on the freedom of expression. Everyone is to have the opportunity to participate in cultural life. Creativity, diversity, and artistic quality are to be integral parts of society's development" (Kulturrådet 2012). One of the key elements of this policy was to "promote international and intercultural exchange and cooperation in the cultural sphere," and within it, the acknowledgement that

[22] See for example, Intercult, http://www.intercult.se/.

"[i]ntercultural exchange, like international exchange, is extremely important for the development of cultural life" (Kulturrådet, n.d.).

As of 2013, the Swedish government's integration policy objective was: "Equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities for all, regardless of ethnic or cultural background" (Government Offices of Sweden 2013). The inclusion of "responsibilities" here marks a shift towards the inclusion of "duties" as a feature of the increasingly common civic integration policies being implemented to varying degrees across Europe (Kymlicka 2012a), such as citizenship tests or language requirements. As yet, these have not been implemented in Sweden to the great extent that they have been elsewhere, such as in the UK and the Netherlands. Indeed, as Borevi (2010) shows, these policies have largely been left as voluntary in Sweden, and the acquisition of rights (e.g. citizenship) are not as yet dependent upon "proving" fulfillment of specific responsibilities, such as through completing civic education or language courses and exams.[23] An alternative interpretation of the direction taken by this policy is that it is more closely reflective of the attempt to replace racial and other hierarchies through dual transformation of immigrant and host societies, as required by Kymlicka's "multiculturalism-as-citizenization" discourse.

Despite the interculturalist message of Swedish cultural policies in recent years, large influxes of asylum-seekers, primarily from the Syrian war, along with a weakening economy (though robust relative to other parts of Europe) have led to the growth of anti-immigrant and

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[23] As of writing, and according to the Migrationsverket (Swedish Migration Board) website, the requirements for attaining citizenship as an adult in Sweden are: "be able to prove your identity; have reached the age of 18; have a permanent residence permit, a permanent right of residence or permanent residence card in Sweden; have lived in Sweden for a specified period; have conducted yourself well in Sweden." http://www.migrationsverket.se/English/Private-individuals/Becoming-a-Swedish-citizen/Citizenship-for-adults.html, accessed February 2015.

anti-Muslim sentiment alongside a general conflation of race and immigration in public discourses. Racial controversies befell the Cultural Minister in 2012, neo-Nazi groups attacked peaceful anti-racism demonstrations in a Stockholm suburb in December 2013, neo-Nazi parties carried out public demonstrations against immigration in Stockholm in late summer 2014, and three mosques were vandalized or fire-bombed in a 10-day period in late December 2014. In each of these cases, especially those connected with violence, anti-racist activists responded loudly. On May Day 2014, religious institutions in Jönköpping drowned out a public Nazi demonstration by ringing church bells for 2 hours straight, and thousands of anti-racism demonstrators flooded the streets of Stockholm in August 2014 to march against a planned neo-Nazi rally. In late December 2014, several hundred demonstrators in small town Eskiltuna showed public support for a mosque firebombed the night before, offering what they called a "love bomb" in response. These public conflicts over race and cultural diversity are part of an increasingly public national conversation about processes of belonging and citizenship.

Canada – Multiculturalism as Liberal Response to Pluralism

Were one to ask Americans which characteristics exemplify U.S. culture, one might hear responses like baseball and apple pie as often as claims that there is no such thing as American culture. But when asked what Canadian identity is, or what marks Canada as unique – as different from the United States, from its colonial 'parents' Britain or France, or from any other country for that matter – many Canadians cite their multicultural "mosaic," describing it as the common thread that draws together their nation

Canada's reputation as a country of pluralistic tolerance was built on a recognition of difference necessitated by its politics, history, and geography: the coexistence of political contests between the descendants of the two "founding nations" of France and Britain and their

descendants, the struggles of the First Nations and Aboriginal communities for equal rights protections and self-governance, and the challenge to integrate a growing number of immigrants (first from Europe, but increasingly from non-European homelands) all demanded a federal plan for policy and guarantees of rights. Canada's history of colonial settlement, immigration, and the coercive moves made against indigenous peoples are therefore integral to understanding the country's relationship to multiculturalism, both at its establishment and today.

History of pluralism and immigration in Canada

Elke Winter has argued that, in Canada, the multicultural form of pluralism (defined as "an approach that encourages the recognition of ethnic diversity and its expression within the public space") should be described as sets of *triangular* relations:

> "…[T]he conditional association between 'us' and 'others' is rendered possible through the exclusion of 'them.' Put differently, two or more groups come together — that is, enter in negotiation processes about pluralist collaboration — not because they are equal in terms of power or similar in terms of 'culture,' but because they are confronted with a (real or imagined) third group that forces the national majority to give concessions to minority groups — or to attempt their co-optation, as the glass is always either half full or half empty." (Winter 2011: 6)

In her study of Canadian English-language newspaper discourses in the 1990s, Winter shows that the pluralist national identity forged in Canada through multiculturalism was rooted in an opposition between a "national we," national minority "them," and immigrant "others." This sense of the nation as comprised of three groups (us, them and others) was present in Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's October 8, 1971 speech to the House of Commons announcing that the findings of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism had led to the Government's creation of a federal multicultural policy: "It was the view of the Royal Commission, shared by the government and, I am sure, by all Canadians, that there cannot be one cultural policy for Canadians of British and French origin, another for the original peoples,

and yet a third for all others" (Cameron 2004: 402).[24]

Who are these "others?" Immigration to Canada since 1900 has been marked by fluctuation, first peaking in 1913 (52.5 immigrants per 1,000 population), then dropping to fewer than one immigrant per 1,000 population in the early 1940s (Chagnon 2013: 2). In the decades prior to World War II, Canadian law included numerous racially discriminatory policies, such as an 1885 piece of legislation requiring a head tax on Chinese immigration and the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1923 banning most Chinese immigration outright. Restrictions on Chinese, Japanese, and South Asians in Canada denied them voting and electoral rights and restricted their rights to employment (e.g., they were barred from law, pharmacy, public works, education, and civil service careers) and Japanese, Italian, Ukrainian, and German Canadians were all interned during World War II. These examples of the exclusionary measures in 20th century Canadian law were exacerbated by unofficial forms of discrimination, practiced by immigration officials as much as by other legal arms (Triadafilopoulos 2012; Calliste 1993). These practices and legal structures were rooted in a mix of scientific racism and nationalism, common to Europe and North America at the time, which effectively maintained Canada's white European-dominated population. Indeed, according to Statistics Canada, as of 1966, 75% of all Canadian immigrants were European (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2012a: 12).

Political scientist Triadafilos Triadafilopoulos has argued that these "illiberal worldviews and ideas" could not be maintained in the wake of events in the mid-20th century, namely the Holocaust, the discrediting of scientific racism and eugenics, and post-colonial movements (2012: 8). He argues that liberal democracies in the 1960s were therefore forced to reconcile their declarations of human rights (themselves necessitated by what Triadafilopoulos calls the emerging "global human rights culture") with their own discriminatory immigration and

[24] Pierre Trudeau's Multiculturalism Federal Policy speech, Oct 8, 1971; reprinted in Cameron (2004).

citizenship policies (2012: 4). In the case of Canada, these global norms mixed with local political institutions and opportunities that enabled it to bring liberalizing changes "quickly and quietly" in comparison with other countries (his comparison is with Germany), including the political mobilization of immigrants themselves.[25]

The major shift in Canadian immigration policy came in 1967, when the Canadian government adopted a universal admissions policy, codified in the Immigration Act of 1976, more commonly referred to as 'the points system.' After several internal task forces, policy papers, and proposals were met with critical reactions and accusations of lip service, the final Immigration Act introduced this points system as "a way of demonstrating the purity of Canada's intentions to the rest of the world" (Triadafilopoulos 2012: 103). This reform shifted the country's immigration policy away from racial or cultural discrimination while prioritizing economic impacts by giving immigrants with "education, knowledge of an official language and the ability to join the labour market" priority in immigration. This meant that, like Sweden (though through very different policies), Canada also admitted a much higher number of immigrants post-1967, and within that, greater numbers of non-European and non-American immigrants than ever before. Also like Sweden, this shift led to a relatively rapid change in demographic composition in Canada: "Whereas immigrants from 'non-traditional' source regions, including Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, and Africa, comprised only a tiny fraction of Canada's total immigration intake from 1946 to 1966, by 1977 they constituted over 50

[25] For example, through Canada's one-party government in a parliament system reliant on electoral coalitions that benefited from immigrant votes: "Immigrants who had benefited from the liberalization of policy in previous years were concentrated in competitive urban ridings key to both the federal Liberal and Conservative parties' electoral fortunes. Canada's single member plurality (SMP) electoral system encouraged the building of winning electoral coalitions that included immigrant voters — a trend that had roots in the 1950s. As such, it made very little sense for politicians to take an anti-immigration position or otherwise to challenge the cross-party political consensus that had emerged around immigration policy in the preceding years" (Triadafilopoulos 2012: 87). See also Kelley and Trebilcock (1998).

percent of annual flows" (Triadafilopoulos 2012: 2-3).

According to Statistics Canada's 2011 National Household Survey, Canada's foreign-born population was approximately 6,775,800, or 20.6% of Canada's total population, "the highest proportion among G8 countries" that year (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2014: 7). Furthermore, the "non-traditional" immigration trend continued in such a way that, though European immigration accounted for three quarters of all immigrants in 1966, by 2010 only 16% of immigrants migrated to Canada from European countries (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2012a: 12).[26] This geographic shift also brought a greater diversity of ethnic identities (including "visible minorities" – the Canadian government's term for "persons, other than aboriginal peoples, who are non-Canadian in race or non-white in colour") with it: the 1901 Census listed roughly 25 ethnic groups in Canada; today that number is over 200 in Toronto alone (Government of Canada 1995; City of Toronto n.d.).[27]

Thus, the number of visible minorities also greatly increased after the 1967 immigration reform; between 1981 and 2001, the population of visible minorities in Canada nearly quadrupled (1.1 million to 4.0 million), growing from 5% to 13% of the total Canadian population (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2012a: 13). By 2011, 19.1% of the Canadian population identified as a visible minority (Chagnon 2013: 14). The great majority of this growth is attributed to migration from Asia – including the Middle East – which remained the main

[26] According to a government report: "Correspondingly, the percentage from Asia and Pacific, and from Africa and the Middle East have grown dramatically (from 9% to 46% for Asia, and from 3% to 25% for Africa). The percentage of permanent residents from South and Central America also doubled over this fifty- year period, and represented 10% of the total immigrant population in 2010." (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2012a: 12; sources are Statistics Canada: "Canadian Demographics at a Glance, January 2008" and "Canada's Ethnocultural Mosaic, 2006: National Picture")) Bloemraad also offers that, "As late as 1981, census statistics showed that three-quarters of all immigrants in Canada were born in Europe or the United States" (Bloemraad 2006: 124).

[27] The term *visible minorities* remains in use despite having garnered due criticism along a number of lines, among them: it often describes groups that demographically comprise a majority, rather than a minority; it suggests the existence of a "Canadian race;" and often lumps together groups that are and are not at an economic disadvantage in society.

source region of all immigration to Canada in 2010 and 2011.[28] According to the 2013 *Report on the Demographic Situation in Canada*, the Asian countries in the top 10 source countries have been consistent but have changed positions in recent years (Chagnon 2013: 5).

According to the 2011 National Household Survey, 20.6% of Canada's population in that year was foreign-born, with projections suggesting the percentage could reach a full quarter of the population (25%-28%) by 2031 (Chagnon 2013; Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2012a: 13).[29] A similar rate of growth is also projected for the percentage of visible minorities, with estimates reaching 29-32% of the population by 2031 (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2012a: 13).

Canadian Multiculturalism Policy

Prime Minister Pearson planted the roots of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act of 1988 decades earlier, with the initiation of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism in July 1963. The Commission's recommendations, and the debates they fostered, formed the basis of a speech delivered to the House of Commons on October 8, 1971 by Prime Minister Trudeau announcing that the government would adopt a multiculturalism policy. This speech is frequently cited as the first instantiation of a federal multiculturalism policy in the world. In the speech, Trudeau stated: "Although there are two official languages [in Canada], there is no official culture, nor does any ethnic group take precedence over any other. No citizen or group of citizens is other than Canadian, and all should be treated fairly" (Cameron 2004: 401). Acknowledging the maintenance of two official languages of English and French, Trudeau

[28] According to the Statistics Canada 2013 *Report on the Demographic Situation in Canada*, "In 2010, 7 of the top 10 countries of origin were in Asia, while 6 of the top 10 were Asian in 2011. These countries were the Philippines, India, China, Iran, Pakistan, Iraq and South Korea (in 2010 only). Overall, Asian countries accounted for 58.7% of all immigrants to Canada in 2010 and 59.3% in 2011." Further, "The Philippines, China and India, which have been the top three countries since 2004, together accounted for more than one-third of all immigrants to Canada in 2010 (36.9%) and 2011 (37.6%)" (Chagnon 2013: 5).

[29] The report cites Statistics Canada's *Projections of the Diversity of the Canadian Population, 2006 to 2031*, March 2010.

described the new policy as, "a policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework" (Cameron 2004: 402).

Trudeau emphasized the dual importance of cultural retention and individual freedom, the latter of which would be "hampered if [individuals] were locked for life within a particular cultural compartment by the accident of birth or language" (Cameron 2004: 402). It was therefore "vital…that every Canadian, whatever his ethnic origin, be given a chance to learn at least one of the two languages in which this country conducts its official business and politics" (Cameron 2004: 402). This statement seems to suggest an understanding of culture as bounded and total ("particular cultural compartment") – but with the possibility of defying these boundaries with the encouragement of federal multiculturalism.[30]

A decade after the announcement of this policy shift,[31] in 1982, the Canadian government adopted the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* (Canada's bill of rights) with section 27 reaffirming multiculturalism by stating that the Charter "shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with the preservation and enhancement of the multicultural heritage of Canadians" (Government of Canada 1982). Short of outlining specific cultural rights afforded to minorities, according to Stein, this section of the Charter offered, "a uniquely Canadian compromise," wherein both individual and collective rights were affirmed (Stein 2007: 1). But, true to Stein's observation, "The relationship between those individual and collective rights continues to be a work in progress as Canada adapts to the Charter" (Stein 2007: 1).

By the time the *Canadian Multiculturalism Act* was written in 1985 (and assented to July 21, 1988), non-European immigrants in Canada had become active in the multiculturalism

[30] The statement is rather ambiguous. It is the liberal ideal of individual freedom of choice that seems to make the bounded nature of 'culture' problematic for Trudeau, though it is unclear whether his position is itself culturalist or challenging the culturalism that his proposal of multiculturalism is meant to combat.
[31] For a comprehensive history of multicultural policy in the intervening period, see Bloemraad (2006).

debate. According to Winter, they had "displaced the original white ethnic groups as principal actors" and their "demands of anti-racism and inclusion were retorted by commentators from the political right, with questions about 'balkanization', stark cultural differences and the limits of tolerance" (Winter 2011: 17, citing Abu-Laban and Stasiulis 1992). Nevertheless, the *Act* provided for ten policy directives committing Canada to recognition and respect for cultural diversity, among them the "freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance, and share their cultural heritage," "equal treatment and equal protection under the law, while respecting and valuing [individuals'] diversity," and, "the full and equitable participation of individuals and communities of all origins in the continuing evolution and shaping of all aspects of Canadian society and [to] assist them in the elimination of any barrier to that participation" (Cameron 2004: 411). The government has claimed that the dual focus on valuing diversity and ensuring equity "distinguishes the Canadian approach, and moves it beyond a policy that merely tolerates minority groups, to one that actively seeks to build an inclusive Canadian society" (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2012a: 11).

The *Act* also stated that, "multiculturalism is a fundamental characteristic of the Canadian heritage and identity and that it provides an invaluable resource in the sharing of Canada's future" (Cameron 2004: 411). By affirming multiculturalism as a fundamental characteristic of Canadian identity, the Act thereby codified a sentiment upon which the government would consistently draw, and that remains unique in the western world.

Three Factors: National Identity, Geography, and National Minorities

The Canadian history of multiculturalism is marked by several distinguishing and related characteristics that set it apart from other multicultural contexts, particularly those of European countries. Among these, the following three stand out:

1. National Unity, National Identity

> In Canada, the success of multiculturalism as a normative approach to immigrant integration - which guides multiculturalism policy - can only be understood because it is, at the same time, an essential part of the country's nation-building ideology. (Winter 2011: 16)

> Multiculturalism serves as a link for native-born citizens from national identity to solidarity with immigrants and minorities. And conversely, multiculturalism provides a link through which immigrants and minorities come to identify with, and feel pride in, Canada. From their different starting points, there is convergence on high levels of pride and identification with a multicultural conception of Canadian nationhood. (Kymlicka 2010: 8-9)

Cultural pluralism is certainly not unique to Canada, but the Canadian response to it, particularly the investment of multiculturalism as a source of unity and the cornerstone of national identity, stands apart and particularly in light of other countries' attempts at cultural erasure or homogenization (e.g., in the United Kingdom or early assimilationist United States). Because multiculturalism in Canada was both a strategy to manage immigration-based difference and also a response to the effects of settler colonialism and the active presence of national minorities, the Canadian sense of multiculturalism had to be made integral to a national sense of belonging. Anglo-Canadians were no longer able to legitimately view themselves as the "rightful owners" of something called "Canadian culture;" through the Multiculturalism Act and accompanying strategies, they too have been made to feel multiculturalism was not only a philosophical good, but is a personal good as well.

According to Triadafilopoulos, this move was a conscious effort to build a base for social solidarity and national unity, essential in order to create a sense of shared citizenship and respect for cultural freedom:

> Trudeau believed that a 'policy of multiculturalism within a bilingual framework' would support the 'cultural freedom of Canadians' while helping to 'break down discriminatory attitudes and cultural jealousies'. Cultural recognition was thus qualified by a robust integrationist position based on shared citizenship. Extending

> this liberal conceptualization of Canadian identity further, Trudeau argued that if national unity were to mean anything in a 'deeply personal sense,' it must be 'founded on confidence in one's own individual identity; out of this can grow respect for that of others and willingness to share ideas, attitudes and assumptions.' (Triadafilopoulos 2012:105)

This sense of a national identity based on pride in multiculturalism sets Canada apart from its European counterparts.[32] Indeed, scholars, journalists, and commentators have argued that, unlike most (if not all) European countries, multiculturalism has become the core of Canadian national identity. Citing its history of national contests for power between British, French, and indigenous groups, sociologist Rainer Bauböck has pointed to Canada's exceptional status: "No other Western country has gone as far as Canada in adopting multiculturalism not only as a policy towards minorities but also as a basic feature of shared identity" (2005: 93). Canadians take pride in their commitment to the diversity and inclusivity that their brand of multiculturalism espouses; not only is it popular, polls show that most Canadians consider multiculturalism as a cornerstone of Canadian nationalism, suggesting it has become "part of the sticky stuff of Canadian identity" (Stein 2007: 1). The very "Canadian" style of multiculturalism implemented there also has brought the country international recognition, itself a source of national pride.

2. Love to Hate and Hate to Love the U.S.A.

Canada's position in North America created a further necessity to build multiculturalism as integral to citizens' sense of national identity. Since the 1867 Confederation, Canadian officials have been aware of the need to mold a Canadian national identity in order to distinguish it from other countries, but particularly against its loud, economically robust, and culturally

[32] One might argue that Australia has been successful in its approach to multiculturalism (as its MPI score suggests), though it is quite different from the Canadian case in several important dimensions (e.g., specific immigration policies, the use of detention facilities in PNG, etc. See Collins 2013; Vertovec and Wessendorf 2010). But national polls suggest that the sense of national pride in multiculturalism may be higher in Canada.

invasive neighbor to the south. The United States was, and to a large extent still is, viewed as a threat to the cultural, political, and economic welfare of the Canadian state. In 1949, the Canadian Prime Minster appointed the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters, and Sciences to study the state of arts and culture in Canada. The Commission's report, known as the Massey Report, made recommendations that eventually led to the formation of the National Library of Canada, the Canada Council for the Arts, and funding for historical conservation and university programs. Among its findings, the report "focused on the extreme vulnerability of Canada to American influences and drew attention to the American newspapers, books, and magazines flooding across the border" (Marsh and Harvey 2006).

According to Eva Mackey, this sense of vulnerability to American cultural imperialism has continued into recent decades: "From colonial times to the present, intellectuals, politicians of every hue, activists, state institutions, and businesses have sought to define, defend, and differentiate Canadian identity" (Mackey 1999: 9). Indeed, in her study of the impact of multiculturalism on the identities of all Canadians (including those who call themselves "*Canadian*-Canadians") Mackey shows the ways in which Canada has always felt marginalized and victimized – first by the British and then as a result of cultural imperialism from America, with the result being a national sensitivity and pervasive feeling that Canadian identity always needs to be "protected and produced" (Mackey 1999: 19-22, 9).

Statements by the government and its employees support this finding. According to a 1999 research document prepared for Canadian Parliament members titled, *The Arts and Canada's Cultural Policy*, the government viewed the U.S. as a threat to Canada's 'cultural sovereignty' as recently as the turn of the last century: "The omnipresence of American cultural products threatens Canada's cultural identity. To survive as a distinct cultural entity, Canada

must continue to support and promote the creation and production of its own cultural products and services" (Jackson and Lemieux 1999).

Alongside economic and cultural policies, a number of immigration-related efforts also were made to establish a national character to set Canada apart. As noted above, after World War II, and like Europe and the rest of the world, Canada was forced to recognize the dangers of pseudo-scientific understandings of race and thus was also forced to re-imagine its national community. This effort included the selection of a national flag (after months of heated debate), the approval of a national anthem, and the use of these symbols "of a renovated and future-oriented Canadian nation" at its centennial celebrations of 1967 (Mackey 1999: 58). According to Mackey, through substantial financial and other governmental support in the 1960s, these centennial celebrations culminated in the creation of monuments and public buildings, festivals and pageants, historical re-enactments, and "the centerpiece of the celebrations," the Canadian Universal and International Exhibition at Montreal (known as Expo '67) (Mackey 1999: 59). This international exhibition, like those of London or Paris, proved to be an "important site for the production and popularization of ideas about the relationship between local, national, and global populations, cultures, identities, and the market" (Mackey 1999: 59). More specifically to Canada, Canadians from all over the country traveled to the Expo to learn about their country, as Mackey noted: "These trips can be seen as 'pilgrimages of patriotism,' that combine the ritual of participation in patriotic performance, with the pedagogical practice of learning about the nation, its relationship to the world, and one's role as a citizen and national subject" (1999: 59). Key among these lessons was a sense of pride for cultural pluralism and tolerance, and familiarity with the multiple cultures that lived side by side "in harmony" in Canada.

Unlike in the United States, also a settler colonial country built by immigrants at the

expense of native groups' sovereignty and rights, Canada approached national identity as rooted in multiculturalism – a liberal approach that valued both diversity and freedom of choice. The influence of the U.S. on this approach is not to be diminished: without the perceived (and, in many ways, real) threat to Canadian culture and identity, cultural policies sensitive to multiculturalism would not have flourished, nor would the government have provided the immense funding and resources needed to support it. Yet, as Mackey critically shows, the right appropriated "key assumptions of the discourse of marginalization and victimization used by left-liberal nationalists (for example the idea that Canada needs a 'culture' and that Canadian culture needs to be defended and made strong)" in the service of anti-multiculturalism and anti-immigration arguments (Mackey 1999: 12). The question of Canadian national identity, like all forms of identity, remains dynamic.

3. Quebec and Majority/Minority Cultures

As noted above, the demographic convergence of settler colonial British, settler colonial-cum-national minority French, national minority Aboriginal/indigenous groups, and later newcomer immigrants led consecutive Anglo-Canadian governments to make policy decisions that protected their dominance over the French (or, at the least, disabled the French from dominating in any way beyond Quebec), while accommodating the need for labor through immigration and managing claims by indigenous groups. This convergence has similarities to Australia in the latter two groups, but the French Quebec case sets the Canadian context for multiculturalism apart.

According to Québécois scholars, Trudeau's "multiculturalism in a bilingual framework" was created specifically against calls for biculturalism in order to accommodate French language claims while avoiding delivering the French the special status they so desperately sought (Winter

2011). [33] As quoted earlier, Prime Minister Trudeau was careful to provide assurances in his speeches that no one ethnic group should receive special preference under multiculturalism. The French-speaking communities of Quebec were quick to respond to the shift from the "bicultural" of the Commission developed under Pearson to the "multicultural" of the resulting policy under Trudeau. Multiculturalism has been viewed by Quebecois as an insult specifically aimed at the French ever since.

Indeed, the fight for secession in Quebec in the early 1990s and eventual referendum in 1995 was largely to do with this perceived demotion in status. When the referendum failed, the Premier of Quebec at the time attributed the extremely narrow loss (50.58% "No" to 49.2% "Yes") to "money and the ethnic vote," a statement which was then used by the English press to demonstrate that the Quebecois were intolerant racists, allowing them to point to themselves and Anglo-Canada's multiculturalism "to reaffirm its superior tolerance at Quebec's expense" (Mackey 1999:14).

Mackey offers this example as testament to the ways Canadian political rhetoric and maneuvers continue to pivot on Quebec. Quoting Himani Bannerji, Mackey argues: "Canada's 'difference studded unity', its 'multicultural mosaic' becomes an ideological sleight of hand pitted against Quebec's presumably greater cultural homogeneity: multiculturalism is therefore mobilised here as 'moral cudgel with which to beat Quebec's separatist aspirations'" (Mackey 1999: 15; Bannerji 1996: 108-9). According to Mackey, multicultural and Aboriginal 'others' in Canada were therefore "necessary weapons in the war between the two 'founding' nations" (16).

[33] Elspeth Cameron repeats a common opinion when she states that, "a multicultural nation within a bicultural nation made no logical sense" (2004: xii). Bloemraad offers the following summary of views on Trudeau's shift from *bicultural* to *multicultural*: "Commentators and scholars debate Trudeau's motivations for embracing multiculturalism over biculturalism. Some argue that the goal of multiculturalism was to undermine Quebec's unique place in the confederation (Labelle, Rocher, and Rocher 1995); others suggest it was an electoral ploy aimed at building support for the Liberal Party among new ethnic voters (Hawkins 1991)" (Bloemraad 2006: fn49).

More recently, the "reasonable accommodation" debates in 2006-07 renewed these tensions, as did the related 2013-14 debates surrounding a Parti Quebecois (PQ) proposal for a Quebec Charter of Values that would have forbidden public sector employees from wearing conspicuous religious items or symbols. In each case, critics took aim at what they viewed as encroachment of Muslims on Quebec's values. The reasonable accommodation issue calmed following the publication of the *Bouchard-Taylor Report* in 2008, which demonstrated that much of the media reports regarding immigration and a perceived "take over" of Muslims in Quebec (commonly used to justify critique of reasonable accommodation) were either overblown or entirely false (Banting and Kymlicka 2010; Kymlicka 2010). Similarly, the 2014 bill containing the proposed Charter of Values died following the 2014 general election and the PQ's loss of power, a loss many attributed to their support of the Charter. Nevertheless, these events demonstrate that Quebec remains a politically volatile region for immigration and multiculturalism policy.

The frustrated position of many in Quebec has led scholars there to argue in favor of policies of *interculturalism* over *multiculturalism*, and there is some indication that their calls are taking minimal effect, though multiculturalism remains the official policy name.[34] As discussed earlier, Québécois scholar Charles Taylor favors *interculturalism* for its narrative power, what he describes as "the story that we tell about where we are coming from and where we are going"

[34] The word "intercultural" is increasingly used in Canadian government documents, though usually in its dialogue sense and in conjunction with multiculturalism, not in opposition to it. For example, in his foreword to the *2010-2011 Annual Report on the Operation of The Canadian Multiculturalism Act*, the Honorable Jason Kenney, Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism stated: "When we in Canada talk about multiculturalism, we envision pluralism, intercultural understanding and equality of opportunity" (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2012b: 5). The Canadian government's call for funding proposals in the Inter-Action Event Stream also takes up the term as it lists the funding objective: "Building an integrated, socially cohesive society by building bridges to promote intercultural understanding, or by fostering citizenship, civic memory, civic pride, and respect for core democratic values grounded in our history." See "Inter-Action Event Guidelines," http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/multiculturalism/funding/Inter-Action_Events_Guidelines.pdf.

(2012: 413). For Taylor, when the same set of policies protecting cultural diversity is accompanied by a narrative that places the majority culture as a starting point for mutual and equal dialogue and eventual cultural transformation, then no party will feel their culture is being displaced, replaced, ignored, or denied. All will have a stake in the future directions the policy takes (which of course is also one of the goals of much multicultural policy, though achieved unevenly) (Taylor 2012). Such a process requires interaction between all members — in other words, Taylor argues, it requires bi-directional integration.

In contrast to this alternative Quebecois intercultural narrative, Taylor contends, the present narrative accompanying Canadian multiculturalism has been that of "removing the majority culture" and, rather than replacing it with anything else, recognizing and respecting all cultural forms equally — such that all cultural identities exist together and none is given more ground than another in the eyes of the state. The problem, Taylor argues, is that in practice this narrative does not require integration: if no majority culture exists, then what would one integrate with? This, he argues, increases the likelihood that cultural groups will isolate themselves. Although the current multiculturalism narrative does not foreclose integration, it also doesn't require it, and thus, Taylor argues, the current narrative itself – i.e., an unwillingness to permit Quebec its standing as a majority culture – is enough to keep Quebecois separatist struggles alive (Taylor 2012).

Despite the claim that no one culture stands above the others in Canada, there is of course a majority culture that newcomers are asked to join, for example by learning an official language (English or French), or taking the national citizenship exam in order to naturalize. Unsurprisingly, that majority culture is a white-Anglophone one:

> In Canada, although there may not be the overt construction of national cultural homogeneity such as that which Gilroy argues exists in Britain, the white

> Anglophone majority undoubtedly has cultural, economic, and political dominance. If Canada is the 'very house of difference,' it contains a family with a distinct household head. (Mackey 1999: 12)

Thus, while policies in Canada may not dictate a majority culture, an examination of lived experience in Canada offers a view of cultural practices that suggest the critical utility of ethnographic analyses (in this case Mackey's) that suggest reassessments of theory and policy in light of immigrant experience.

Canadian Multiculturalism in the 2010s – is there a backlash?

Notably, the first country in the world to establish multiculturalism as a federal policy now remains one of the only countries in the world that continues to publicly support those policies. Multiculturalism is embedded in the Canadian national legal structure and both the policy and the demographic reality it describes are viewed as indisputably popular. In a 2007 poll, 84% of Canadians agreed with the following Ipsos-Reid poll statement: "Canada's multicultural makeup is one of the best things about this country" (Soroka and Roberton 2010: 3). Later, a 2010 Environics study found that 27% of Canadians polled gave the unprompted answer of "Multiculturalism" (the highest frequency of any one answer) when asked, "In your view, what is it about Canada that you think most deserves to be celebrated on its 150th birthday?" (Soroka and Roberton 2010: 4). More recently, a 2014 CBC poll on racism showed that 65% of respondents said they were "proud of Canada's multicultural makeup" (CBC News 2014).

Findings like these led the authors of the 2010 *Research and Evaluation of Citizenship and Immigration Canada* to report:

> There is no evidence of the kind of retrenchment seen in European countries over the past decade. Indeed, we suggest that one of the main findings in this report is that Canadian attitudes towards multiculturalism are very stable, perhaps a remarkable finding, given high levels of immigration and diversity (Soroka and Roberton 2010: 2).

Kymlicka and Banting have argued similarly that Canadian multiculturalism should not be viewed through European experiences or discourses of backlash: not only does Canada have a different historical and political context, but its experiences with immigration and multiculturalism are also relatively unique (2010). In reference to the backlash to multiculturalism attributed to Europe, Winter has argued that Canadian multiculturalism is unique in at least four ways: 1) Canada has experienced relatively no ethnic violence, as in the Paris *banlieues*, or Stockholm immigrant suburbs;[35] 2) there are higher levels of public support for immigration and multiculturalism in Canada than elsewhere; 3) Canada has not experienced a widespread public backlash against multiculturalism like that experienced in many countries of Europe (internal critique is of course present but it has been politically isolated, mostly in Quebec, and, even among anti-multiculturalists, there is "more media noise than political bite" (Kymlicka 2010: 15-17));[36] 4) Canada has enjoyed a high naturalization rate of immigrants (Bloemraad 2006); and 5) Toronto's population is perhaps unique in the world in terms of diversity due to immigration (Winter 2011: 13).

A 2007 team of researchers tasked with assessing the potential for a backlash to multiculturalism in Canada concluded that:

[35] The Ottawa shooting of October 2014 has been described by the media and government officials as an act of terrorism and prompted a number of anti-Muslim acts of vandalism in response. Immediate public reactions included outcries of an anti-immigrant and anti-multiculturalism nature. See e.g., "Terror attacks threaten Canada's multicultural project," *DW.de,* http://www.dw.de/terror-attacks-threaten-canadas-multicultural-project/a-18018846. But as more information was released, most national and international media and public commentators described the shooter as a mentally ill individual rather than a terrorist motivated by Islam or ethnic affiliation.

[36] According to Kymlicka: "So far at least, it appears that the backlash against multiculturalism has largely been restricted to Quebec. This is not surprising…. But even within Quebec, it is now clear that the impetus of the anti-multiculturalist movement has ebbed. The Bouchard-Taylor report has shown that the original media reports of "excessive" accommodation were often wildly inaccurate, and it concludes that there is no need for a dramatic revision of the existing policy of accommodation" (Kymlicka 2012a: 16-17).

> There is little evidence of the deep social segregation feared in parts of Europe ... Canada is not "sleepwalking into segregation." There is no justification for a U-turn in multiculturalism policies comparable to that underway in some European countries. (Banting, Courchene and Seidle 2007: 660, 681)

Since the codification of multiculturalism in Canada in 1971, the state has made available financial and in-kind support to organizations that enable ethnic communities to legitimately cultivate "multiple identities while promoting Canadian citizenship" (Bloemraad 2006: 122) and to publicly present their cultural and artistic talents and heritage across Canada. Political sociologist Irene Bloemraad describes this support as "material and symbolic resources [provided] to immigrants that they can use to make claims and access political debates" (122). In recent years, much of the multicultural funding that has been offered has originated from municipalities, rather than coming directly from the federal government. These municipal governments are also taking on more of the creative multicultural policy work (Straw 2013).

A 2007 government review of the Multiculturalism Program concluded that, "there was a need to adjust multiculturalism programming to focus more on integration and link the program to broader notions of citizenship and Canadian identity" (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2012a: 1). Thus, in October 2008, the Multiculturalism Program was transferred from the Department of Canadian Heritage to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), a shift that broadened both the CIC's mandate ("to include longer-term integration") and "clientele" (to include all Canadians, not only immigrants, as CIC had previously) (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2012a: 19). At Canadian Heritage, the four objectives of the Program had been developed in 1997 and included civic participation, anti-racism, institutional change, and federal institutional change, stated as:

- "ethnocultural/racial minorities participate in public decision-making"
- "communities and the broad public engage in informed dialogue and sustained action to combat racism"

- "public institutions eliminate systemic barriers"
- "federal policies, programs and services respond to diversity." (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2012a: 19)

Once at the CIC, these objectives were revised, and the Cabinet approved three new objectives in July 2009:

- "to build an integrated, socially cohesive society;[37]
- to improve the responsiveness of institutions to meet the needs of a diverse population;
- to actively engage in discussions on multiculturalism and diversity at an international level." (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2012a: 2)

These new objectives came into effect April 1, 2010 and were assessed by an internal audit. Employees interviewed saw strong connections between the sets of objectives. The main differences were seen to be that civic participation had been replaced with "civic memory and pride," and "intercultural relations between multi-communities, …and citizenship" now were emphasized (i.e., meaning projects must now involve two or more communities to attain funding, showing a preference for intercultural communication *between* ethnic communities) (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2012a: 20).[38]

Additional shuffling of the Multiculturalism Program occurred in 2014 with the role of the Minister of Multiculturalism. The appointment of the new role of "Minister of State (Multiculturalism)" was appointed to Tim Uppal, a second-generation Canadian and practicing Sikh who was the first Canadian cabinet minister to wear a turban in the House of Commons (CTV). But his appointment was met with a mix of excitement and confusion, since his role remained under the previous Minster for Multiculturalism, Jason Kenney, making the chain of command and division of duties unclear.

[37] Several scholars have demonstrated the shift towards discourses of social cohesion in policy circles since the 2001 Cantle Report and its claims of parallel societies left officials scrambling for solutions.
[38] Although the audit failed to cite it as significant, the new objectives have also removed the terms "race" and "racial" from the objectives or their descriptions.

In addition to shifts in the envisioned role of multiculturalism at the federal level, Bloemraad has noted that funding for multiculturalism initiatives has decreased since the 1990s (Bloemraad 2006), from around $21.3 million CAD in the mid-1990s to $14.3 million in 2013 (CBC News 2013). According to government reports, the total Multicultural Program expenditures on grants and contributions in 2009-2010 was $4.2 million CAD and in 2010-2011 $6.8 million CAD (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2012a: 4). But since 2007, at least $5 million CAD per year in funds earmarked to support community multiculturalism programs have gone unspent – not due to lack of applications but rather due to inefficiencies in processing them (CBC News 2013; Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2012a: vii, 24-26). The government's response has been to scale back funding for multiculturalism in favor of other immigration-related priorities, such as settlement services, the budget for which has risen by $400 million since 2005-2006 while funding for multiculturalism has continued to decline (Citizenship and Immigration Canada 2012a).

Finally, in changes arriving in 2015, CIC ended the points system, replacing it with "Express Entry," a system tied directly to labor demands, requiring applicants to "market themselves to employers or participating provinces and territories to secure a place in the Canadian immigration system" (Sumption 2014). This change marks a shift by the Conservative government to focus Canadian immigration squarely on economic immigrants. Confirming previous studies (e.g. Ornstein 2006, cited by Winter 2011: 13), regional reports conducted in 2008-2010 by the Multiculturalism and Human Rights Branch of the Department of Canadian Heritage showed that, when compared to earlier cohorts, "Canadian immigrants are taking longer to catch up to native-born Canadians in terms of earnings, and are at higher risk of poverty" (Kymlicka 2010: 21). Additional studies suggested that "only 40 per cent of skilled principal

applicants who arrived in 2000-2001 were working in the occupation or profession for which they were trained" (Banting and Kymlicka 2010: 53) while other studies showed that second generation visible minorities feel less attachment to Canada, and "experience feelings of alienation and disenfranchisement" (Winter 2011: 13; see also Reitz and Bannerjee 2007). In a commissioned report on these regional studies, Kymlicka argues that, while a disturbing trend, many of the causes of economic decline among immigrants, "seem to lie outside the jurisdiction of the federal multiculturalism policy, relating instead to issues such as professional accreditation, the evaluation of foreign job experience, language training, and mismatches between immigrant selection and actual labour market needs (e.g., recruiting large numbers of IT specialists just before the IT bubble burst)" (Kymlicka 2010: 21). Nevertheless, as seen in the Swedish case, growing gaps between immigrants and the Canadian-born, both in terms of income and belonging, can have increasingly negative impacts on efforts of multiculturalism, however defined.

These changes mark a philosophical shift among decision makers in the federal government: in moving the duty to fulfill the requirements of the Multiculturalism Act from the unit of government also responsible for cultural policy, heritage, language, broadcasting, and sports, to the unit responsible for citizenship applications, immigration decisions, and refugee cases, the Harper government also seems to have marked a shift in the government's view of the role of multiculturalism in Canadian society as one solely for immigrants, and a rather undervalued one at that. Shifts in the government's support of multiculturalism, decreased budgets, and increases in immigrant income disparities and unemployment notwithstanding, scholars have suggested that the Canadian context is sufficiently different from European contexts to dismiss claims to impending backlash or parallel societies. But given that Canadian

national identity has been rooted in multiculturalism, these shifts could be a way to dislodge its primary position in preparation for Canadian multiculturalism's fall from grace.

Concluding Remarks

In this dissertation, I do not make claims confirming or denying the backfire, backlash, or retreat of multicultural policies, but rather query the impact of policy on immigrant practices, both in the states in which they are implemented, and also in the broader global and diasporic networks and communities that they (perhaps unintentionally) also influence.

Triadafilopoulos's *Becoming Multicultural* highlighted the ways in which Canadian and German policy-makers' tendencies to "stretch" existing policy to fit changing global norms in the post-war period actually backfired, creating more openings for critics to challenge those policies, which eventually resulted in policy changes, and ultimately in their 'becoming multicultural' societies. Triadafilopoulos's study importantly points to the influence of both global and local norms and political structures, a valuable intervention into the political science of policy-making related to membership and immigration (what he terms "the migration-membership dilemma"). But norms and policy represent a bi-directional interplay of influence, not simply a uni-directional relationship — thus, we must also look at the ways policy has impacts on norms and practices related to identity, belonging, and membership, and particularly those which may not be restricted to local spaces or connected to intentional outcomes, in other words, diasporic practice and citizenship.

According to Triadafilopoulos, "if the similarity in long-term outcomes [of multicultural policy in Canada and Germany] shows that norms and corresponding ideas matter, differences in the timing and degree of conflict show that politics also matters" (2012: 4). I argue that, because culture and cultural identity are critical to both norms and politics, the everyday interactions of

people and the ways in which they perceive cultural identity should also be analyzed in discussions of multicultural policy. These are of course political and related to norms, but these kinds of policy shifts have such direct influences on cultural life (as they are intended to do) that they are also important to contextualize culturally, as much as politically or historically.

Despite their similar rankings in the most recent MPI, through the discussions of Swedish and Canadian political, historical, and cultural contexts above, it is clear that both countries rely on notions of multiculturalism in their understandings of national identity, though to importantly different degrees and for different historical purposes. In Canada, multiculturalism was a useful strategy for dismantling the strength of the Quebecois challenge to British-English-Canadian dominance and for asserting itself as a unified entity distinct from the United States. By establishing multiculturalism rather than bi-culturalism, Prime Minister Trudeau recognized the Aboriginal and non-British or French Canadians ("visible minorities") while also offering the country a way of marking itself as different from the United States and other countries through the notion of the mosaic. Thus, multiculturalism is commonly understood be a cornerstone or "the sticky stuff" of Canadian national identity. In Sweden, however, the history is markedly different. As a largely homogenous, socialist country for much of its history – well into the 20th century – the quick demographic changes that resulted first in the increasing numbers of non-European immigrants, and then in the shift from majority labor migration to majority humanitarian/asylum migration meant that within one generation the "face" of Sweden had changed significantly. As described above, Sweden's approach to multiculturalism has shifted with each of these population shifts, moving from a corporatist group-focus to an individualist orientation, and from a commitment to freedom of choice towards a more integrationist strategy.

Indeed, both Canada and Sweden experienced growth in immigration at the same time, as

shifts in immigration policy and global politics meant the demographic composition of that immigration also changed significantly. In Sweden, this meant a shift from labor migration to large numbers of humanitarian/refugee immigrants, alongside a corresponding shift in ethnic, national, and class backgrounds with important impacts on education and labor statistics. In Canada, the opening of immigration in 1967 led to high rates of migration from non-European origins, and, while the number of refugee and humanitarian cases was significant, so was the number of immigrants who arrived through the points system – drawing the educated, wealthy, and linguistically prepared from around the world to Canada.[39] The comparison of these contexts reveals different histories and ethos of multicultural support that nevertheless are often described as similar in terms of the "success of multiculturalism."

As Vertovec and Wessendorf have also emphasized, attention to the local contexts and histories of multicultural policy is imperative to understanding the ways multiculturalism has impacted immigrant communities (2010: 1). Both Canada and Sweden are home to significant Iranian communities, where Iranians have been relatively successful in economic, political, and cultural arenas (as discussed in the following chapters). Despite the differences noted here, the Iranian communities in Sweden and Canada have both produced large, public festivals featuring Iranian arts and culture, enabled in whole or in part by multiculturalism. Just as these festivals were not produced in the same way – as outlined in the following chapters – neither were the policies and societies that enabled them, and these differences are importantly related.

[39] By way of example, in 2011, economic class migrants (i.e. skilled workers, business immigrants, and their families, etc.) made up 62.8% of all immigrants, as compared to the protected persons class (i.e., refugees, successful asylum claimants, etc.), which comprised only 11.2% that year. In 2010, 66.6% were economic class immigrants, while only 8.8% were protected persons (Chagnon 2013: 4).

CHAPTER 3

Debating Culture, Jumping Fire: Contesting Culturalism through Democratic Practice in Stockholm

In the fictitious town of Iranian playwright Bijan Mofid's 1967 play *Shahr-i Qiṣṣah* (City of Tales), the citizens are all animals and their travails are meant to represent Iranian society through musical satire: there's "donkey the worker, monkey the wise joker, bear the bureaucrat…."[1] In one scene, an elephant comes to town, a newcomer the likes of which none of the animals had ever seen. They question everything about him: who are you? What are those big teeth? What is that long thing hanging from your face? And hey, what kind of name is *Fīl* (elephant in Persian)? After ridiculing the elephant and remarking on how strange his appearance and name were, they decided to help him: they cut off his trunk, tore out his tusks and put them on his head, and took him to the registration office to get a new birth certificate, changing his name from *Fīl* to the more common Manuchehr.

Figure 7. Album cover of a recorded performance of *Shahr-i Qiṣṣah* designed by renowned Iranian graphic designer, Ghobad Shiva.[2]

[1] Characters listed by Hossein Valamanesh as interviewed by Mary Knights and Ian North in *Hossein Valamanesh: Out of Nothingness* (2011).
[2] Cover image: http://www.garteh.com/articles/default.asp?codeweek=29&idm=243.

Now considered a classic of Iranian theater and performance, Mofid's *Shahr-i Qiṣṣah* offered clever socio-political critique through folktales, children's stories, and rhyming verse set to music. The tale of the newcomer elephant, in particular, has been interpreted as a satirical take on conformity and of course as a critical commentary on assimilation.[3] An Iranian-Swedish producer of large diaspora commercial concerts in Stockholm built on this latter meaning when he related the tale to me. For him, the story was a way of expressing his frustration with what he called "manipulation" and "betrayal" of Iranian culture at the hands of Swedish cultural organizations and their Iranian-Swedish collaborators:

> What [the organizers of *Eldfesten*] are doing with *Chahārshanbih Sūrī* is the same thing [as in *Shahr-i Qiṣṣah*]. They have taken *Chahārshanbih Sūrī* and made its name *Eldfest*; the ceremony, the things that they put on stage, many of them have nothing to do with Iran, but they want to say that, since *everyone* is coming, then…! [But] you can't change the festival just because participants are *khārijī* (foreigners)![4]

Chahārshanbih Sūrī is an Iranian holiday celebrated on the final Tuesday evening before New Year; in Stockholm, as of 2010 it has been celebrated as a large state-supported cultural festival called *Eldfesten*. At the base of this producer's criticism is an interpretation of culture that anthropologists have long critiqued, variously called essentialist or culturalist ideologies (Baumann 1999, Grillo 2003). In these conceptualizations, as Ralph Grillo has argued, human beings are "bearers of *a* culture, located within a bounded world, which defines them and differentiates them from others" (Grillo 2003: 158, emphasis mine). In this view, cultural traditions are not only fixed and timeless, but also felt to be owned by some and in need of

[3] Originally written for and performed as stage theater, after a long run on Iranian stages *Shahr-i Qiṣṣah* was recorded as a radio program and filmed for television, garnering a large and loyal audience across Iran. According to one source, some used the play after the 1979 Revolution as a form of protest: "it was broadcast by its admirers from the rooftops of their homes in Tehran in protest against religious leaders" (Daniel and Mahdi 2006). *Shahr-i Qiṣṣah* remains part of popular culture in Iran as well; construction of what would become the largest theme park in the Middle East is currently underway in Tehran, slated to open in 2015, and called *Shahr-i Qiṣṣah.*

[4] Interviewed by Amy Malek, June 27, 2012. Translation mine. *Khārijī* here refers to Swedes.

protection from others. To the Iranian-Swedish producer in question, and to many immigrants like him, Iranian celebrations are *owned* by Iranians and thus reserved for specific linguistic and artistic traditions that comprise a bounded, authentic Iranian culture (also owned by Iranians). Thus, a public celebration in Stockholm of an Iranian holiday presented with a Swedish name, by English- and Swedish-speaking hosts that included performances of non-Iranian music and was described as belonging to "everyone," was taken as an affront to his understanding and ownership of Iranian culture. That fellow Iranians had produced this festival in collaboration with Swedes led to his charge of cultural betrayal:

> This is something on the level of fraud, a scam [*kulā bardārī*] …Yes; it's to that extent! Do you know what "*tahrīf-i tārīkhī*" [historical distortion] is? It's to change culture [*sic*]. *Tahrīf-i farhang* [cultural manipulation]. When they say that *Chahārshanbih Sūrī* isn't Iranians'— doesn't belong to Iranians – then it begs to be questioned.[5]

As discussed in Chapter 2, questions of culture and belonging have been at the heart of debates surrounding multiculturalism (and particularly of anthropologists' critiques of it), leading scholars such as Steven Vertovec to call for "less emphasis on the 'culturalism' and more on the 'multi'" (1999: np). Vertovec defined 'culturalism' as "conceiving cultures as reified, static, and homogenous across bounded groups" and "the assumption of common beliefs and practices within a discrete ethnic group" (Vertovec 2011). His checklist of the highly critiqued culturalist assumptions often found within multicultural ideologies could also describe this particular producer's preferred view of Iranian culture from his position in Stockholm: "discrete, bounded and integrated" as a set of traits, values, and practices "tied historically to one place," "deterministic of behavior," "transmitted between generations," static, totalizing, essentializing, and representable as a community of members whose interests can be "represented by a 'leader'" (1999: np).

[5] Interviewed by Amy Malek, June 27, 2012. Translation mine.

Furthermore, critics like Anne Phillips, Seyla Benhabib, Nancy Fraser and other scholars who have put forward what Will Kymlicka has called "post-multiculturalist critiques of essentialism" (2014), have argued that multicultural policies encourage essentialist constructions of groups and thus serve as "cultural straitjackets" that ultimately police cultural practices, "forcing those described as members of a minority cultural group into a regime of authenticity, denying them the chance to cross cultural borders, borrow cultural influences, define and redefine themselves" (Phillips 2007: 14). Philip Scher describes a similar scenario in his study of Caribbean Carnival in Brooklyn, which was subjected to what he called, "culturalist 'museumification' strategies by New York City and by cultural organizations," a process he has termed "bureaucratic multiculturalism" (Scher 2003: 88, 115-116).

One of three ways Peggy Levitt has suggested that migration scholars should re-examine culture and gain greater understanding of the everyday realities of migrants was to examine the ways in which cultural policies and institutions engage and impact migrant experiences (Levitt 2012). She specifically recommended research investigating how cultural policy has been "used to manage movement and settlement" (Levitt 2012: 498) and offered the U.S. and Sweden as two exemplary cases where cultural policies could not be more different: "In Sweden, it is standard practice to use state cultural institutions to pursue social goals, while in the United States there is no coherent cultural policy, let alone one aimed at integrating immigrants" (Levitt 2012: 498).

This chapter takes up Levitt's call and examines the Swedish case, where a robust approach to multiculturalism has included cultural policy measures aimed toward integration efforts. In this chapter, I make two key points about the impacts of this festival specifically and the potential impacts of cultural policy on immigrants and their incorporation or integration more broadly.

First, I demonstrate that cultural policies can operate in unexpected ways by creating opportunities for the spread of cultural experimentation and democratic practices within and across diaspora groups. Swedish cultural policies and the institutions tasked with implementing them have created avenues for interaction between Iranian community members and intermediaries of the state that not only prepare immigrants for increased participation in Swedish public life – a key integration goal of the state – but *also* promoted democratic processes that encouraged reconsiderations of cultural attitudes among Iranian-Swedes.

In the case of Eldfesten I offer here, democratic processes were rehearsed through debates surrounding culture that took place in production meetings and in ethnic media leading up to the 2012 festival. Though not always brought out explicitly, notions surrounding culturalism (and its conceptual 'cousins': multiculturalism and interculturalism) lay at the heart of the debates that ensued, and formed the basis for public contestations between Iranian community members, arts organizations, and state intermediaries with important impacts for diasporic belonging. As a demonstration of such an impact of policy on practice, and counter to the concerns of anti-essentialist critiques of multiculturalism, I found that culturalist understandings (i.e., of culture as owned, authentic, or total) were debated among Iranians in Stockholm precisely because Swedish cultural policies offered an incentivized counter-discourse of intercultural exchange and integration.

Through these examples, I also show that multicultural policies can create fora for the spread of democratic ideas and processes within and across diaspora groups, contributing to the growth of diasporic citizenship. Programs funded by Swedish cultural policies facilitate diasporic citizenship by promoting political practices and cultural attitudes; these ideas and beliefs can then move outwards laterally across diasporic spaces (Brah 1996, Clifford 1994). Key

individuals within the Iranian-Swedish community in Stockholm have utilized their experiences and positions within democracy-promoting Swedish institutions to engage community members in a didactic and participatory forum intended to exhibit, through practice, the values of democratic processes. As demonstrated below, their goal is not only to model, encourage, and rehearse successful collaboration among Iranians in Sweden, but to influence the democratic practices of Iranians in other parts of the diaspora and, ultimately, to impact the democratic nature of a future Iran.

Second, I argue that critics of multiculturalism have been uncritically dismissive of policy-funded cultural programs, without having studied the transformative impacts that the production of public festivals can have off-stage and in their after-lives. In other words, while state-supported cultural products – like festivals – are important to study in their own right, migration scholars should also be attentive to the processes of cultural production, which often involve transformative practices for immigrant integration. Politicians, scholars, and journalists have been particularly vocal in proclaiming the failure of multiculturalism and critics from the left in particular have asserted that "feel-good" or "celebration multiculturalism" has focused on shallow celebrations of difference through cultural forms (e.g., Bauböck 2008). This focus, they argue, has left wide inequalities between minorities and the majority in terms of integration, employment, housing, and socio-economic status. Kymlicka and others have argued that these critiques mischaracterize multicultural policies (Kymlicka 2012a); I show that such critiques too quickly dismiss cultural policies like the funding of cultural festivals. While cultural policies may create competition for funding, they can also lay the groundwork for cultural contestations over the fixity and boundedness of culture, the rights of representation, and understandings of

cultural identity, which in turn open the possibilities for intercultural exchange and integration – two key objectives of Swedish multicultural policy.

Gerd Baumann has observed that reified culture, a feature of essentialism, is a "real factor in social life" as long as minority groups continue to undertake the process he called "folk reification" (Baumann and Sunier 1995; quoted in Phillips 2007: 52). I show that culturalist perspectives remain important sources of ideological power in the everyday lives of Iranian diaspora communities and thus require renewed anthropological attention at the level of practice. During my fieldwork in Stockholm, the aforementioned producer's culturalist perspective (demonstrated above) was not only one man's opinion; it was also the criticism raised in vocal contestations that occurred in Persian-language media, in committee meetings, and in communications with Swedish intermediary institutions. It therefore reflected certain anxieties among Iranian community members, discussed below, that could be mobilized – and debated – in response to interactions with the state.

Thus, far from serving as a cultural straitjacket, I offer a case in which multicultural policies and the programs they support have enabled precisely the opposite, where Iranian-Swedes with culturalist motivations and anxieties (e.g. of representation, preservation, and border-guarding) are being challenged democratically by Iranian-Swedes who have mobilized support of national institutions and multicultural policies to revise and experiment with cultural forms, ideas, and practices.

Iranians in Stockholm – A Brief Overview

Ethnically homogenous for much of its history, Sweden became one of the first countries in the world to adopt state multicultural policies in the 1970s, after policy changes shifted the composition of the majority of Sweden's immigration – from white, European, Christian or

secular labor migrants to non-European asylum seekers and their families. By 2012, 20% of Sweden's population was either foreign-born or second-generation. With these population shifts also came shifts to multicultural policy, moving Sweden towards models of bi-directional integration and intercultural exchange. These policies and the system of government that produced them have been famously touted abroad as a success story and, until recently, Sweden remained one of the few European countries to maintain a commitment to cultural diversity and policies of multiculturalism. However, critiques of immigration and Swedish multicultural polices are growing louder and multiculturalism has been blamed for immigrant rioting, high unemployment, crime rates, and racial tensions. This political rhetoric is enjoying increasing popular favor regardless of conflicting or scant sociological evidence to back such claims. This favor is perhaps made most evident by the electoral successes of the far-right xenophobic anti-immigrant political party, the Sweden Democrats, who captured 12.9% of the vote in the 2014 national elections, making it the 3rd ranking party in Swedish parliament (Riksdag).

Over 97,000 residents of Iranian heritage were registered as living in Sweden in 2013 (Statistiska centralbyrån 2014). According to the City of Stockholm and Statistiska Centralbyråns (SCB) population data, in 2014, 22.6% of the residents of Stockholm County (roughly equivalent to the Stockholm metropolitan area) were foreign-born, and among them 25,703 were Iranian (5.3%) (Stockholms stad 2014). Although Iranian immigrants are spread around the county, they are most concentrated in the municipality of Stockholm (population: 11,592; third behind Finns and Iraqis in the city), and also comprise the highest immigrant population in its neighboring suburban municipalities of Solna, Sundyberg, and Sollentuna (Dagens Nyheter 2012b).

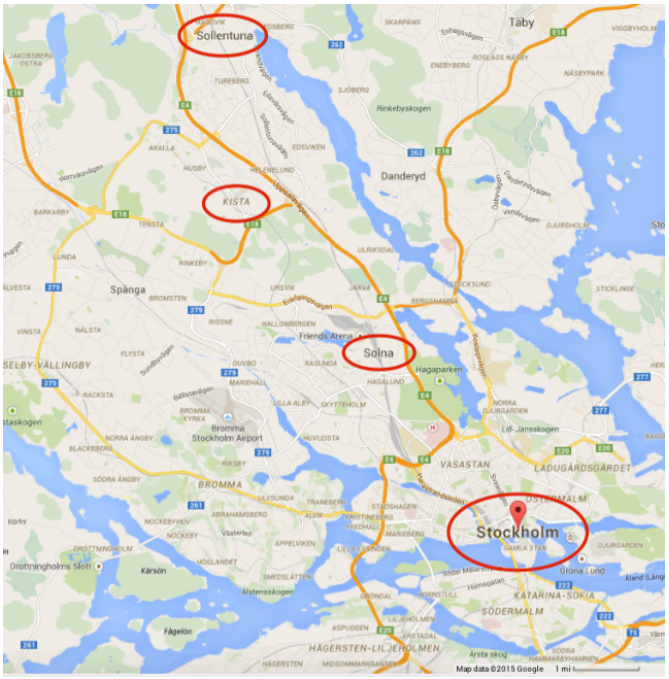

Figure 8. Map of northern Stockholm highlighting areas with high concentration of Iranian residents. Map data © 2015 Google.

Within the municipality of Stockholm, by of the end of 2013 some 275, 598 residents – or 30.7% – were foreign-born (including immigrants and their children). But unlike Toronto or other multicultural cities, there are very few enclaves or residential clusters of co-ethnic immigrants in Stockholm. Whether due to refugee settlement restrictions, economic constraints, personal choice, or limited housing options, it is most common for immigrants in Stockholm to live among a diverse array of other immigrants, rather than solely among fellow co-ethnics (Dagens Nyheter 2012a). Thus, although over 11,000 Iranians live in the city of Stockholm, they are spread across all 27 townships (*församling)*. Of these 27, Spånga-Kista is home to the largest concentration of Iranians at 3,489 (31.7%), particularly the neighborhoods of Kista, Akalla, and Husby. Yet, these are highly diverse neighborhoods, in a borough (Rinkeby-Kista) that itself is 80.4% foreign-born, and therefore by no means should we consider these areas centralized Iranian enclaves (Stockholms stad 2015). Indeed, while there may be high concentrations of

immigrants in the metropolitan area, when compared with cities of comparable diversity, there are no true ethnic enclaves in Stockholm – Iranian or otherwise (Dagens Nyheter 2012a).

From January to July 2012, I conducted fieldwork with Iranians living in Stockholm (both the municipality and county). Although my research focus was upon cultural workers, I interviewed a wide array of individuals and participated in a variety of events, whether produced by the many local Iranian associations, radio stations, language schools, or cultural organizations run by Iranian-Swedes. Large numbers of Iranians began to arrive in Sweden in the 1980s and 1990s, primarily as refugees of the Iran-Iraq War and the political, economic, and social shifts in the country following the 1979 Revolution. As noted by Melissa Kelly (2011), the Iranians who arrived to Sweden during this period were often political activists, secular, and opponents of the Islamic Republic. Sweden's policy of refugee dispersal during this period resulted in the dispersal of Iranians across the country, often to remote towns in need of the financial benefit that came with taking in refugees.[6] During my fieldwork in Stockholm in 2012, nearly all of the Iranian-Swedes with whom I spoke and who had migrated during the 1980s and 1990s related tales of the challenges they faced having fled bustling Tehran, for example, to arrive in a tiny village in snowy Sweden with no money, no family, and no knowledge of Swedish language or culture.

What the majority of Iranians arriving in Sweden at that time did arrive with, however, was a relative abundance of social and cultural capital. According to Kelly, Iranians were and remain one of the "most highly educated immigrant groups in Sweden," with more than 25% of

[6] As the number of refugees entering Sweden increased, municipalities in points-of-entry (e.g. Stockholm, Malmö) with higher numbers of immigrants were carrying the majority of the burden of support for refugees waiting for decision on their asylum cases. To remedy this, Sweden implemented an active "Sweden-wide" program of refugee dispersal from 1985-1994, during which nearly all municipalities across Sweden held agreements with the state for refugee placement. After asylum was granted they were permitted to move if they chose to do so, but wait times were often long and moving was difficult for some. This policy was reformed in 1994 to allow refugees to arrange their own accommodation upon arrival if they were able to do so. (Andersson 2003)

both men and women having attained at least three years of post-secondary education – 6% higher than the Swedish average (2011: 444). Despite the generally high valuation of education among Iranians, perhaps even above average Swedes, Iranians in Sweden face a high unemployment rate – only 54.4% of Iranians in Sweden are employed, compared to 81.6% of Swedes (Kelly 2011: 444). Indeed, in 2012, Sweden had the highest unemployment gap between foreign born and native employees out of all the Nordic countries (Government Offices of Sweden 2013). According to Eurostat, in 2012 Sweden had the largest number of unemployed between ages 20-24 in all the Nordic countries – both among natives and foreign born. But the foreign born were far worse off in this regard. The Iranian case is perhaps exemplary of the fact that education rates seem to have had little impact on unemployment among certain migrant groups.[7] In fact, according to a report on integration released by the Government Offices of Sweden, in 2012 native persons in Sweden with post-secondary education held jobs that required their level of education far more frequently than did foreign born persons with secondary education (Government Offices of Sweden 2013). In other words, educated foreign-born persons in Sweden are doing jobs that are beneath their skill-level at a far greater rate than are native-born educated persons (Government Offices of Sweden 2013: 89). These indicators have been cited as suggestive of larger systemic discrimination against immigrants in the Swedish labor market (whether due to barriers to credential transfers or to racial, ethnic, linguistic or other forms of bias), one of the many factors that analysts and activists have pointed to in the wake of 2013 rioting in immigrant neighborhoods.[8]

Beyond the early wave of asylum-seekers, between 2000-2011, Iranians accounted for

[7] See for example, Shahram Khosravi, "White masks/Muslim names: immigrants and name-changing in Sweden." *Race & Class* 53, no. 3 (2012): 65-80.

[8] Megafonen, an advocacy group in Husby, was cited in numerous media reports looking for the cause of the riots; see e.g., "Sweden Riots Put Faces to Statistics as Stockholm Burns," http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2013-05-26/sweden-riots-put-faces-to-statistics-as-stockholm-burns.html

3% of all immigrants arriving in Sweden (Iraqis comprised the number one position during this period, at a chart-topping 12%) (Government Offices of Sweden 2013: 24). Many Iranians continued to arrive as refugees (often on religious, ethnic, and sexuality bases), however, family reunification, economic and educational reasons also were more frequently cited than in the previous period. The draw of free post-secondary education in Sweden was also among the incentives for Iranian youth looking for alternatives abroad, but this changed in 2011 when the government withdrew this form of support for immigrants and limited free education to Swedish nationals.

Perhaps due in part to their social, political and cultural activities in Iran prior to migration, Iranian communities in Stockholm are very active in both political and cultural realms (Hajighasemi 2012). Many political refugees with whom I spoke said they continued their political activism once in Sweden. Today, Iranians are members of national Swedish political parties, hold municipal positions, and even serve in Swedish Parliament. They are also active in public resistance to the Islamic Republic, primarily in struggles for human rights, women's rights, and religious freedom; on any given day one can find an Iranian demonstration against the regime in the center of Stockholm. During my fieldwork in 2012, for example, an encampment was set up in Sergels torg, the main protest square in Stockholm, and remained there for over a month. It included a large homemade prison structure one could walk into to learn about the conditions of political prisoners in Iran.

These political activities can and do manifest in cultural settings, where Iranians are also very active in Stockholm. Like the political activists who maintained their activism in diaspora, Iranians who had been professional artists in theater, film, and music in Iran described to me their efforts to pursue their careers once in Sweden, whether through Swedish theater and film or

through ethnic media (to varying degrees of success). Today, Iranian-Swedish musicians and dancers often perform on public stages, including in Melodifestivalen, Sweden's immensely popular annual competition for representation in the Eurovision Song Contest, itself a barometer of European pop culture.[9] They serve on arts councils and lead organizations that determine funding of city and provincial programming. They appear in the casts of popular Swedish TV programs (e.g., Nina Zanjani as Isabelle on *Wallander*), serve as news anchors on local TV networks, and are particularly active in Swedish theater, increasingly gaining lead roles on main stages and in positions of authority among the notoriously homogenous cultural elite that run Stockholm's prestigious theaters. There are frequent concerts by touring Iranian diasporic musicians (usually pop, but also classical and 'fusion'), and Iranian cultural traditions, particularly those surrounding Nowruz, are increasingly present in mainstream Swedish culture – thanks largely to the active Iranian community in Stockholm. Indeed, in 2014, a popular quiz show ("*Vem vet mest?*" translated as, "Who Knows Most?") included the question: "What is the Swedish name for the party that launches the Persian New Year, celebrated by outdoor bonfires?" The answer was of course *Eldfesten*, the subject of the remainder of this chapter.

Figure 9. Screen grab from "Vem vet mest?" quiz show on Swedish television, aired March 2014.

[9] At least three Iranian-Swedish musicians have competed in the last 10 years, most recently in 2015.

The Festival, The Stakeholders, and The Debate

In the following section I offer a history of Eldfesten and an ethnographic account of the weeks leading up to the 2012 Eldfesten, an event that was marked by contestation, debate, and gossip in the Iranian community in Stockholm. I first introduce the event and the players involved, followed by the debates that ensued and the relationship between them and cultural policy imperatives.

Eldfesten: A Celebration of *Chahārshanbih Sūrī* in Stockholm

Figure 10. Fire-jumping in the center of Stockholm during Eldfesten 2012. Photo © Amy Malek.

Swedish for "fire festival," Eldfesten is an annual celebration held in a number of Swedish cities[10] on the last Tuesday evening of the Iranian solar year, i.e. six days before the vernal equinox (the New Year). This celebration is known by Iranians as *Chahārshanbih Sūrī* (often translated literally as Red Wednesday) and, in its celebration as Eldfesten, the event is advertised in both Swedish and Persian languages as a celebration of this ancient Iranian holiday. According to police estimates, in its first year in 2010, the event drew between 12,000-15,000

[10] The first festival was held in Stockholm in 2010; over the next several years additional cities were added, such that Eldfesten was celebrated in five cities in 2014: Stockholm, Gothenburg, Malmö, Sunsdvall, and Västerås. With increasing reach, the event has also received greater coverage in national television, newspapers, and radio.

attendees; in 2011 it drew between 15,000-17,000; and in 2014, Eldfesten in Stockholm drew an estimated audience of 23,000. Recall that the estimated population of Iranians in Stockholm County is 25,703 – thus, not only did the event draw a sizeable portion of the Iranian community to an outdoor festival in March, a fair number of Eldfesten's audience in Stockholm were non-Iranians.

Figure 11. Eldfesten 2013 Poster featuring the character ***Hājī Fīrūz***, played by Iranian-Swedish theater and TV actor, Amir Barghashi.

Tracing its roots to an ancient Zoroastrian feast, *Chahārshanbih Sūrī* has been celebrated in Iran for centuries, though the practices and rituals associated with the celebration have varied over time and in different towns and cities.[11] In contemporary Iran, *Chahārshanbih Sūrī* is a popular holiday usually celebrated by small gatherings of family and friends in yards, alleyways, and side streets. The primary form of celebration involves jumping over small fires while singing "*surkhī-i tu az man*, *zardī-i man az tu" (*[let] your ruddiness [be] mine, my paleness yours) (Kasheff and Sirjani 1990), a ritual that is meant to rid practitioners of the ills of the previous year and to bring good fortune for the coming new year. Setting off fireworks, consuming certain foods, and singing and dancing with the appearance of a traditional costumed character (*Hājī Fīrūz*, also known as *Hājī Pīrūz*) are all common to *Chahārshanbih Sūrī* celebrations in Iran today.[12]

[11] For more on the history and traditions of the holiday, see Kasheff and Sirjani (1990).
[12] This poster for Eldfesten 2013 features *Hājī Fīrūz* as performed by Swedish-Iranian theater and TV actor Amir Barghashi on stage at Eldfesten 2012; the photograph used in the poster was taken by the author. The name of the event is written in Persian (*Chahārshanbih Sūrī)*, in transliterated Persian as "Chaharshanbe Soori," and in Swedish as Eldfesten 2013.

In diaspora, the holiday has become an occasion to come together in large gatherings, often in organized public celebrations that – far from the neighborhood or family gatherings held in Iran – more closely resemble festivals, fairs, and carnivals common in the U.S., Canada, or Europe. In cities like the Bay Area, Toronto, and Washington, D.C., local Iranian organizations (cultural, religious, and/or student-run) coordinate with local officials to close local streets, parks, or parking lots for fire department-monitored fire jumping to the beats of young Iranian DJs alongside vendors selling traditional soup, grilled corn, and kabobs. In some large cities, these rituals and celebrations are joined by elaborate concerts and dance performances (San Diego, Stockholm, Toronto); in others, the organization is more often informal and family-based (New York, Los Angeles).[13]

In Sweden, beginning in 1994, a large *Chahārshanbih Sūrī* event was organized annually by an Iranian association (part of the national umbrella organization, Iranska Riksförbundet i Sverige (IRIS)) in Rissne, one of the several suburbs of Stockholm with a large immigrant population. In 2009, a commercial concert producer decided to bring this Iranian celebration to Kungsträdgården (the largest public square in the center of Stockholm) where it could be showcased for a larger population. Newspaper articles later noted that the producer had gathered over 200 people to work on the event over several months, and that they expected upwards of 20,000 attendees (*Dagens Nyheter* 2009). A multicultural marketing firm (KAPI) posted an online notice that claimed the event was a unique business opportunity given that "the purchasing power of Persians in Sweden in 2006 was 8.5 billion kronor" and that "Persians

[13] Despite a growing Iranian population, the NYC *Chahārshanbih Sūrī* celebration in 2014 was shut down by local fire authorities, prompting many a Facebook comment from Iranian New Yorkers claiming Iranians' inability to properly organize and attain permits for their functions.

consume extra amounts for Nowruz."[14]

However, the 2009 Eldfesten event never happened. Just after midnight on the night before the scheduled celebration, the stage of Kungsträdgården was set on fire. The blaze took three hours to extinguish and resulted in severe damage to one of Sweden's most famous public venues. Upon investigation, the Detective Inspector of the Stockholm Police told the *Svenska Dagbladet* newspaper that he had no doubt that the fire at Kungsträdgården was a case of arson, but that as yet they had no suspects (*Svenska Dagbladet* 2009). After the fire, theories abounded as to who may have been responsible – was it racists angry at the prospect of an Iranian presence in the center of the city? Indeed, Swedish message boards from the time included such speculation, including ill-informed, if unfortunately typical, debates over the assumed "Muslim" nature of the event, and suspicions over a "global intifada."[15] Or, alternatively, was it a consequence of intra-community rivalries?

According to recollections of Iranian organizers attentive at the time, the attempt to bring *Chahārshanbih Sūrī* out of the suburbs by holding a separate event on the same night (the only possibility since the celebration is based on a date-fixed holiday), sparked disagreements between various Iranian parties. Yet, as one young Iranian-Swede told me, it did not really matter who did it and why, the result for the Iranian community was the same: disgrace.

> It was a *huge*, *huge*, *huge* disgrace for us as Iranians in Sweden… I remember myself that it was a big disgrace for us. … And then you get all of these stereotypes back – they are cannibals, they are savages, barbarians, terrorists,

[14] The marketing materials cite Statistics Sweden for this figure. KAPI AB, http://www.kapimarketing.com/iransk-eldfest-i-kungstradgarden/. January 2, 2009.

[15] Speculation from Ubuntu Forums under Politics>Integration and Immigration, a Swedish discussion thread titled, "The stage of Kungsträdgården burned on the day of Eldfesten:" "Is it a coincidence that the place where Eldfesten was to be celebrated is burned during the night? Can Global intifada be involved? Or has it been due to an opaque religious conflict between religious minorities? Or is it indeed a work of racist Nazis opposed to the Persian New Year being celebrated here? Swedish media is not likely to connect the wires for us, which of course leaves room for speculation." Conversation archived at https://www.flashback.org/t872530. Of course, the holiday is rooted in Zoroastrianism and has nothing to do with Islam.

whatever. Burning flags, burning stages.[16]

This feeling of disgrace was the motivation for a group of young, second-generation Iranian-Swedes to move to organize an Eldfesten in Kungsträdgården the following year (2010), this time as a non-profit effort involving the cooperation of major national state-sponsored Swedish organizations in collaboration with a small committee of Iranian associations. This founding organization, known as Initiativ Iran, began as a human rights and activist organization founded by three 1.5 and second generation Iranians, all around 25 years of age at the time (2009-10). These three individuals were extremely active during the protests and demonstrations that took place in Sweden after the 2009 election debacle in Iran, including in the successful planning of a large public concert and rally in the center of Stockholm.

In the wake of the fire, Initiativ Iran was particularly interested in showing to Swedish society that Iranians were not only honorable but an open and inclusive group. To do this, they approached Iranian colleagues employed in Swedish institutions (discussed below) whom they knew also prioritized cooperation, democracy, and human rights. Tomaj Keyvani, a representative of one of these organizations, described their decision to collaborate:

> [Initiativ Iran] approached us and they said that you should do something about this [fire] because this is not good for us. Because now in the whole Sweden people are saying that, 'Oh these Iranians, they can't do anything, they just fight with each other, they burn down the stage, and they do this and do that." So they came to Farhang and to Riksteatern and they said, 'We should do something to erase that bad memory. To show that we can cooperate.' *That's* why we took this up and arranged *Chahārshanbih Sūrī*. And we also were very insistent of inclusion. That's why we went to [IRIS] and included them …it could have been so much easier if we just would have excluded them. We could have done that, you know? …It's only out of respect that we wanted them to be a part of it…because we wanted to make this event that is about inclusion, that is about reaching out to everybody.[17]

[16] Tomaj Keyvani, interviewed by Amy Malek, June 19, 2012.
[17] Keyvani, interview, June 19, 2012.

Not coincidentally, these aims for inclusivity echo those found in Swedish cultural policy. The themes of inclusion, diversity, openness, and democracy were repeated throughout my interviews with the various organizers and representatives responsible for organizing Eldfesten in 2012. Indeed, the original vision of Initiativ Iran was to bring the event to the center of the capital not only to broaden the audience of the event, but also to demonstrate the capabilities of the Iranian community to work together in a professional production alongside and in collaboration with Swedish organizations. This was an effort to engage community members in a didactic and participatory forum intended to demonstrate and rehearse democratic processes – with eventual goals of influencing the democratic nature of a future Iran. In an attempt to make it as inclusive as possible, in 2011 the partners of Initiativ Iran, Riksteatern (the National Touring Theater of Sweden), Farhang Förening, and ABF approached various organizations of the Iranian community in Stockholm, inviting all of them to join a production committee, eventually called Eldfesten Committee.

Initiativ Iran had ceased operations by 2012, but the cooperative collaboration between the Committee and the remaining three original organizations has resulted in successful annual celebrations of Eldfesten since 2010, drawing audiences of between 10,000 to 20,000 people to Kungsträdgården each March. The event is professionally produced and includes pyrotechnics, a house band, and most recently, a large fireworks display, the only to occur in this central area of Stockholm outside of New Year's Eve celebrations. The musical performances include a broad range of artists, all of whom are paid professionals, and many of whom are touring artists based outside of Sweden. Importantly, the line-up is intended to appeal to all age groups and many different musical tastes and is entirely conceived through consensus by the Eldfesten Committee.

Figure 12. Shanbehzadeh Ensemble performing on stage at Eldfesten 2012. Photo © Amy Malek.

Yet, this success has had its detractors. Eldfesten is an event that has drawn on an Iranian holiday and traditions but quite deliberately has incorporated cultural interpretations that stray from traditionalists' views of the holiday. In addition to holding the event in the center of the city, rather than in the suburbs where most Iranians live, the festival has included on its stage Swedish and English languages alongside Persian, artists and cultural forms that are not considered Iranian or performed solely by Iranians, and Swedish politicians delivering political speeches. Perhaps most significantly, the committee has presented the event as one that "belongs to everyone." Doing so has meant that the festival offers many features that the Swedish Arts Council (a government body tasked "to implement national cultural policy determined by Parliament" [Kulturrådet n.d.]) and other cultural policy makers find attractive: central and easily accessible intercultural performances, ethnic and linguistic diversity, careful attention to gender equality on stage, attention to disability access, etc. That the Swedish National Touring Theater, Riksteatern, provided roughly 85% of the funding for the 2012 festival, while Farhang and other sponsors provided the remaining 15%, is not unrelated to these features. Both organizations are supported in whole or part by state funds, and therefore the event is as well. Indeed, Eldfesten

could not exist without state support, which demands in exchange careful attention to the goals and imperatives of national cultural policy and those of its institutional intermediaries.

While the organizers and cultural policy officials may be pleased with these characteristics of the event, as are the several thousand audience members and supporters who return each year, some in the Stockholm Iranian community publically expressed criticisms leading up to and directly after the 2012 event. A local producer summed them up this way:

> The Iranian *Chahārshanbih Sūrī* celebration was always done by *Ettehādīeh* [Iranian Federation of Sweden (IRIS)] until 2010 when a group from Riksteatern (the National [Touring] Theater of Sweden) came and continued that work. But unfortunately, since 2010 when they began, the celebration's Iranianness has deteriorated [*ūn hālat-i Irānī-i jashn bih ham khurdih*]. For that reason, last year, that celebration — it was very well organized but unfortunately it was not the *Chahārshanbih Sūrī* celebration that Iranians had always celebrated, with all its traditions. It was something different, something new, like a festival instead of a celebration. You know? It wasn't *Chahārshanbih Sūrī*.[18]

High levels of competition and contestation occurred in the lead-up to Eldfesten 2012. On several of the numerous local Iranian radio stations, hosts and callers aired attacks on the festival's organizers, spread rumors about the pocketing of tax funding, criticized its selection of artists and host, suggested impropriety and corruption through an inflated budget, and misled the public about the nature of the event and its intended audiences, encouraging the community to attend the competing event in the suburbs instead – something of a "vote with your feet" appeal to cultural protectionism.

Differing visions of cultural representation led to many heated questions – both on-air and off. Even individuals attending the organizing committee meetings questioned the leaders of the event over how "Iranian" it was or was not perceived to be, and warned of the reputation costs they each may be suffering by being associated with such a production. The tension was so high among organizers during the days leading up to the festival that, in response to anonymous

[18] Interviewed by Amy Malek, June 27, 2012. Translation mine.

threats received by Riksteatern, the lead producer quietly ordered security details for himself and the Kungsträdgården stage for the 24 hours prior to show time, fearing a replay of the 2009 arson, or worse.

Thankfully, the three-hour 2012 event itself was a successful occasion free from violence or any other unexpected unpleasantness. The critiques and questioning that the organizers endured were most frequently (though not always, as discussed below) delivered by older first generation community members, often themselves entrepreneurs who saw the event as manipulating culture, as catering to Swedish tastes before Iranian ones, and as competition for their more traditional event in one of the immigrant suburbs of Stockholm. But the festival itself was not the only outcome of these planning meetings and informal disputes. Embedded in the planning of the festival were a community conversation, debate, and ultimately, a fight over the meaning of culture that would have lasting implications.

In the following sections, I highlight the roles of the four main organizations and individuals spearheading the 2012 event (Riksteatern, Farhang Förening, ABF, Eldfesten Committee, each discussed below) to demonstrate the ways in which leaders of each organization contributed to a particular emphasis on themes of integration, democracy, and intercultural dialogue both in public meetings of the planning committee and in private discussions, with the larger aim of shifting understandings of culture in immigrant communities in Sweden. I show that for the key leaders in this collaboration, cultural goals were closely tied to democratic ones for the larger diaspora and, eventually, to Iran. I then turn to an analysis of several of the disputes and contestations that led up to the 2012 event, to further highlight the ways in which power, money, and national cultural policy impinge on local debates surrounding culture and belonging – and vice versa.

Riksteatern – Sweden's National Touring Theatre

Founded in 1933 as a strictly touring theater, Riksteatern's mission has been from the outset to bring theater to all the people of Sweden, a notion first articulated in relation to geography by Arthur Engberg, then Minister of Education and Cultural Affairs: "It is not only the population of the capital who have the right to enjoy the best in theatre. The rest of the nation can with justification raise the same demands" (Carlson 1963).[19] The organization's main (though not sole) method towards that objective has been to tour the productions of the country's prolific theaters (e.g. the Royal Dramatic Theater), and to produce and tour its own productions beyond Sweden's major cities, into even the smallest and most remote of Swedish cities and towns (including areas within the Arctic Circle) to reach its over one million audience members annually. The result of Riksteatern's efforts has been the integration of theater into the everyday lives of the average Swedish person, though recent funding decisions threaten the breadth of these programs.[20]

Riksteatern is largely state subsidized, as its funding is determined annually by the Swedish Parliament, but it is not state-run: Riksteatern is technically owned and partially financed by some 230 local theater associations across Sweden (established as Riksteaterförening, or National Theater Associations), with a combined total of over 40,000 members. Referring to itself as a "democratic movement," the theater aims to produce theater "for everyone, everywhere" (*för alla överallt*) and its 2011 mission statement proclaimed that, "Riksteatern should be a pioneer in the exercise and development of new forms of participation,

[19] Translation quoted from Carlson (1963). Original Swedish: "Det är icke blott huvudstadens befolkning som har berättigat anspråk på att komma i åtnjutande av förstklassig teaterkonst. Nationen i övrigt kan med skäl resa liknande anspråk." Quoted by Riksteatern (n.d.).
[20] For example, budget cuts put in place under the Reinfeldt government.

involvement and influence to create tomorrow's democracy (*morgondagens demokrati*)" (Riksteatern n.d.).

Following increased immigration to Sweden in the late 20th century, the interpretation of Riksteatern's mission necessarily expanded to bringing theater not only to all the *places* in Sweden, but to all the *people* in Sweden, including immigrants, and regardless of whether their Swedish linguistic skills were established yet or not. To be clear, the state's goal in subsidizing Riksteatern was always "to bring living theatre to the greatest number of people, in the most efficient and just manner available," (Carlson 1963) but it was only through a shift in policy from the Minister of Culture in 2007 directing cultural institutions to internationalize that the theater began producing and touring productions in multiple languages, taking on themes of migration and identity, and seeking international subjects, performers, and producers.

Towards this effort, the theater established an International department, and hired Rani Kasapi, a producer with experience in intercultural and international non-profit organizations to run it. According to Kasapi, what Riksteatern was offering before the establishment of the International department was "the easy way" to do international programming, targeting international programs that would appeal to the Swedish audiences they already reached:

> I saw that the kind of international relations that the cultural institutions usually made were with, for example, Belgium, Germany, France, Canada, you know? It was, for me, the easy way because it was targeting an already existing audience. It was the audience who already went to the cultural institutions. So I thought, okay, how do we target the audience who are not using the cultural institutions? And a large part of that audience have different cultural backgrounds, so my starting point was, 'Okay, who are *these* people?' And it was quite easy to see what groups from different parts of the world live in Sweden today and we made our international strategy in that way. We wanted to focus on those regions in the world where we also had a lot of immigration. Because in this sense, we had capital in knowledge, in language, in networks. We had so much suddenly if we started there, and we could also bring in people to help us make the decisions and we could work together with people on different levels in the civil society. And kind of engage more people into our work. Because Riksteatern at that time didn't

> reach these people at all. They were not coming to anything. They were non-existent. The only ways Riksteatern [had] tried to reach these people [before], it was a play about honor killing or something like that. You know, that was the level at that time.[21]

Building on the internationalization policy directive from the Ministry of Culture, the newly-established International department at Riksteatern created a strategy that targeted what would be a new audience for the organization: the large number of immigrants from Finland, the Balkans, the Middle East, Chile, and parts of Africa. According to Kasapi, this strategy required hiring individuals who were familiar with these communities, whether personally or professionally:

> As soon as there was a position to be filled, I was trying to [suggest] maybe this person, maybe that person, … it was not planned recruitment from the leadership in Riksteatern. But I was there to push and suggest people all the time. And suddenly … we were a team. We had Farsi, we had a Kurdish speaker from the Turkish part of Kurdistan. We had a Turkish speaker, we had a Finnish speaker. We had from another department a Serbo-Croatian. So suddenly we felt that we're slowly having the base to start doing this.[22]

The Farsi speaker Kasapi listed was Mansour Hosseini, a first-generation Iranian immigrant to Sweden with a professional background as a theater performer, director, and producer. He had worked from the ground up after migrating to Sweden, eventually accumulating extensive experience in Swedish theater production. Since 2007, through his position at Riksteatern, he has produced concerts and radio programs in support of human rights in Iran as well as theater productions highlighting humanitarian struggles in Africa, India, and beyond.

When Initiativ Iran approached Hosseini, it is perhaps not surprising – given his position – that he viewed *Chahārshanbih Sūrī* as a potentially mutually beneficial project: the theater would be able to provide programming and support for an important target population, thereby

[21] Rani Kasapi, interviewed by Amy Malek, May 30, 2014.
[22] Kasapi, interview.

taking a further step towards its goal of serving "everyone, everywhere" while the Iranian community would benefit from the professional and financial resources the theater could offer in celebration of one of its most cherished holidays.

Kasapi and Hosseini, in many ways, are intermediaries of state cultural policies. Their positions in Riksteatern were created as a result of a shift in national cultural policy and their cultural work reflected the vision of the Swedish Arts Council (*Kulturrådet*), a body that describes culture and integration as intimately linked. Among the council's cultural policy objectives in 2012 were the "promot[ion of] international and intercultural exchange and cooperation in the cultural sphere," which it argued "is extremely important for the development of cultural life" in an intercultural society "with a mixture of expressions and experiences, both at the individual level and that of society" (Kulturrådet, n.d.).

The International department at Riksteatern worked differently from other departments in its goals of integration through culture. In order to create networks and introduce the theater to immigrant communities, Kasapi and her team produced concerts featuring very popular musicians from Turkey, Bosnia, and the Iranian diaspora that sold out large venues – usually costly events that were viewed by her team as investments. The investments paid off, she told me, when local associations from these communities, appreciative of the attention the national theater was paying to their cultural identities, to partner with Riksteatern on future events. This partnership, Kasapi argued, then had two critical impacts for the cultural integration mission: first, in their role as partners with Riksteatern, local immigrant associations "suddenly had to work with their municipalities" to raise funding and build networks to successfully produce the events, with important long-term benefits for both the municipalities and the communities. As Kasapi put it, "it kind of placed them in their local context." Second, these partnerships and the

performances that were produced by them garnered mainstream Swedish press coverage and increasingly, non-immigrant audience members, leading to public visibility and recognition of the value of their cultural forms and identities:

> You know, it made them important. It's saying, 'You are important.' I felt that in all the years [I worked on this] that people suddenly feel that they have been *seen*. And from their cultural side – because sometimes you just see people as something else, in another context, and very seldom do you acknowledge someone's cultural identity. And it's something that means a lot to people. I think it's a really important gesture from Sweden and Swedish institutions: to show that we're interested in you. You mean something. You are important here.[23]

As noted in the Introduction, with his decades of professional production experience and the well-established resources of Riksteatern, Hosseini could have managed the production of the three-hour Eldfesten celebration without partnering with a committee of associations. However, like Kasapi described, he and his Initiativ Iran and Farhang partners saw an additional opportunity in the chance to create a co-production with various Iranian leaders and community members tasked with a common goal and operating under the rubric of democratic principles. Given the "disgraceful" history they were working to resolve and, in addition to the goals Kasapi outlined, Hosseini deemed inclusion, transparency, and democracy as critical to the project, and culture as the best arena in which to teach, practice, and spread them diasporically. He described it this way:

> You should build up the democracy. I think it's [important] just to listen to each other – and culture is the best way to rehearse democracy. It's also a kind of export of democracy. If we [teach] a new generation, they know democracy…. I'm definitely sure that if the new generation goes back to Iran….[24]

Indeed, Hosseini felt that for Eldfesten to be a true success in collaboration, the team needed to engage with those who had been so vocally against the 2009 planned event and again against the 2011 event, thoroughly demonstrating true collaboration and modeling democratic

[23] Kasapi, interview.
[24] Mansour Hosseini, interviewed by Amy Malek, May 8, 2012. Emphasis mine.

practice through cultural production. In fact, when articulating his personal motivations for producing Eldfesten, alongside his political goals,[25] Hosseini also highlighted one of the less-often articulated attributes of Nowruz – as a time for reconciliation, peace-making, and inclusion:

> I'm a political, active person. ... Of course, the main thing for me is democracy and politics. The second thing that is very strong [is that] *Nowruz* and *Chahārshanbih Sūrī* have the strongest roots for Iranians. The third thing is [that this is] one of the happiest days that people can be together … even if you have had some, [let's say], problems with somebody – if you had some arguments, if we didn't talk in one year – you could just go to your auntie or your friend and just say, 'The past is past.' This is what Iranians do in the New Year. And of course it's something that includes everybody. Even thinking about this idea, it's something that includes everybody. We chose *this*.[26]

While the production of the event itself would be on his and his employers' shoulders, Hosseini called upon an Iranian colleague at another major Swedish institution founded upon democratic ideals and goals, Arbetarnas Bildningsförbund (ABF), to pull together the collaborative production team that would enable their shared democratic goals through cultural work.

***ABF*: "A practical workshop in democracy"**

Arbetarnas Bildningsförbund (the Workers' Educational Association, known as ABF) is a large Swedish organization that was established in 1912 as a politically independent body with an agenda to support labor movements and liberal adult education. According to its website, ABF strives to bring together Swedes of all stripes to learn democratic processes and encourage adult education:

> Democracy, diversity, justice and equality are the foundations of the ABF's operations. Our goal is for people to study together and form an opinion on key social issues. Everyone should have the opportunity to gain the knowledge to

[25] Hosseini is also the producer of Voices of Change, a Riksteatern series of radio programs, symposia, and concerts that highlight human rights and humanitarian issues through cultural productions.
[26] Hosseini, interview.

> influence their own situations, and to be able to influence local and global developments. (ABF n.d.)

Financed almost entirely by the Swedish government, ABF's focus on adult education is practically applied through their many workshops, symposia, and other events, but also through the study circle, the organization's major pedagogical tool. A study circle is a group of 8-12 individuals who meet regularly to study a given issue or subject together, led by one member of the circle who is provided training by ABF. The organization also provides meeting space, leadership training, pedagogical training, and, in some cases, funding for special projects. Its focus on democracy and diversity are articulated by ABF as critical to its operation:

> Study circles have been crucial to the fight for democracy in Sweden, and have contributed to making Swedish popular movements among the strongest in the world. But democracy is not hereditary. A democracy needs people who dare to re-analyse things and have the courage to question things that are wrong. This sort of courage and security can be developed in small groups using the educational methods that the ABF stands for. (ABF, n.d.)

For ABF, the study circle method is "a true exercise in practical democracy," as circle members jointly choose their subject, working methods, and goals. Importantly, it is the role of the study leader to ensure that "everyone has a say and that all participants' experiences and personalities are respected." This mission is reminiscent of Riksteatern's democratic objectives and goal to reach "everyone, everywhere," which became a clear objective for the Eldfesten Committee as well.

Massood Mafan, an Iranian-Swede who arrived in Sweden in the 1980s as a political refugee, has worked with ABF for nearly a decade, and in 2012 was based in their Rinkeby location. Described as an immigrant ghetto by the *New York Times* in 1998, Rinkeby is a suburb of Stockholm known for its dense concentration of immigrants from all corners of the globe and

particularly for having a large Muslim population. Through ABF, Mafan has organized numerous seminars, workshops, film screenings, training sessions, and targeted social programs for Rinkeby's youth, its unemployed, and its majority immigrant population. Activism and a sense of responsibility to be engaged towards positive change have deeply informed his actions – whether his youthful political activism in Iran that eventually necessitated his exile, or his volunteering and eventual employment in ABF.

This worldview also inflects Mafan's practices in diaspora — while working at ABF, Mafan also owns and runs a publishing company, producing new works of Persian-language fiction and non-fiction for worldwide distribution. His contacts with Iranians in other parts of diaspora are vast, maintained by both his business and cultural endeavors.

> I like idealism; I always want to be an idealist. But in another way I also want to be realistic. Gradually, when I put politics aside, I thought that if I want to change the society that I belong to, then it's in culture, ideas, and human rights. There is no other way than these. Encourage people to read, dialogue, discuss. You know? … It takes time, it moves slowly. But there's no other way. And maybe it's being an idealist, but I think the effect that we've had, our work, me and friends who have helped, the effects – despite all the insults and curses – can have an effect over time. Small. And that's why when I have ideas of quitting, I say no, no, let me stay a bit longer. … I've become part of a society; a youth who was 24 years old, didn't know the language, didn't have money (I came to Sweden with $200), but the society gave me these opportunities. I also worked hard; I wasn't idle. But this society also gave me opportunities to grow. [And] it can also be an opportunity for there [Iran], too (*yi imkān barāyi ūnjā ham mītūna bāshih dīgih*).[27]

Here Mafan articulates a similar understanding that culture is an avenue for democratic practice, but also a diasporic vision in his cultural activism, based on democratic goals for Iran through his cultural work in Sweden.

I first met Mafan early in my fieldwork, as the leader of the weekly meetings of the Eldfesten Committee, and I soon learned in those meetings that Mafan's tall build, deep voice, easy demeanor, and humble yet authoritative approach were among the many tools in his arsenal

[27] Massood Mafan, interviewed by Amy Malek, May 18, 2012. Translation mine.

for keeping the order among a diverse group of association representatives and community leaders. That he insisted on a democratic process to these meetings – including open debates, speaking lists, time-keeping, and voting systems in which each organization received one vote regardless of the number of their meeting attendees – was not a coincidence. His experiences in ABF and his political views on democracy all traveled with him to the Eldfesten meetings.

> In these years [in Sweden], we learned how to behave [*raftār kunīm*], how to act, etc. Because democracy, you don't become democratic in one night. It's a way of life. Democracy is not something where you fly here from Tehran on a plane and in one night become democratic because the country is democratic. You have to learn. You have to learn the process and show how you can coordinate [*hamāhang*]. These societies – Swedish society, European society, or American – it took several years of struggle to be able to reach this level [of democracy]. They set the foundations for expansion. It's possible that in Iran we ***spoke*** about democracy, but we didn't ***live*** with democracy. Here living and experiencing [democracy] is difficult. In the meetings, you saw, one would say – they thought they were democratic – they'd say, "Do it this way!" And when you disagreed with it, they'd get upset. The experience of speaking democracy and doing it, differ.[28]

As a respected community figure, Mafan was able to bring together Iranian organizations to work collaboratively on Eldfesten and take it as an opportunity to practice democratic processes of collaboration. When committee members became excited, angry, or agitated to the point of jumping the speaking list or ranting rather than stating their opinions in concise and effective ways, he was quick to interrupt, taking advantage of these teaching moments to cite the open, democratic nature of the meetings that required all members' rights to speak be respected and preserved.

Indeed, Mafan and Hosseini both invoked the democratic nature of the Committee's proceedings in all seven official Eldfesten Committee meetings I attended.[29] By way of example,

[28] Mafan, interview. Translation mine.
[29] Although my presence as a researcher was noted, the Committee members only knew that I was interested in Iranians in diaspora, not that I had any particular interest in democratic ideals or processes. The performative nature

after a heated exchange between two Committee members surrounding the question of belly dancing, Hosseini had this to say:

> Let me say something here—thankfully, up to today, we've been able to have a friendly and intimate tone in the meetings. Please, try to keep this intimate tone. In the same way that you have opinions, you should feel safe to express your opinion – because that is the foundation of democracy, that we should be able to criticize each other and express our opinions.[30]

And later, in the same meeting, responding to concerns over community criticisms:

> Of course, work that hasn't been done is the only work that won't be criticized! Let me tell you now, anything that we do [will be criticized] – even among ourselves, because our tastes are different, and that's a good thing! We have different tastes, and one part of democratic work is that if there is something we must sacrifice it is our opinions. I'll never forget, someone went up to [former Swedish Prime Minister and statesman Olaf] Palme and asked, "Why are racists free?" And he said, "This is the cost of a free democracy that we must pay."[31]

By holding these committee meetings, the organizers brought together Iranians of different generations, backgrounds, ages, and migration histories to democratically debate the production of an intercultural event celebrating an Iranian holiday. In so doing, they facilitated the development of democratic practices and introduced many to the values of cultural mixing and open dialogue. No longer did traditional Iranian norms regarding age, position, and gender necessarily over-rule: although attention to norms surrounding respect for elders was certainly critical in these debates, those elders did not always get their way. This is representative of the delicate balance required in these meetings, and Mafan and his ABF experience were critical to working towards that balance. His motivations to create opportunities for Iranians in diaspora to practice democracy were rooted both in an aim to build diasporic belonging and cooperation, but also in a felt duty to the democratic future of Iran.

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of these meetings may or may not have been emphasized for my benefit but regardless, the subject matter did not appear to have been altered.

[30] Mansour Hosseini, Eldfesten 2012 committee meeting, March 2, 2012. Translation mine.

[31] Hosseini, Eldfesten 2012 committee meeting, March 2, 2012. Translation mine.

Farhang Förening – a professional Swedish arts organization

Co-founded as a volunteer organization in 1995 by Rostam Mirlashari, a professional Baluchi musician from Iran who arrived to Sweden as a political refugee in 1991, alongside several colleagues, Farhang Förening (Farhang Association) in 2012 was a state-supported non-profit organization based in Stockholm with a handful of salaried employees. The organization has a stated intercultural mission "to inform and spread knowledge about folk and world music to a greater audience" while " building bridges between individuals with different cultural backgrounds" (Farhang Förening n.d.). It does so by producing music concerts, dance performances, workshops, and festivals, and is funded almost entirely by state, provincial, and local grants, for which the organization must re-apply bi-annually. As stated in on the organization's website:

> Farhang organizes artists, musicians and writers with various backgrounds around issues regarding culture, creativity and identity in a world characterized by globalization, diasporas, and cultural multitudes. Our effort is to create forums for the meeting between different musical traditions and to contribute to a process where cultures meet and generate something new together. (Farhang Förening n.d.)

Unlike the many Iranian ethnic associations in Stockholm, Farhang began with the primary aim of "show[ing] the non-Iranians Iranian culture."[32] But by 2000, when Farhang was recognized by the Stockholm municipality as a professional organization and began receiving state funding for its operational costs, the mission of the organization had broadened. Unlike Mafan and Hosseini, Farhang's project coordinator Keyvani, a 1.5 generation Iranian-Swede who arrived in Sweden with his family at the age of two, described Farhang's position towards Iranian culture as coincidental and pragmatic rather than ideological:

> We are not an Iranian organization. We happen to be Iranians who work here, therefore we have a good network with Iranian artists. But we work towards the

[32] Tomaj Keyvani, interviewed by Amy Malek, February 13, 2012.

> Swedish, the *whole* Swedish market. …We want to involve immigrant groups in the cultural scene. …We try to approach Kurdish, Iranian, Turkish, Arabic, Chinese, Yugoslav, Assyrians. But it's not exclusively for these groups. It's open for many Swedish people – like ethnic Swedes. But we make a special effort to reach out to these communities, which we may be better in finding than the state organizations, in the suburbs and special places we know that they live.[33]

A direct beneficiary of Sweden's cultural policies, Farhang's operational budget is comprised of a combination of grants from the Kulturrådet, the Stockholm County Council, and the City of Stockholm. This operational funding is supplemented by ticket sales (40%) and programmatic funding grants, which historically has been provided by these same governmental organizations as well as other state-sponsored organs, such as the Statens Musikverk and the Royal College of Music. According to Mirlashari, the co-founder and current artistic director of the organization, the funding Farhang receives has much to do with shifts in cultural policy and the politics of the country:

> They [funding bodies] know that it is one of our goals to show the positive face of multicultural society. A multicultural society has the possibility to create new productions. The Right here, in politics, try to say that well, *they* [immigrants] came so it has become crowded, it's this, it's that, and we try to say that it is not that way at all. We [immigrants], both from our working out there with the everyday things that everyone does, and from our positive cultural things, we can help this society. And we have![34]

For Mirlashari, Eldfesten has the potential to open eyes and ears to new music and cultural forms – perhaps rooted in Iranian culture but not necessarily or exclusively – and should not be bound by national or cultural borders. Indeed, as a musician himself, Mirlashari would prefer a more open artistic program for Eldfesten that encouraged cultural mixing and exchange:

> See, Eldfesten takes an inspiration from Iranian culture but we put it on in Sweden, and we want it to be for everyone, not just for [Iranians] – it's a gift from us. People don't get this. I don't know why – not a lot, but a number of people don't get that it's a gift from us to this society that we've entered. And that's why we've said it is for the public. And when we say it is public then we need to try to

[33] Keyvani, interview, February 13, 2012.
[34] Rostam Mirlashari, interviewed by Amy Malek, February 13, 2012. Translation mine.

> make a section of the program include acts that – it's not that only that our public should be mixed, but that on the stage, too, we should create the possibilities for mixing! For example to bring a big Swedish artist to this program, …[then they'd] say "I participated in an old traditional Iranian event," and take good memories from that and develop some credit for us.[35]

Farhang's success at acquiring grants and funding for its programs has also resulted in the organization becoming a facilitator for individual artists who have not yet mastered Sweden's bureaucratic ropes. This role of intermediary is critical for immigrant participation and incorporation in multicultural policy objectives, as Keyvani demonstrates:

> We can help people… We have some people who come to us and say, "We have this idea, we want to do this." And we help to write a good application and we send it in in Farhang's name but that guy [will be] a project leader or producer of that play. And if it is granted then they take care of it and we help them along the way with all of these things that's maybe hard to do if you're one person – like accounting, organization, marketing and things like that.[36]

Farhang runs a number of programs annually; perhaps most well known is their Kista World Music Festival, itself a celebration of music that incorporates traditions from around the world and encourages the kind of mixing that Mirlashari advocates. It is this intercultural approach, which Farhang embodies, that its leaders espoused in Eldfesten committee meetings, challenging other community representatives' beliefs about cultural ownership, authenticity, and integration in Swedish society.

The Eldfesten Committee

As described in previous sections, the Eldfesten Committee is a group of Iranian associations in Stockholm who have come together upon the invitation of Riksteatern, ABF, and Farhang to collaborate in the organization of the annual Eldfesten festival.[37] Riksteatern may have the resources necessary to produce a festival, just as Hosseini has the experience and

[35] Rostam Mirlashari, interviewed by Amy Malek, June 1, 2012. Translation mine.
[36] Keyvani, interview, June 19, 2012.
[37] With the expansion of Eldfesten to four other cities in Sweden, Hosseini also reached out to community organization and leaders in those cities to conduct similar committee meetings in those locales.

Farhang the artistic vision, but would the community accept it? Would they view it as coming from Swedes or from the community itself? The 2011 festival was repeatedly criticized for not being "Iranian enough," and this contestation was the impetus for the formation of a more open and transparent Eldfesten Committee for 2012. In Autumn 2011, the event organizers representing Riksteatern, Farhang, and ABF invited all Iranian associations in Stockholm to join this open committee; they did so in person, by email, and through media outlets, particularly radio stations.

The committee's membership has varied each year, though several organizations have been involved now for multiple years, such as local Persian schools, radio stations, and other ethnic associations. The committee has remained open to new membership without exception, and all of its meetings are considered public. In an effort to further increase transparency, in 2012 several of the documents circulated at meetings were also posted on the festival's website for the public to view. Termed a "co-production," the members of the committee were responsible for weighing in on the festival's cultural matters, like artist selection and representation of Iranian traditions, and also for taking on organizational aspects of the event such as certain logistics, publicity, and recruitment and management of day-of volunteers. In return, these organizations' logos were included on the event's website as evidence of Committee membership and in recent years they have been given opportunities to participate in tents during the event in ways that benefit their not-for-profit missions (e.g. through coordinating a tent for youth, the school can recruit new students; through organizing a fun photo-op tent, the student group can publicize its next big party, etc.).

From January to May 2012, I attended six production meetings of the Stockholm Eldfesten Committee leading up to the festival, as well as a post-festival follow-up meeting. The

meetings were regularly well attended by association representatives and were composed of anywhere from 15 to 25 people each meeting. The associations represented were mostly – though not exclusively – local Iranian ethnic associations. These included several local radio stations, a TV station, youth programs and language schools, arts associations, a university student group, political activism organizations, and retiree/senior organizations. In terms of gender, the representatives attending these meetings were more often men; in the meetings I attended women usually accounted for only 20-30% of attendees. With the important exception of the student group, the vast majority of individuals around the meeting table were over 35 years of age and had immigrated to Sweden at least 15 years previous; most had arrived in the 1980s and early 1990s and had established themselves and their families in the local Iranian community in Stockholm. The student group representatives, on the other hand, represented a union of students (both undergraduate and post-graduate) enrolled in a number of Stockholm's universities, and the vast majority of them had arrived in Sweden between 2 and 5 years previous without any family or other systems of social support.

I attended these meetings as both an observing anthropologist and as a volunteer, serving as a photographer for the event on the day of the festival. I also interviewed more than ten of the regularly-attending Committee members outside of these meeting settings. Apart from myself, only one other person at these meetings could be classified as not first-generation: born in Iran to Iranian parents, he had left Iran at age 2 and arrived in Sweden when he was 5 years old. The relative absence of the second generation of Iranian-Swedes around the table was marked, and the use of Persian as the primary language of the meetings may have had to do with this generational composition. When I inquired as to the generational composition of the group, several committee members suggested that the Iranian-Swedish second generation were too busy

with their careers and young families to participate. When I asked second generation Iranian-Swedes active in cultural work in Stockholm the same question, they agreed that time was precious, but also indicated that they felt other cultural matters were perhaps more important and pressing for them.

Each Committee meeting was presided over by Mafan of ABF, and began with an explanation of the purpose of the committee, a re-affirmation of its openness, a description of the democratic underpinnings and processes of the committee, and (re-)introductions by all individuals in the room, in case new attendees were present – and new attendees were always present. Two hallmarks of these meetings were perhaps the consistent presence of most individuals and the transitory presence of a minority of others. Under Mafan's direction, the meetings began with agenda items and progress reports on action items created during the previous week's meeting; the bulk of this work was undertaken by Hosseini (producer at Riksteatern) and his production assistant. In the course of these detailed updates, questions arose over various matters and the committee's opinions were sought on key decisions – from the order of artist performances to the type of flammable material to use for the all-important fire-jumping section of the festival. These opinions could be expressed only via speaker list – with strict adherence coordinated and regulated by Mafan – and each organization represented in the committee could offer a single vote during resolution of debates, regardless of how many representatives attended the meeting or the number of individuals their organization counted on its membership roll.

Several committee members suggested to me that this latter point was the final straw that led to the withdrawal of IRIS, the Iranian Federation of Sweden, from the Committee prior to the 2012 festival. IRIS had been the organizer of a large *Chahārshanbih Sūrī* celebration in the

suburbs of Stockholm for 15 years and envisioned the purpose of the event and its cultural features quite differently than did many of the other Committee members. This led to much contestation in 2009 (the year of the fire), 2010 and 2011; in 2012, when IRIS's demand for two votes in exchange for their continued cooperation in the Committee was rejected as unfair and against protocol, they refused to join the Committee and wrote to Riksteatern that the protocol was against regulations. They then enlisted a prolific concert producer to organize a competing festival in Akalla (an immigrant suburb of Stockholm) on the same night as Eldfesten.

In the following section I analyze positions taken during this and other controversies to illustrate the ways in which culture and its meanings for the Iranian community in Stockholm triggered diasporic anxieties over belonging and identity– due in no small part to the role of interculturalist cultural policy and the strings of state funding.

Causing Controversy, Contesting Culture: Four Sources of Diasporic Anxiety

Baumann's study of the London suburb of Southall demonstrated that anthropological concepts of culture may not match those of the anthropologist's ethnographic subjects, prompting important questions about what work culturalist discourses do for groups and individuals in society (1996). Much like the cultural anxiety Grillo argued was common among both majorities and minorities with culturalist perspectives, several diasporic anxieties emerged among Iranians in Stockholm who held this perspective. However, unlike in Baumann's research context, where minorities' representations of themselves through culturalist discourses enabled them to claim resources made available by the state, interculturalism represents the dominant discourse through which Swedish cultural policies were implemented (as demonstrated in Chapter 2). Thus, in the case of Eldfesten, by asserting notions of Iranian culture as bounded, timeless, authentic, and owned, culturalist Iranians were in fact threatening to prevent their

communities from staking claims for state funding and support.

Three ethnographic examples surrounding the 2012 Eldfesten event demonstrate how members of the Iranian community expressed contestations and debated culturalism among and between themselves, revealing important differences in understandings of culture, tradition, and representation within the Iranian community in Stockholm. The contexts of these examples (meetings, radio programs, interpersonal conversations) reveal ways in which democratic ideas and practices enabled fruitful debates beyond the meeting room. Furthermore, these examples show that Iranians were conscious about the expense of the event, and that it was largely sponsored by a Swedish institution responsible for implementing Swedish cultural policy. Yet their motivations for or against culturalist ideas were never forward-looking moves to ensure the ability for their community to continue to make claims on the state. Rather, they were framed as personal affronts to an owned culture, and betrayal of "authentic" Iranian culture in exchange for Swedish institutional support – personal, communal, or otherwise.

1. Authenticity Anxieties: "What about this event is actually Iranian?"

Despite the common sense notion that traditionalists among any society tend to be among its older members, I found that those who expressed concerns about tradition and its representation in Eldfesten were not restricted by age cohort, and rather seemed to be more frequently expressed by first generation Iranians – both young and old. Indeed, two individuals expressed this perspective most fervently in the 2012 Committee meetings: a retired man in his 70s, and a male university student in his early 20s who arrived to Stockholm from Iran in 2009. Both were first generation immigrants, and despite having different migration trajectories, motivations, and life experiences, they shared a lack of familiarity with Swedish cultural and social forms, which could result in a common feeling of exclusion from mainstream Swedish

society that strengthened nostalgia for Iran, as well as the desire to "shore up" the group boundaries of the group(s) towards which they did feel strong belonging.

In one such incident, the university student raised concerns over the costumes of a scheduled dance group:

> The navel is not supposed to be seen in actual *Iranian* dance. Neither men's nor women's. So if the dancers, if they're dancing … they should not have their navels visible. Because in the Uppsala Culture Night a group of them who danced…well, these things get a little mixed up with Arab dance and other things.[38]

The meeting almost immediately got out of hand following this comment. Several individuals agreed with the student, one woman extended his argument to express concern over the appearance of "belly dancing" on an Iranian stage (which had been part of a short dance medley in the 2011 festival), and others disagreed with the appearance of "Arab dancing" in particular. Meanwhile, those who were professionals in arts and cultural fields bristled loudly at the idea of dictating costume and artistic choices to an artist. A political activist and self-proclaimed intellectual argued that he and his comrades had left Iran precisely because of censorship and would not stand for it here either. Another individual attacked the student's words and those of his defenders as racist, specifically anti-Arab. Mafan quickly brought the meeting to order, and returned the focus to the speaker's list and the issues on the agenda, but as soon as the meeting ended, the debate continued. The student re-articulated his original claim and, as we walked out of the meeting, he made a point of clarifying his position to me:

> Student: You can't spend 1 million kronor and then use symbols that aren't part of your culture. And because Swedes are kind of hazy [*gīj*] and don't know a lot about or recognize these cultures, they mix them up! For example last year, when a Latin-American musician came [to Eldfesten], still to this day people say 'Last year a singer came from Latin America! I still don't understand what that was!' Ok, fine – but then an Arab or Indian dance or whatever can be just as strange to people. Because you're supposed to be working for *Iranian* culture.

[38] Comment made in Eldfesten 2012 committee meeting, March 2, 2012. Translation mine.

Malek: Who was saying this about Latin Americans? Iranians or Swedes?
S: Iranians were saying it. Swedes don't even make a distinction! That's the point![39]

In this clarification, the student offered a culturalist perspective that excluded Arab dance from "Iranian culture," despite the fact that Arabs form a minority group in Iran. He illustrated his recognition of Swedish audiences as either ill-informed or unwilling to make distinctions between cultural boundaries that he felt were critical. As he told a woman in the meeting: "Swedes don't understand, they mix it up! We are doing this to separate it for them!"

In a second example, a retiree attending an Eldfesten Committee meeting described why the previous year's event had been so harshly criticized.

> When I enter Kungsträdgården holding my child's hand, we are going to *Chahārshanbih Sūrī*, not a concert by so-and-so singer. … BUT, that can also be next to it. Last year, I saw two or three things that left me thinking there must be no supervisor here. (…) Everyone was gathered in front of the stage, there was no path to walk through, and then most of the people there were Swedish. Then, Iranians, hand in hand, would from time to time push these people when they wanted to go to that side, or to this side. I mean there was some really strange stuff! And that woman on the stage was singing in Spanish. And then, Iranians ourselves who were off to the side because they couldn't stand in the center, were saying, "What kind of *Chahārshanbih Sūrī* is this?! I don't understand her language, and it isn't even clear where the fire is!" And he was right.[40]

When these anxieties were expressed in the Committee meetings, they prompted conversations that required Iranians to debate the nature of inclusivity and integration in a diverse society through the frames of authenticity, tradition, practice, and representation in diaspora. These examples suggests that those who were most inclined to be traditionalists came from two groups: retirees who arrived in Sweden post-middle age, had not learned Swedish fluently, had not interacted much with Swedish institutions, and as a result perhaps felt excluded from Swedish society. The second group was younger first generation Iranians, mostly students who had arrived to Sweden in the last 2-3 years. This group was quite committed to the festival,

[39] Personal communication with author, March 2, 2012. Translation mine.
[40] Comment made in Eldfesten 2012 committee meeting, February 27, 2012. Translation mine.

but also had not yet mastered Swedish, may not have interacted much yet with Swedish institutions apart from their universities, and had yet to feel a sense of belonging to Swedish society. Thus, like the senior traditionalists, for the students nostalgia for home and a yearning for a traditional representation of their cultural holidays and celebrations were common. This by no means characterizes all seniors or all students – to be sure, I met a wide variety of people with a wide variety of opinions. However, among the Eldfesten Committee in 2012, those few who raised objections regarding authenticity or traditional representations were the representatives of the retiree organizations and the student group. I do not mean to suggest that their objections were the same – as demonstrated above, they were not – but rather that these individuals' criticisms were both motivated by anxieties over authenticity.

2. Preservation and Protection of Tradition vs. Modernity

A related anxiety in which immigrant generations played a role was the perceived need to "protect" tradition, which revealed a culturalist belief in the timelessness and essential nature of Iranian cultural traditions. This issue arose in Eldfesten meetings only from older attendees, but it was also expressed in criticisms from the public on local Persian-language radio stations, and in several of my interviews. There appear to have been two related anxieties here: a) a general resistance (at best) or fear (at worst) of change in the face of migration and the passage of time, and b) anxiety over the mixing of cultural forms and traditions, expressed by the producer at the beginning of the chapter as "cultural manipulation," and later, stronger, as "cultural betrayal." In expressions of these anxieties, there was a sense that, even if time eventually changes some elements of a tradition, we should try to resist this by fighting attempts by other Iranians to speed that process, and even more forcefully protest attempts made by outsiders (here, Swedes, e.g. Riksteatern) to "steal our culture" (expressed as *farhang-duzdī*, lit. "stealing culture"). In this

view, the availability of state resources for such an event be damned if Iranian culture was not in the hands of Iranians. The trade off, they claimed, was not worth it.

While driving several volunteers back from a rehearsal two days before Eldfesten 2012, a Committee member who hosts a local Iranian radio program mentioned that several people had called into his show that week to talk about Eldfesten, unprompted by him. He had not engaged with these callers since he was a Committee member, but expressed pride in the fact that several of his listeners had defended the festival's mission nonetheless. The debate between his callers was about the relationship between integration and tradition:

> The callers said nonsense like, "We should not pay attention to Swedes," and "Swedes only deceive/cheat us!" … But because our regular listeners are at a different level, they called in and said, "Why are you saying all this racist stuff?! Our hope is to become *connected* to Swedes and do good things!" And then they responded with garbage about "Our traditions…" – Come on, we're going after modernity! Not tradition![41]

In this example, the level of the debate moved well beyond the festival to accusations about Swedes' mistreatment of Iranians as rationale for attacking what they viewed to be a Swedish-planned Eldfesten. The radio host presented this debate as one between instigators and his intellectual listeners ("on a different level") who wouldn't stand for what they called racism, and instead advocated for integration and modernity – pitted squarely against isolationism and tradition.

On a different, public (state-funded) Persian-language radio station, Mansour Hosseini was interviewed and questioned by an Iranian-Swedish radio host (RH) about the various allegations that had been levied against him, the Eldfesten Committee, and the event itself. In this particularly heated exchange, Hosseini defends the use of the name "Eldfesten" for the festival:

[41] Personal communication, March 11, 2012.

> Radio Host: For some it isn't important, but some people are critical, saying we who are outside of our country [in diaspora] and have no restrictions must try to protect and keep our traditions just as they are. Let's not change the name of *Chahārshanbih Sūrī*. So I wanted to ask how much this type of restriction (*mahdūdīat*) from Riksteatern is applied for those of you trying to do this [event]? How open are your arms and wings? [i.e., how free are you to do as you please?]
> Mansour Hosseini: See, names in general can change – names of films in other countries are something else, they come here called something else.
> RH: But we can't change the name of *Nowruz*!?
> MH: No, no, *Nowruz* is *Nowruz*.
> RH: And *Chahārshanbih Sūrī* is *Chahārshanbih Sūrī*!
> MH: We also call it *Chahārshanbih Sūrī*! We've written it in Latin script as *Chahārshanbih Sūrī*, in Farsi we've written *Chahārshanbih Sūrī*, but the translation under it – so that Swedes can understand what *Chahārshanbih Sūrī* is…. In English it's been translated as Red Wednesday and someone could complain that you can't translate a proper noun – and that's exactly right. We didn't want to *translate* this proper noun, and we didn't. We took a name that different groups in different cities in Sweden have been using, and said that is same as what Iranians do, and call it *Eldfest*.[42] Here in Stockholm, until last year, [people] called it *Eldfesten-Chahārshanbih Sūrī*. We welcomed the connection between Swedish and Iranian society that had come about, and so we used it. We used this name to include others and we'll keep it, but we'll never change *Chahārshanbih Sūrī*.[43]

Hosseini's reference to inclusion, particularly of Swedes, was in reference to a claim made by Kasapi, his boss at Riksteatern, who had been interviewed by the same radio station (in Swedish) and had argued for the importance of inclusion and openness in Riksteatern's programming, prompting these anxieties over protection.

In an interview with me several months after the festival, Hosseini described how he tried to convince those who cried protectionism by arguing that the best way to keep Iranian traditions from disappearing altogether was to include others in them and to "welcome" modernity, multilingualism, and the changes that are already upon them:

> We are living in a country [where] we cannot isolate ourselves. We cannot say, "Ok, we want to protect our *Chahārshanbih Sūrī*." But this *Chahārshanbih Sūrī*

[42] "Eldfest" is also used by Swedes to describe a Swedish fire festival holiday celebrated with bonfires on April 30, also known as Valborg.
[43] Sverige Radio P6 broadcast, March 8, 2012. Available at http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=2493&artikel=5006428.

> that you celebrate here is not the *Chahārshanbih Sūrī* you celebrated in Iran! And when you are out of your country, your culture is influenced by the food, by the atmosphere – and of course, you have never had this cold of a *Chahārshanbih Sūrī* in your country … even the weather makes a difference! … Everything can change and influence [culture]. … But you just convince them that if you want to **protect** it you should **open** it…. if you want to protect *Chahārshanbih Sūrī*, and Eldfesten, and [make] the tradition continue. Honestly 4 years ago, the [Iranian] people in Stockholm, the young generation, they didn't care about *Chahārshanbih Sūrī*! Because most of them, they don't even speak Farsi. … Most of the young generation, they say, "Why should I go there? It's just some people yelling… talking Farsi on the stage, and… I don't understand what they say." And ok, there is kabob there…. But you should just make it a little bit modern! Put another language on the stage. At least English and Farsi. …This was what I could convince most of those traditionalists – if you want to continue your tradition, who is going to continue it? You are going to be dead in 10 years. You're all retired. You don't have the power to continue. If there is some person you want to continue it, it's your children and your grandchildren. And if your grandchildren don't understand what you say, which tradition are they going to carry?[44]

Hosseini's position within Riksteatern, a Swedish cultural institution beholden to the winds of Swedish cultural policy, certainly influences his view. But in our many conversations, I was convinced that Hosseini personally believed in the intercultural mission of his projects and an anti-essentialist view of culture. Nevertheless, his exhortation to fellow Iranians to welcome cultural change through partnerships with the Swedish state rings familiar to Baumann's and others' assertions of the power of the state over the cultural identities of immigrants. What these examples offer, however, is a case where, unlike in most states, the anthropological conceptualization of culture matches more closely to that of the Swedish state (in 2012) than to some minorities themselves.

3. Money Matters: Public Funding and the Ethics of Ownership of "National Culture"

Individuals who believed they had the responsibility to protect an "authentic" representation of "traditional" Iranian culture often also believed in their ownership of this bounded cultural package. Thus, they argued, not only is Iranian culture viewed as bounded, but

[44] Hosseini, interview, emphasis mine.

it also *belongs* to Iranians, all of whom should protect it both from theft by outsiders and from betrayal by insiders. The producer's accusations at the beginning of this chapter are exemplary of this understanding, and he officially registered his complaint to Riksteatern through numerous letters, prompting an official response, which he described to me:

> [Riksteatern] wrote that this celebration belongs to NO minority group [*gorūh-i aqalīat*]. By "minority" they meant countries like Iran or Syria or Turkey. And that this belongs to everyone. It belongs to anyone who celebrates it. In other words they see it as one of their own![45]

In response to this ownership claim, Keyvani of Farhang suggested to me that, like Christmas, no one could own a cultural holiday:

> You can't own *Chahārshanbih Sūrī*. And we always said we don't own it. If someone else wants to do *Chahārshanbih Sūrī* somewhere else and in another way, you're welcome to do it. We can't patent you know, *Chahārshanbih Sūrī*, because it's for everybody. Nobody owns it. I think that's the main reason why we don't have any entry fee. Because you can't have an entry fee on Christmas, it would be stupid![46]

Keyvani continued later:

> It's important that we show people that we are not making money out of [Eldfesten]. This is costing us a lot and that's very important when it comes to *Chahārshanbih Sūrī*. Because it's a national tradition. It's nothing you can own. It's not like Kista World Music Festival, which is a concept that we own; we have created it. We haven't created *Chahārshanbih Sūrī*. It has been existing for several thousands of years. So you can't take it and make it your own thing, it wouldn't be right ethically.[47]

The question of money – the size of Eldfesten's budget, and how much money was given to whom – was a source of much debate and gossip. The figure repeated among critics was that Riksteatern was spending 4 million SEK on Eldfesten (roughly $600,000 USD); this was more than twice the actual cost of the event, a fact outlined in detail by Hosseini to the Committee when these rumors escalated. The accusation made on Persian-language radio programs was that

[45] Interviewed by Amy Malek, June 27, 2012. Translation mine.
[46] Keyvani, interview, February 13, 2012.
[47] Keyvani, interview, February 13, 2012.

it should only take several thousand SEK to put on a festival – like the one planned in Akalla, where artists performed for free on a soccer field – so where is the rest of this taxpayer money going? The implication (which some of the more voracious critics stated outright) was of corruption and theft on the part of several of the event's key organizers, leading Hosseini and his boss, Kasapi, to appear on the Persian language radio supported by Swedish National Radio to answer these accusations on-air cited earlier.

Several individuals in the Committee have argued that financial considerations, including personal investments in competing festivals, were the 'real' reasons for protests leading up to Eldfesten in 2012. Whether or not that is the case, the fact remains that culturalist vs. interculturalist debates formed the rhetoric and discourse of protest for these parties, and worked to rally support among certain circles. The initial complaints rested on culturalist understandings that had been affronted: by "changing" the name of the holiday, using non-Persian languages, not having enough Iranian traditional elements, highlighting non-Iranian performers, and removing the holiday from the suburbs (where more Iranians live), the Eldfesten Committee were changing "our" culture to make Swedes happy and, even worse, they were taking "our" tax money to do it.

Mirlashari offered his take on the problem of finances and the actions of "traditionalists." It wasn't that they were traditional, he insisted, it was that they aggressively acted against the work he and his colleagues were trying to accomplish, rather than taking a live and let live approach and focusing on improving their own efforts:

> They couldn't just say that, okay, you do your own program the way you like it and we'll do our own. And in my opinion that would be great. For example, I think for older mothers who live in Akalla, it would be easier to go there. Why not? Do you see? And to create several stages for people to try to put money towards it, get money from the government, give money from their own pockets, get money from, I don't know, the business sector of Iranians. Then make 20 stages! On the same day! And have all the Iranian artists in Stockholm perform that day! That also would be great. But this unfortunately isn't how it happened.

> They really harassed us. Of course, because the event happened professionally, peacefully, cleanly, it had a very positive impact at the same time. And I'm hopeful that anyway next year those other people who had trouble seeing that people could work a different way – that they focus on their own event and make it better. I wish that they also be successful. Because they are also needed. They should be there. But we work differently.[48]

Immigrant Cultural Capital and Integration

As demonstrated by the three areas outlined above, the Iranian-Swedish case is useful for understanding the ways in which individuals and institutions interact vis-a-vis cultural policy; through cultural programs, state cultural policies and intercultural aims are being introduced to local immigrant communities with the effect of transforming individuals' attitudes about culture.

The incidents described above were sparked not just by migration but also by Swedish policies and understandings of culture that offered state-supported counter-discourses to culturalist claims. The role of individuals was critical in this — in each of the organizations outlined earlier, individuals who had extensive experience working both in the Iranian community and also in Swedish institutions took the initiative to undertake community outreach. They had learned the "Swedish way" of operating in their institutional settings and were fluent in the language that was needed to do so successfully. This takes time, as well as certain educational, linguistic, and professional expertise — in other words, cultural capital. Kasapi emphasized the importance of individuals to me, stating that a state or municipality can have "beautiful policies on beautiful paper," but "policies hang so close together with individuals. Because if you don't embrace it fully, you will just tick the box. [You will] do a very surface level [job]. So it demands you have the right people at the right time in the right place."[49]

Because a large majority of the Iranians in Sweden were demographically positioned for success at the point of migration in ways that others' groups were not, including having access to

[48] Mirlashari, interview, June 1, 2012. Translation mine.
[49] Kasapi, interview.

these kinds of cultural capital, it is important that the Iranian case not be used to silence the concerns and interests of other immigrant groups in Sweden or elsewhere.[50] Iranians in Sweden may have arrived as refugees with little or no financial support, but they arrived with a significant level of cultural capital, which they have, by and large, leveraged to the benefit their communities. Other immigrant groups may not have been positioned as beneficially to do so. My intention, therefore, is not to suggest that the Iranian case demonstrates that all multicultural policies have similar impacts on all minority groups, nor even that the Iranian case is one in which multicultural policies have created a fully integrated Iranian community in Stockholm, whatever that may mean. Contestations still occur, and will continue to occur in a community that is as diverse as any other. Rather, my intent is to show that the charges leveled against funding cultural programs like festivals and cultural partnerships are missing important community-level impacts on practice and cultural attitudes that occur off-stage and can have important consequences transnationally. These are unexpected outcomes developed through unexpected mechanisms. One could argue that efforts like those undertaken at Riksteatern is part of an emerging neoliberal multiculturalism using partnerships as a covert way to co-opt immigrants into state institutions. Or one could just as successfully argue that these partnerships offer an ideal form of integration that enables immigrants to participate in public culture while changing the terms of what constitutes Swedish public culture itself. Either way, in the case of Iranians in Stockholm we find state-supported cultural production promoting participation not through the celebration of identity or identity politics, but through practice.

Sweden's cultural policy, as discussed in Chapter 2 and above, seems to take a bi-directional approach to integration on paper, even if this ideal has not been reached fully yet in

[50] Some conservative analysts have made arguments regarding the failure of integration in Sweden using the Iranian case. See, for example, Sanandaji (2012).

practice. My research suggests that this form of policy can result in shifts to cultural attitudes, belonging, and practice, but even in immigrant groups with active cultural workers who support such policy approaches (such as the Stockholm Iranians discussed here), there are long-term fights to be waged. Hosseini highlighted the connection between cultural policy and an intercultural understanding of integration in describing the need for state cultural organs to reach out to immigrant communities, as the International department at Riksteatern had begun to do:

> We are physically in Stockholm, but if [Iraqis] are [living] in the north of Sweden…the society mostly cannot reach them. They don't watch Swedish TV, listen to Swedish radio – they have their own. And [so we should] just approach them by their own culture and make them close to the society. It's about integration. … Integration is really important. But integration is not just [*mocking tone*], "YOU SHOULD SPEAK THIS COUNTRY'S LANGUAGE. YOU SHOULD SPEAK SWEDISH AND YOU SHOULD EAT MEATBALLS AND BUY IKEA AND YOU ARE SWEDISH AND YOU ARE INTEGRATED!" No. …Integration is not…that I involve myself in your culture, it's that all cultures should be involved *together*.[51]

What ultimately was presented on stage during Eldfesten 2012 was a result of community negotiations: yes, it was agreed, we must have the traditional fire-jumping and presence of *Hājī Fīrūz*, but he will not appear in his traditional blackface;[52] yes, let's have fireworks as is common in Iran, but we must apply for a permit for it first (which is not done by some celebrations in the suburbs and which took several years for the Committee to acquire); yes, we should invite some popular Iranian artists to perform, but we'll also invite rappers, Brazilian musicians, and Swedish fire throwers to share the stage with them.

[51] Hosseini, interview.

[52] As I have noted elsewhere, *Hājī Fīrūz* is a beloved Nowruz character, a jester-like troubadour who ushers in the New Year with songs, dances, and general merriment, often incorporating jokes and comical storytelling into his performances. A typical element of *Hājī*'s costume is his blackface. Scholars do not agree as to the source of this tradition; theories range from *Hājī* as part of ancient religious ritual, returning annually from the dead, to *Hājī* as traditionally performed by East African slaves in the Sassanian period. Regardless, this feature of his costume has proven contentious in public performances in the west, particularly the United States (Malek 2011).

Figure 13. Iranian-Swedish rapper Behrang Miri performing on stage at Eldfesten 2012. Photo © Amy Malek.

Eldfesten Continues

In spring of 2014, I returned to Stockholm to follow-up with my interlocutors and friends in Stockholm. By then, Eldfesten had spread from Stockholm and Gothenburg to three additional cities in Sweden, partnering with some fifty Iranian associations across the country. The *Chahārshanbih Sūrī* event in the suburbs had not taken place since 2012, and the IRIS group who had refused to join the 2012 Eldfesten Committee joined once again in 2014. The 2014 Eldfesten in Stockholm attracted its largest crowd to date, included more mainstream popular Iranian musicians (potentially due to the co-occurrence of five iterations of the festival on the same evening in different cities required a broader range of performers), and was attended by both the Foreign Minister of Sweden at the time, Carl Bildt (who has taken diplomatic trips to Iran and who took a selfie from the Eldfesten stage), and Stefan Löfven, then-president of the Social Democrat Party of Sweden (who shared Nowruz greetings with the audience in Persian). While these politicians represented different political parties, they each extolled the contributions Iranians and other immigrants make to Swedish society. As Bildt told Swedish National Radio: "I thanked everyone who has come here; though they have come here for reasons that are often

tragic, they have come here and enriched Sweden."[53] Bildt told the crowd that he had experienced Nowruz in different parts of the Middle East, calling it a 4,000-year old tradition, "far older than anything we have in our northern parts."

Swedish TV (Channels 2 and 4) and radio broadcast the live event in their news segments, and diaspora satellite television networks covered the Stockholm festival, each broadcasting segments of performances intercut with interviews from Hosseini. His message to each outlet is perhaps telling of the multiple goals he and his co-organizers have for this festival. To Swedish National Radio, like in his statement quoted above, Hosseini emphasized integration as bi-directional and undertaken, in part, through culture:

> The people and the reception from the audience give us this warmth that makes us invest more and more and make it bigger and bigger. It's [about] integration. When you come to a society you learn all the celebrations and customs and at the same time, we present all our celebrations and then it becomes an integrated society. Integration is not just one-way, it's two-way.[54]

Meanwhile, he told the Iranian and diaspora audiences of London-based free-to-air Persian-language network Manoto+ that one of the festival's main goals was to promote Iranian artists, but that the other was to create such a presence in Sweden that Iranians eventually would have their own national holiday:

> One of my other goals is that, in the years to come, to spread [Eldfesten] to other Swedish cities; we are in five cities now and I'm hopeful that in the next four years we can fully celebrate it in at least ten Swedish cities. And that in the future, in the Swedish calendar, this day will be known as Iran Day.[55]

Each of these goals, as articulated to his multiple audiences – in Sweden, in Iran and across the diaspora – work to promote belonging and citizenship for Iranians around the world;

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[53] Carl Bildt, interviewed by SVT Radio. Translation by Katja Antoine. http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=3993&artikel=5813864

[54] Mansour Hosseini, interviewed by SVT Radio. Translation by Katja Antoine. http://sverigesradio.se/sida/artikel.aspx?programid=3993&artikel=5813864

[55] Mansour Hosseini, interviewed by Manoto+ TV. Translation mine. http://www.manoto1.com/shows/manotoplus/SHOW40/videos/44881/VID4928.

festivals and holidays garner the attention of fellow Swedes as much as it does fellow Iranians in diaspora. For this latter group, Eldfesten provides a model, networks, and opportunities to experience diasporic belonging.

Diasporic Connections

Just as I had asked Hosseini about his motivations, I also asked Mirlashari why he felt the need to work with a committee rather than to move forward with the festival as they envisioned. And like Hosseini's, Mirlashari's answer reveals a desire for belonging in Sweden alongside a diasporic outlook with implications for belonging and citizenship well beyond Sweden.

> You know, the issue is that we were interested in growing projects like Eldfesten or Nowruz, to use cultural elements to [show] the presence of the Iranian community, to make the lives of the Iranian community *easier*! When I say the Iranian community, I mean myself. I can live more easily here. There's no doubt -- if I can live easier here, then of course a fellow Iranian can, too. Then, we tried to familiarize a greater number of people with our own ideas and thoughts. Go sit in [the Committee], with non-professionals – people who haven't tried to work professionally [in the arts] – to see how we use this money they talk about. So that they don't think, "Oh, 1 million kronor…" To see our philosophy, our vision, and our ideas from up close. So they can then find new friends. From this perspective we tried to make a committee with different characters, people who don't think like we do, but come and have an open debate with us, and they can in this way learn something from us and we can get a good critique from them. …It was for this that we thought to have a bigger group, in a committee, to help one another, and to find a common language among the Iranian community.[56]

This aim of finding or creating a common language among the Iranian community is reminiscent of the goals of Ariannejad and Tirgan in Toronto and speaks to the general trend forming in the capitals of the Iranian diaspora to create this kind of concerted effort towards learning and teaching collaboration, cooperation, and democratic processes. Hosseini, Mafan, and Keyvani may be interested in bringing Iranian diaspora artists to Swedish stages on behalf of their institutional commitments, but they each are also interested in bringing Iranians and

[56] Mirlashari, interview, June 1, 2012.

their cultural and political investments into mainstream Swedish life. Furthermore, they are also invested in diaspora-building and intercultural exchange more broadly, creating networks and organizations that empower Iranians in diaspora to actively engage in areas of mutual interest, whether political, cultural, or otherwise, both in diaspora and in Iran. And these efforts are equally supported by policies that aim for integration. Hosseini drew out this diasporic connection:

> As I said, we unfortunately have Iranian chauvinists that say everything should be in Persian, everything should be in Farsi, and everything should be in the traditional way that we have [always done it]. And I say, okay, if you want to have it like this, you can celebrate it, no one is against you. But *this* is the way that we want to present our culture. If you go to a country and just speak loud with your own language, nobody [will] understand that there is violation of human rights in Iran. …Two years ago there were people who were going [to demonstrate in] the center of Stockholm and they were just talking loud in the megaphone …IN FARSI… And I don't want to say which group it was, but they were there about 6 months, and nobody knew what [they were saying]…not even one TV channel was interested to know about them. Because all their [signs] were in Farsi…. If you just shout "*Huqūq-i bashar dar Iran nābūd shud!"*— Well, all Iranians know about this. We [need] to reach our voice to the other people who don't know about it.[57]

This form of diasporic citizenship turns on civic responsibilities and democratic principles through non-state platforms, even if state institutions enable them. As demonstrated here, the multiculturalism-as-citizenization paradigm, as advocated by Kymlicka, is implicated in the 'being and doing' of diaspora in Stockholm that make up notions of Iranian diasporic citizenship.

Conclusion

Fundamental questions surrounding integration and cultural policy are being debated among European journalists, politicians, and policy makers, but also among immigrants and their descendants. In Sweden, a country that earned a global reputation as a forerunner in European

[57] Hosseini, interview.

multiculturalism for its democratic, progressive, liberal policies, immigrant groups are increasingly threatened by rising nationalist parties who blame immigration for an array of social ills. Concurrently, multicultural policies that encourage home language learning, community organizing, and cultural production — policies rooted in the same liberal notions of equality that drive multiculturalism everywhere — have been gradually undermined by financial cuts and face increasing political hostility. Immigrant groups and ethnic groups in Stockholm, for their part, are often pushed by economic and social factors to live "apart" from Swedish society, in "immigrant suburbs" where cheaper housing is available, but fewer services exist. It is reported by the state statistical organ that unemployment is significantly higher among immigrants than among 'natives' while, generally, education rates are lower. In the Iranian case, post-secondary education rates are in fact 6% higher than among 'native Swedes," yet unemployment remains above the national average, indicating a particularly paradoxical problem.

In the tale I began with – the Iranian-Swedish producer's invocation of the newcomer elephant– there is an anxiety about the need to protect and preserve cultural traditions in the face of assimilation pressures. The feeling by some Iranian Swedes that a kind of "authentic" Iranian culture exists and should be preserved despite immigration, assimilation, and quotidian diasporic life also reveals this anxiety. In the case of Eldfesten, this position was productively debated with self-described "intercultural" ones, thanks in part to the influence of Swedish cultural policies and Iranian Swedes who disagreed with culturalist interpretations. Indeed, the questions being debated within the Iranian community in Stockholm are similar to those being debated in scholarly and policy circles: Should Iranians be protecting and preserving traditional forms of Iranian culture in Sweden and ensuring Iranian events are for Iranians and utilizing state funding to do so? Or should they be working to bring Iranian voices to national debates, public spheres,

and city centers, combining Iranian cultural forms and identities with those that they encounter in Sweden and beyond?

For immigrant Swedes and their kin, increasing assimilation pressures meet social and geographic isolation in the cultural field. And the players are conflicted, as the Iranian community in Sweden illustrates. During participant observation in three months of Eldfesten Committee meetings, alongside careful attention to voting procedures, speaker lists, and public agendas, I observed heated community contestations surrounding issues of tradition, modernity, democracy, culture, and assimilation. In the face of a public celebration of Iranian new year that welcomed Latin bands, rappers, Swedish fire throwers, and Swedish politicians to share the stage with Iranian classical musicians, pop performers, and traditional dancers, criticism from the community included accusations of tarnishing cultural authenticity, contestations over 'ownership and rights' to represent an Iranian holiday in such a way, and debates over who should speak and spend on behalf of the community.

The motivations for theses critiques are probably many — including, importantly, the perceived infringement upon personal economic gain and the appropriate use of tax revenues — but it is clear that culturalist understandings were effectively mobilized in these debates, drawing on community members' conviction that Iranian festivals and celebrations should be "IRANIAN," presenting to outsiders and the youth of the community an "authentic" representation of Iranian holidays and festivals and culture. What this means, even among "traditionalists," was yet another source of anxiety and contention.

Indeed, in these frequent meetings of community leaders, it was also made clear that the way this holiday is celebrated in Iran looks completely different than it does anywhere in diaspora. The festivities, which include impromptu fire jumping, dancing, and setting off of

fireworks, are illegal in Iran (the Supreme Leader Khamenei called the festivities "void of religious roots and cause of great harm and corruption" in 2010) (Payvand Iran News 2010).[58] The holiday celebrations are also often impromptu in the U.S. and elsewhere, which makes it illegal thanks to the bonfires, but it is more often celebrated in diaspora in large festival settings with concerts, orchestrated fire jumping guarded by firefighters, and with organized food, fun, and festivities. While this fact was delivered as a criticism in Committee meetings, it also acknowledges that *Chahārshanbih Sūrī* can't be celebrated in the same way 'here' as it is 'there.' Nevertheless, there was a feeling among some Iranians in Stockholm that authenticity should be attempted anyway, in order to more 'accurately' show what Iranian culture is for Iranians and non-Iranians alike. These statements reveal a deeply felt philosophy about culture and tradition, maintained even in the face of sure failure to "protect" some traditional, authentic, view of Iranian culture.

While anthropologists may agree about the problematic notions of cultural preservation or protection that these culturalist philosophies rely upon, the meanings community members and our interlocutors place on culture continues to influence their practices and makes clear that we cannot dismiss these concepts when they persist in everyday life. Using the term *practice* to indicate more than just behavior, then, the leaders of Eldfesten argued that culture is the realm where Iranians should rehearse the skills of democratic life, absent 'back home' and yet critical to a future they envision for Iran.

Multiple Swedish institutions contributed to this outcome, and their roles were critical – ABF's pedagogical approach to creating a democratic society, Farhang's interculturalist mission, and Riksteatern's leadership in promoting and sponsoring international and intercultural

[58] *Chahārshanbih Sūrī* 2010 (the year of this statement) was a political event in Iran's major cities as protests were planned to coincide with the holiday. See the *Guardian*'s Iran News live-blog of the night at http://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/mar/16/iran-protest.

productions in Sweden were all present in the Eldfesten committee meetings through their representatives, including Hosseini, Mafan, Mirlashari, and Keyvani. Furthermore, each of these individuals considered their cultural work political – not only were they interested in the aesthetic, musical, and intercultural aspects of the event, they were also interested in the democratic practices and processes that could be rehearsed through its production. With the political winds in Sweden moving further to the right, the future of these institutions and individuals are unclear. The new leaders of Riksteatern appear to be less supportive of this kind of intercultural approach, while the leaders of Farhang have pursued more hands-on, community-wide avenues for their intercultural work. That Eldfesten has continued to grow despite these changes is testament to its demonstrated effectiveness at mobilizing community leaders and reaching large, multicultural audiences for its intercultural performances.

Swedish cultural policies set the agenda for the Swedish Arts Council, national arts institutions, and other funding bodies which, in 2012, created openings for community debates and contestations about culture, particularly surrounding tradition, authenticity, and representation. These are important opportunities for communities to articulate and debate their positions in Sweden vis-à-vis culture, language, and tradition. By incorporating intercultural counter-discourses in these debates, the organizers of Eldfesten also introduced integration as a process that requires migrant groups and the Swedish state to engage over questions of culture. Thus, rather than finding multiculturalism operated as a straitjacket preventing cultural experimentation for Iranians in Stockholm, my research offers a case of cultural policy enabling creative re-interpretations of culture and critical dialogue.

Indeed, in the case of Eldfesten, one could attend the three-hour event and dismiss it as just another cultural festival, an example of the festivals that mark the shallowness of celebratory

multiculturalism, an insidious form that divides and marginalizes cultural minorities. But to do so would ignore the impact of Eldfesten on the Iranian community and on Swedish public culture, an impact that goes well beyond a shallow celebration of "culture." Thus, while multicultural programs and the policies that produce them should be critiqued based on outcomes, those outcomes must also include what is often produced off-stage, including forms of citizenship and participation that develop in local, national, and diasporic spaces.

CHAPTER 4

Producing Practice through Culture: Teamwork as a Resource for Iranian Diasporic Citizenship in Toronto

At the by-invitation-only Opening Ceremony of the 2011 Tirgan Iranian Festival in Toronto, festival CEO Mehrdad Ariannejad addressed a room of local and provincial politicians, Iranian diaspora dignitaries, community leaders, artists, and representatives from the press. After welcoming the crowd and thanking each of the half-dozen politicians present by name, he proudly proclaimed that it was no accident that Tirgan was planned and produced in Toronto. He described his adopted city as follows:

> [Toronto is] the world's most diverse and welcoming city, where humanity comes to celebrate our historical and contemporary heritage, where we gather to see beyond the politics of the day and envision a world of future possibilities, where we focus on all that binds us together as a human family. This is indeed the Canadian way, and the main reason why hundreds of thousands of Iranians have chosen to make Canada their home.

Ariannejad was but one of many speakers that weekend to invoke discourses of multiculturalism, Canadian nationalism, and the promotion of diversity as a unifying force, themes that were repeated by artists, organizers, and politicians alike. According to Statistics Canada's 2011 National Household Survey, more than 6 million Canadians self-identify as a visible minority, or 19% of the total population (Statistics Canada 2013). Over half of those visible minorities live in Ontario, and the majority live in its largest city, Toronto, whose residents identify with over 200 ethnic groups (Winter 2011: 15 fn 3 and 4). An estimated 46% of the Toronto population (5,583,064) in 2011 was composed of immigrants, and among them, 47% identified as visible minorities (Statistics Canada 2013). These ethnic groups host hundreds of festivals throughout the calendar year and their events are usually preceded by Canadian and Ontario politicians' statements of support, each sprinkled with references to *diversity*, *heritage*,

mosaic, and *community*, modified by adjectives like *vibrant*, *rich*, *unique*, and *proud*. The simultaneous focus on the cultural richness of multiculturalism (that offers ethnic communities the opportunity to feel proud of their "unique and vibrant heritage") and the celebration of the unity of "the human family" (that shares a "historical and contemporary heritage") is common in these political testimonials.

Figure 14. Reza Moridi, MPP for Richmond Hill, addresses the media at the Opening Ceremony of Tirgan 2011. To his left stand federal, provincial, and municipal politicians, including then-Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Jason Kenney. Photo © Amy Malek

In a country known perhaps as much for its cold climate as for its policies of multiculturalism, summers in Toronto are packed with public performances, both organized and impromptu. As Torontonians begin to shed their coats and re-populate the city's sidewalks and patios (themselves considered a prime summer "scene"), Toronto bustles with public concerts, theater-in-the-park, outdoor film screenings, and cultural festivals – all excellent excuses to enjoy the city while temporarily liberated from its icy winters. Families from across the city seeking summer recreation make weekend pilgrimages to the various shores of Lake Ontario: to Beaches, to Toronto Islands, and to the Harbourfront Center. Harbourfront Center is an arts and cultural venue located on a 10,000-acre site along Lake Ontario and is a Toronto destination in

its own right. But in the summer this historic location draws thousands of Torontonians and tourists each weekend for the cultural and ethnic festivals that take place there.

Though smaller than the giant *Caribana*, a carnival that draws upwards of 1 million Caribbeans to Toronto each August, the festivals at Harbourfront are no small affair – over 100,000 attendees flock to each these summer events. Festivals, more generally, are an ever-present feature of Toronto summer life – from multi-day mega-fests to smaller neighborhood fetes and all points in between. Along with Caribana, festivals like the *Taste of the Danforth* (Greek street festival), *Ashkenaz* (Jewish music and culture festival) and *Masala!Mehndi!Masti!* (South Asian cultural festival) are all familiar to average Torontonians as major events on the summer calendar. They also provide sources of inspiration (as well as a template) for other Toronto ethnic groups' celebrations.[1]

The cultural diversity of Toronto is celebrated (through festivals and otherwise) by federal, provincial, and municipal officials alike. As is the case with Canada more broadly, this diversity is marked as a cornerstone of the city's identity. Canada's official policy of multiculturalism has resulted in a unique approach to incorporation and identity, but also to the development of today's multiethnic Toronto – a city known to scholars as "a world in a city" (Ansief and Lanphier 2003) and to newcomers as "a good destination for immigrants…really welcoming to new people."[2]

In this chapter, I offer an ethnographic analysis of the production of the Tirgan Iranian Festival, a multi-day celebration of Iranian arts and culture in Toronto billed as the largest Iranian festival in the world. As addressed in the Introduction and Chapter 2, multiculturalism is

[1] Each of these festivals began as smaller affairs and have grown to such an extent that major corporate sponsors have been added to their titles, e.g. Krinos Taste of the Danforth, Rogers Masala!Mehndi!Masti!, etc. Beyond financial growth, M!M!M! also has been exported internationally, premiering in Dubai in 2012.
[2] Behrouz Amouzgar, interviewed by Amy Malek, August 24, 2011.

often criticized for promoting shallow celebrations of 'ethnic' cultures while doing little to impact immigrants' day-to-day lives or structural inequalities in polyethnic states (e.g. Alibhai-Brown 2000). Here I offer the case of one such festival to show how art and culture were used by Iranians in Toronto as a resource for the building of practices like teamwork, participation, and volunteerism. Indeed, as outlined below, the Tirgan Iranian Festival was envisioned as a community-building exercise as much as a presentation of contemporary Iranian art and culture.

Figure 15. Tirgan 2013 drew record crowds to Harbourfront Center, located along Lake Ontario. Photos © Amy Malek

Through interviews with volunteers, directors, and community partners of the festival alongside participant observation in Tirgan planning meetings and at the 2011 and 2013 festivals themselves, I show that cultural policies that set diversity and multiculturalism as priorities created opportunities for the development of practices of volunteerism, accountability, and collaboration. State-funded local arts councils and agencies in Canada are thereby also key players in the formation of diasporic identity and belonging. Not only are they supporting cultural productions that work to create incorporated, multicultural citizens (cf. Bloemraad 2006), they are erstwhile financing and promoting the production of diasporic practices related to cultural and diasporic citizenship (Siu 2005). Through an emphasis on the everyday practices of diaspora, I show how one such community partnership program produced both a festival and a

source for rehearsals of (and precedents for) inter- and intra-community collaboration — an on-going project that has impacted diasporic practices well beyond the festival grounds.

These forms of practice are deeply implicated in the production of diasporic citizenship, a process defined by Lok Siu as, "the processes by which diasporic subjects **experience** and **practice** cultural and social belonging amid shifting geopolitical circumstances and webs of transnational relations" (Siu 2005: 5, emphasis mine). As discussed in the Introduction, the notion of *experience*, or of "being" a diasporic citizen, often expressed in terms of belonging, relates to the emotional commitments and attachments of communities and individuals to more than one nation-state, but also to the diaspora itself – to scattered communities of co-ethnics/co-supplicants/co-nationals. Similarly, *practice* involves actions, contestations, discourses, and movements by diaspora members – the "doing" of diasporic citizenship. I suggest this *being* and *doing* are mutually constituting and reinforcing; they co-exist and motivate one another. To be sure, the artistic and aesthetic representations on stage, on gallery walls, and on Iranian bodies at Tirgan were important for fostering the *experience* of belonging in diaspora (the "being" of diasporic citizenship). Here, however, I foreground the ways in which *practice* (the "doing" of diasporic citizenship) is not only productive of Tirgan, but is also produced by it, through off-stage processes that occur before and after the four-day celebration of Iranian arts and culture.

Festivals as Schools: Multiculturalism's Civic Training Grounds

In her study of political incorporation among Portuguese and Vietnamese immigrants and refugees in Toronto and Boston, Irene Bloemraad found that when multiculturalist policies were paired with government assistance for immigrant groups (e.g. funding for community organizations, as is common in Canada), immigrant organizing occurred at higher rates than in states without this crucial pairing, such as in the U.S. (Bloemraad 2006: 165). According to

Bloemraad, government assistance leads to a greater overall number of community organizations, and therefore more services, programs, and opportunities for immigrants that improve the likelihood of their organizing at the community level. Such organizing, she argues, leads to greater rates of successful immigrant incorporation. Though Bloemraad focused primarily on political citizenship and incorporation of immigrant groups (using naturalization as a metric), her study offers important insights into the relationship between community organizations and state intervention that are useful for understanding the impact of multicultural policy on immigrants and the development of (multi-)cultural citizenship in diaspora.

Among her most useful insights for this study, Bloemraad points to the ways in which cultural organizations, events and activities "carry important indirect consequences for political incorporation" (94). In her study, she cites critics of multiculturalism who argue that its policies promote superficial celebrations of ethnicity with a focus on food and folklore, yet she found that "organized activities that foster community pride — or which are just plain fun — can serve as 'schools,' teaching newcomers the requisite skills for civic and political involvement" (94). Indeed, Bloemraad suggests that the communication and organization skills learned at such 'schools,' might then be "transferred from a workplace, voluntary association, or church to the political arena" and that "those who are 'institutionally connected' enjoy an advantage in the political system" (92).

Bloemraad acknowledges the transnational and homeland-orientation of many immigrant groups' cultural organizations, particularly at their inception, but argues that a "rich organizational structure" in any organization can still result in support for political incorporation in "the new home." (94) Her analysis applies well to the Iranian-Canadian case – indeed, at least three Iranian-Canadians ran for public election in 2014 supported by volunteer corps of their co-

ethnics campaigning on their behalf – but her study did not extend to the realm of cultural citizenship or into the transnational arena. How do these community partnerships and unintended 'schools' impact cultural citizenship and the larger diasporic community beyond the 'new home'?

In the case of the Iranian Tirgan Festival, this chain of learning extends from a state intermediary (Harbourfront Center) to a voluntary organization (Tirgan) to volunteers, with the effect of increasing the potential for not only incorporation and participation of Iranian immigrants in political and cultural arenas in Canada but also the potential for the application of those new skills and experiences in larger, diasporic efforts – both cultural and political. This transfer of skills is important, and my ethnographic findings complement Bloemraad's suggestions surrounding political participation. Beyond this, however, these institutional connections and informal education have impacts beyond Canada. As I argue in the following sections, these impacts on immigrant practice proliferate diasporically.

Tehranto: The Multi-faceted Community of Iranians in Toronto

The Greater Toronto Area (GTA) is home to the largest concentration of Iranians in Canada and has become a destination of choice for Iranians in diaspora over the last two decades (Moghissi et al 2009). Though significant immigration to Canada by Iranians began in the 1980s, a large proportion of the Iranian population in Toronto arrived between 1996 and 2001 and the city continues to welcome new immigrants. That a large number of Toronto's Iranians arrived to Canada after living through the Iran-Iraq war distinguishes them from the majority of Iranians who migrated to the United States or Sweden. Indeed, most Iranians in Canada lived in Iran through the war *and* the rebuilding of the country's economy and infrastructure. Another important distinction from Swedish Iranians is that many Iranian Canadians left Iran in the late

1990s and 2000s not as political refugees (though there were many of these, as well) but as students seeking higher education, young professionals seeking jobs, or families seeking a "better life" more generally. In 1981, the majority of Iranians arriving in Canada were protected persons (defined as, "government-assisted refugees, privately sponsored refugees and persons who receive protected person status in Canada as a result of a positive asylum claim") — but just twenty years later, the number of Iranian immigrants had grown more than five times and the type of migrant had changed as well (Chagnon 2013: 3, 6). Compared to earlier years, 2010 and 2011 showed significant growth in the number of Iranian economic class immigrants (defined as, "skilled workers, business immigrants, provincial and territorial nominees, the Canadian Experience Class, and live-in caregivers, as well as their spouses or partners and their dependents" (Chagnon 2013: 3, 6). Thus, Canada's points system has greatly impacted this feature of Iranian migration to Canada – highly skilled, educated, linguistically capable, and young Iranians were particularly successful in a system that calculated entry based on these characteristics. Recent changes to Canada's immigration system have marked the end of the points system and leave open questions as to the impact on migration from Iran and the Middle East.

In addition to immigrants who settled in Canada through the points system or as protected persons, a relatively new strata of Iranian immigrants began to join their compatriots in Toronto in the 2000s: the Investor Immigrant class. In this scheme, ended in 2015,[3] immigrants to Canada who invested a minimum dollar amount in land or business ventures in Canada were entitled to landing papers that enabled them to live in Canada legally, making them eligible to apply for

[3] In place of the Federal Immigrant Investor and Entrepreneur program, in January 2015 Immigration Canada launched the Immigrant Investor Venture Capital Pilot Program, requiring a $2 million investment over 15 years, a net worth of $10 million (legally obtained), language competency in French or English, and a post-secondary educational credential. See Citizenship and Immigration Canada, http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/immigrate/business/iivc/index.asp.

citizenship within 3 years.[4] A group that one of my interlocutors described as "the nouveau riche of the Islamic Republic" has taken advantage of this system to achieve what Aihwa Ong has termed *flexible citizenship*: "the cultural logics of capitalist accumulation, travel, and displacement that induce subjects to respond fluidly and opportunistically to changing political-economic conditions," for example when "mobile managers, technocrats, and professionals [seek] to both circumvent *and* benefit from different nation-state regimes by selecting different sites for investments, work, and family relocation" (1999: 6, 112).

In Ong's study, entrepreneurs and other elite citizens of Hong Kong "collected" citizenship and passports that enabled them to travel without additional visas or hassles to many parts of the world (thereby guaranteeing mobility), and also to "flexibly" take advantage of social, financial, and other advantages not offered in China. This enabled them to start transnational corporations or to sponsor family members who could benefit from the education and social capital gained from a North American upbringing (Ong 1999). These same incentives apply to the case of wealthy Iranians in Toronto where, in some cases, investor immigrants have purchased mansions where their children live (cared for by nannies) and go to school while their parents remain in Iran or travel for much of the year, maintaining businesses and other investments. This trend was also common in the Chinese-American context studied by Ong, where children, given the name "parachute kids," were left alone to live in foreign lands by "astronaut" parents, creating families whose members live in multiple countries and challenge conventional understandings of the nuclear family (Ong et al. 1996: 748; Ong 1999: 127-128).

Though still a relatively less common case in the Toronto Iranian context, this phenomenon is nonetheless one that was mentioned to me multiple times during fieldwork. In

[4] The dollar amount varied based on year of application and which province invited their investment; the range in 2014 was $300,000 – 800,000 CAD (*Globe and Mail* 2015).

these instances, Iranians who had lived in Toronto for over a decade remarked disdainfully about the financial sources of these new investor immigrants, questioning "off whose backs" wealth was accumulated post-Revolution and in exchange for what political gains and losses for the country.[5] Regardless, the prospect of a Canadian passport has attracted Iranian elites, who, like the Chinese in Ong's studies, have business interests in multiple parts of the world, and are seeking: (a) the ability to travel, (b) insurance in case of political fallout, and (c) access to cultural capital and social services, including Canada's famous universal healthcare and access to education. The investor class among Iranian immigrants may not be as numerous as the Chinese, but the diasporic networks they create are spread around Europe, Australia, North America, and the Middle East and are thus vulnerable to the threat (and reality) of sanctions, political unrest, and intervention. They are therefore keen to protect their interests. Also, like the Chinese studied by Ong, they seek the educational credentials of elite North American institutions — even Khomeini's great-granddaughter earned her degree in Canada[6] — and in particular fields, such as medicine, dentistry, engineering, software development, and law.

[5] Bolstering these suspicions was the case of Iranian-Canadian Mahmoud-Reza Khavari, former managing director at Bank Melli who lived in Iran while his family lived in Canada, where he owned a $3 million home in Toronto. Khavari is suspected of being party to a major Iranian banking scandal revealed in 2011 involving over 30 individuals arrested for fraud that culminated in the embezzlement of $2.6 billion. Khavari resigned from his position abruptly and fled to Canada; he has never been charged, but some Iranians in Toronto have pointed to him as an example of the corruption they claim is common among the investor immigrants. See, e.g., Globe and Mail (2011) and New York Times (2011). Further suspicion of these families came through two of my interlocutors who went as far as to claim that the fact that women in some of these families wore *hijab* indicated that the family was part of the ruling establishment in Iran, with religious agendas that were particularly problematic for a liberal democratic country like Canada. No evidence of these motives was offered, but the rumors were repeated and reveal a source of tension within the Iranian community in Toronto.

[6] An *IranWire* article on the controversy surrounding a photo of this young woman, photoshopped to conceal her trendy skinny jeans, translates and quotes a Facebook commenter who offered a common sentiment among some Iranians: "Honestly, is there anyone among you [those tied to the regime] who educates your children in Iran? *Mashallah* all of you, reformist or conservative, educate your children in either Europe or America. The West and America are only bad and dirty for the rest of us, but for you all they're heaven…I wish your grandfather was here to see this… 'Down with America' and 'Down with Britain' have always been oft-repeated slogans, but all of you in power send your kids to the US, Canada or England for education" (HaghighatNejad 2013).

Alongside economic and investor immigrants, the newest wave of migration by Iranians to Toronto and other parts of the diaspora is includes those who left Iran after the 2009 election crisis. Journalists, students, activists, and other politically-active young professionals who were involved in the 2009 protests and election fallout often were forced into exile after wide-scale arrests and prison torture became common. A 2013 Statistics Canada report listed Iran among the top 10 Asian source countries for immigrants to Canada, and the period between the 2006 and 2011 Census marked a sharp rise in Iranian migration from among that group: "Iran rose from 8th place in 2008 (6,600 immigrants, or 2.7% of all immigrants admitted that year) to 4th place in 2011 (7,500 or 3.0%)" (Chagnon 2013: 5). This surge in population growth in what is increasingly referred to as "Tehranto" has been most apparent in Toronto's suburban neighborhoods.

During this period, asylum-seekers (based on sexual orientation, political activities, religion, and otherwise), students, job seekers, and investor immigrants continued to arrive. The milieu in Toronto has therefore become one with varying experiences of living in Iran and of living in Canada, and of being Iranian and of being Canadian. While some families are reunited by immigration, others are divided, and these divisions often become mapped onto the city: young, single, well-educated technocrats and graduate students often live cosmopolitan lives downtown, while well-healed families and struggling refugees live in the mixed-class uptown suburbs.

The first generation of Iranians in Toronto includes the community's leaders, who have lived in Canada for over 30 years, but also the 'new' first generation, whose members arrive daily. Meanwhile the second generation in Canada is coming of age, though in fewer numbers than their American second generation counterparts: the majority of Iranian Canadians arrived

much later than Iranians in the U.S. and so do not yet have grown children born and raised in Canada. Thus, those second generation Iranian Canadians who *are* of age relate stories of growing up in the cultural mosaic feeling their difference in elementary school classrooms and feeling pressure to fit in. As a result, many second generation Iranians in Canada describe themselves as "assimilated" and are not as active in the day-to-day life of the Iranian community, suggesting that events like Tirgan are perhaps more meaningful to those who have themselves immigrated and are keen to counter the alienation of migration. Regardless, for community leaders and activists in the 1.5 or second generation, the perceived cultural difference between Iran and their diasporic homes is keenly felt in intergenerational contexts, and can be a source of tension and conflict.

While Toronto's downtown core is home to bustling ethnic businesses in Chinatown, Little Italy, Little Korea, and Little Portugal, suburban Toronto is home to many neighborhoods of overlapping ethnic clusters, as they increasingly become examples of the city's ever-expanding super-diversity (Vertovec 2007b). In the case of Iranians in Toronto in the early 2010s, the suburban neighborhoods of Richmond Hill, North York (including Willowdale), and Thornhill (including Markham and Vaughan) were home to large numbers of Iranians and their flourishing stores, super markets, restaurants, and businesses, whether in well-known strip malls, like the famous Iranian Plaza on Yonge Street, or sandwiched in between Korean schools, South Asian salons, and the quintessential Canadian establishment: Tim Horton's coffee shops. Koreans, Jamaicans, Chinese, Iranians, and South Asians live and work side by side in areas like North York, where Mel Lastman Square provides the go-to public venue for Toronto's Iranian protests, festivals, and promenading, but also for other community events like the Latin Arts Festival, the Korean Harvest Festival, Hispanic Fiesta, and Canada Day celebrations. In recent

years, large real estate developments in Toronto's suburbs – condominiums, subdivisions, and apartments – have been produced by Iranians and mark exceptional sites where the Iranian residents outnumber their other "ethnic" neighbors. The Toronto Iranian community has been notable for its prolific cultural productions and participation in local social and political spheres, including the election of the first Iranian provincial parliament member, Reza Moridi (MPP Richmond Hill; elected 2007, re-elected in 2011).

The Tirgan Iranian Festival could not exist without extensive community support, both political and economic (e.g., sponsorships) requiring a robust ethnic economy and political participation, much of which is conducted in these suburban locations.

Figure 16. Iranian Plaza in North York, Toronto is perhaps the best-known cluster of Iranian-Canadian businesses in the city. It features two markets, a bakery, a kabob restaurant, several after-school tutors, a photo studio, a travel agency, a chiropractor's office, a jeweler, a tailor, and an array of other offerings. Photo © Amy Malek

Yonge Street, the major north-west artery through Toronto, is celebrated as the longest street in the world and its North York intersections at Finch and Sheppard are key cardinal points in the lives of Iranian Torontonians. In his book of short stories titled *Me and Yonge Street*, local author Hassan Golmohammadi details the many reasons his character Jafar loves Yonge Street, including its liveliness, its businesses, its parks and festivals, its Iranian Plaza, its immense

length. In the midst of his ode to Yonge, he describes his journey from Iran to Toronto in colloquial Persian, and his thoughts drift to his studies at York University: "My major field is computers. Most of our [class] activities are group-work. Toronto's universities create in people a culture of working together and being useful for society. [Things] that we were not able to do in Iran" (Golmohammadi 2011: 14, translation mine). This sentiment, common among Iranians I worked with in Toronto and the wider diaspora, drives the practices and events analyzed in this chapter.

Doing Diaspora: Teamwork & Collaboration as Citizenship Practices

> A glance at our history would attest that political differences have resulted in hostility and division amongst Iranians and have consistently distanced us from one another. It is unfortunate to see that as a result we have not managed to hold a uniform front in representing Iran and Iranians outside of Iran. It is time to set aside our differences and focus on our commonalities.
>
> – Behrouz Amouzgar, Tirgan Director of Public Relations, as quoted in *Shahrvand* (Zerehi 2011)

Among Iranians in diaspora, and particularly among community organizers, the perceived inability to successfully engage in collaboration and teamwork is a common point of frustration. While these may be fundamental skills taught and valued in Canadian civil society, collaboration and teamwork were repeatedly identified by Iranians during my fieldwork as key areas of deficiency and sources of contention in their communities. As such, for the Iranian case, efforts at developing these skills serve as particularly appropriate windows into diasporic practice.

While learning to work together in groups is indeed a concept that pervades Canadian education systems, as alluded to by Golmohammadi's Jafar, these values have played a relatively minor role among education priorities in Iran (Malekzadeh 2011). As a result, the moral judgment that occurs when grading whether a student "works well with others" (a common evaluation on grade school report cards in the U.S.) is relatively absent in Iranian society. In Iran,

being considered a good person – or a good citizen – may have little to do with whether one is considered a "team player" in the ways it often is viewed in many parts of Europe and North America. Indeed, historians have noted the implementation of team sports and scouting in early 20th century Iran as attempted paths toward values, often through American and British institutions. Houchang Chehabi, in his 2002 study of sports in Iran, noted that the introduction of Western team sports in schools was part of an early 20th century modernization effort in Iran's education system: "In a conscious effort to inculcate the value of cooperative effort, insufficiently fostered by traditional Iranian *zūrkhānah* exercises, the director of the school, Dr. Samuel Jordan, concentrated on ball games. Students had to take up pick and shovel to help build the school's football field" (Chehabi 2002: 277, citing Arthur C. Boyce). Similarly, historian Cyrus Schayegh's study of sports and health in 1920s and 1930s Iran added the pivotal role of scouting, arguing that it was viewed by authors and scouting organizers "as the vehicle for the creation of a type of individual who would stand out not only by his personal audacity and self-discipline, but also by his fair play and ability to integrate into a group, shedding what was seen as excessive individuality. Sport 'teaches how to live in society. . …one needs to cooperate with teammates . . . '" (Schayegh 2002: 360, 363).

The extent of any impacts of scouting and western sports on teamwork practices on Iranian youth is debatable, but whatever impacts they may have had were reduced after these activities were discouraged (and in most cases outright prohibited) after the 1979 Revolution. In contrast, from a young age, Canadian students are taught in school to work in pairs and groups on tasks ranging from arts and crafts projects to math sets, ostensibly learning the lesson that teamwork – and a cohort of democratic principles that facilitate it (e.g., equality, mutual respect,

participation, active listening, negotiation, compromise) – is the best way to achieve collective success.

Two related concepts, volunteerism and philanthropy, are areas where Iranians in North American diaspora cities have yet to match host society norms. Volunteerism (as "the act or practice of doing volunteer work in community service")[7] is of course common in everyday Iranian life, but varies in form from North American contexts. A variety of traditional forms of volunteerism and charity exist in Iran, whether conducted through religious institutions (e.g. *zakāt* [alms-giving] or *waqf* [donations to charitable trusts]), extended family networks, neighborliness or other traditional institutions of support in their communities.[8] As a result of migration, practices associated with those institutions have weakened in diaspora, while volunteerism through non-profit organizations or other secular routes (common practice in Canada or the U.S.) has yet to become a norm in Iran, though non-profits supported by volunteers do exist.

Thus, despite the relative wealth of Iranian communities in North America, diasporic Iranian non-profit organizations looking to fundraise have expressed (in interviews, but also publicly) the need for greater philanthropic efforts and more concerted efforts to encourage volunteerism.[9] While their parents are to thank for establishing families and communities in

[7] Merriam-Webster Dictionary. http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/volunteerism, accessed February 15, 2015.

[8] For more on the history of philanthropy in Iran as envisioned by U.S.-based and now defunct PARSA Community Foundation, see their 2007 video, "History of Persian Philanthropy" (PARSA CF 2007).

[9] There have been significant moves towards volunteerism and philanthropy among Iranian Americans. Alongside local endeavors, diasporic volunteerism has been promoted on a national scale through the National Iranian American Council's National Days of Service, Iranian Alliances Across Borders' Camp Ayandeh leadership camp for high school and middle school students and Leadership in Action Fellowships, and Public Affairs Alliance of Iranian America's Day of Thanks events. Philanthropy was the primary target of PARSA Community Foundation. Its founder, Noosheen Hashemi (2013), described philanthropy and the work of PARSA as related to civic responsibility in the U.S.: "Learning from the conventional wisdom of our adopted home, the United States (the most philanthropic country in the world), and inspired by best practices of Jewish philanthropy, we set out to encourage community members to give more, to give more strategically, and to participate in the civic life of their adopted homes."

diaspora, the children of Iranian immigrants in the U.S. have been at the fore of this push for volunteerism in their communities. This may be a result of the emphasis on volunteerism in American schools – many Iranian-American students are required to obtain volunteer or service hours in order to graduate from high school. Regardless, the perceived lack of volunteerism and philanthropy, particularly in the Iranian-American context but also beyond it, is connected to the perceived need for teamwork and cooperation more broadly. This sentiment was also expressed to me by Iranian-Canadians, though not by the as yet relatively small second generation, but rather by first generation community organizers attempting to provide social services, cultural events, and/or educational opportunities for fellow Iranians.

Cultural values of teamwork and democracy have been incorporated as core facets of North American socialization, and can therefore present a challenge for immigrants whose upbringing and education featured overlapping but different value systems and cultural logics. This is not to say that Iranians in diaspora have essentialized or naturalized a lack of team mentality as something they *can't* do at a fundamental level — to the contrary, while failed previous experiences were often cited to me as reasons why individuals I interviewed chose not to work with other Iranians, they were also cited by Iranian diaspora community leaders and organizers as a key motivation for organizing events and projects: to create team-oriented learning opportunities and rehearsals (see Chapter 2).

It was thus claimed by some of my interlocutors that a relative lack of experience in collaboration, group dynamics, and team-oriented management had impeded large-scale, coordinated Iranian diaspora projects (whether political, cultural, or otherwise), while also presenting a challenge to diasporic Iranians' participation in mainstream cultural and political realms. As one of the 2011 directors of Tirgan, Arian Shojaei, described, previous negative

experiences of working with fellow Iranians had made him skeptical of joining Tirgan; it was only after observing a few meetings that he realized its organizers took a different approach:

> I went to a few meetings and I really liked it – they weren't self-important [*tu qiāfih*] and really wanted to do something. They worked in a really organized and systematic way [*organized o systematic*]. Because Iranian society, on this front, is really behind. … A scientific system in which we spend six months to create a manual, six months researching, eight months or something working on development – these ideas weren't really prevalent among Iranians, in Iran or outside. That's why I really liked this group. And so I started working with them.[10]

Shojaei contrasted the way Tirgan's organizers worked with the ways he had previously seen Iranians working, particularly in Iran, where he felt hierarchy, personal relationships, and shallow compliments were more common methods than were long-term research, planning, and strategized execution as a team. These latter methods were among those he found operating in Tirgan, processes influenced in part by the North American career experiences of its directors, and in part thanks to training provided by their partner organization, Harbourfront Center.

In what follows, I focus on the off-stage production of the event to examine the ways in which Tirgan's three-hundred Iranian-Canadian volunteers are made to engage with one another as teammates – or, as one director stated, family members – in a year-long planning process that simultaneously enables and challenges this diasporic population to work together to represent their culture, homeland, and selves through the festival form.

Organizing Tirgan, Organizing Iranians

On the weekend of July 22-24, 2011, a Torontonian or tourist could have attended a Filipino festival, a Caribbean carnival, a Brazilian festival, or the Tirgan Iranian Festival, what has become recognized as the largest Iranian festival of arts and culture in the world. Drawing upwards of 120,000 people to the heart of downtown Toronto that balmy July weekend, this

[10] Arian Shojaei, interviewed by Amy Malek, August 9, 2011.

second iteration of the four-day Tirgan Iranian Festival brought together over 150 Iranian artists, musicians, dancers, authors, filmmakers, and theater productions from around the world to Toronto's famous Harbourfront Center. The 2013 event repeated this feat, drawing upwards of 130,000 attendees, mostly Iranian, from across the global diaspora.

A thoroughly diasporic phenomenon, the Tirgan festival in Toronto was developed through a re-fashioning of ancient and contemporary Iranian themes. The name of the event is drawn from an ancient Zoroastrian rain festival celebrated in the summer month of Tir, and later became associated with one of the heroes of Iranian folklore, Arash the Archer (*Arash-i Kamāngīr*). As a featured figure in the *Shahnameh* (the national epic of Iran), the story of Arash is familiar to most adult Iranians in diaspora, but Tirgan was not necessarily associated with him, nor had it ever been celebrated as a secular holiday in Iran or its diaspora before 2008. In fact, the Tirgan Iranian Festival does not aim to incorporate any of the activities or motivations for the Zoroastrian celebration from which its name is drawn; the primary connection with the ancient Tirgan is its summer date. While another ancient Zoroastrian holiday, Nowruz (Iranian New Year, the vernal equinox), is celebrated by Iranians and others worldwide, the festival's founders wanted to propose an Iranian festival for the popular Toronto summer festival calendar and thereby make full use of the location and services of the Harbourfront Center. The best way to do this, they said, was to re-imagine the ancient summer festival of Tirgan in a very "Canadian way."[11]

[11] Ariannejad, public speech, Tirgan 2011. Following a successful Nowruz festival in March 2006 that brought over 20,000 attendees to Harbourfront Center – far beyond the center's indoor capacity – the organizers and the Center were both interested in bringing an Iranian festival to the summer calendar, when the full capacity of the location would be well over 100,000.

Figure 17. In this marketing campaign for Tirgan 2011, Arash the Archer was depicted touring today's Toronto, with his mythical story printed in the bottom right, in small type. Intended to attract attention on social media, these ads were somewhat controversial for the depiction of Arash as a slim, clean-shaven man with a short haircut, wearing Roman costume and penny loafers. Images © Tirgan Iranian Festival/ICCAC.

With a budget of over C$300,000, Tirgan 2011 featured Iranian performers and artists from around the world, including rock groups, literary figures, an Iranian-Canadian choir, jazz musicians, classical Persian music ensembles, modern dancers, an Iranian-Swedish ballet, traditional folk dancers, poster artists, theater performers, puppeteers, and a female orator of the *Shahnameh*. Each of these performances, together meant to appeal to all age groups and backgrounds, offers insight into the construction of what organizers termed the "contemporary art of modern Iran," mobilized with the intent to illustrate "who we really are" for Iranians and non-Iranian audiences alike.

The Tirgan Iranian Festival is the only project of the Iranian Canadian Center for Arts and Culture (ICCAC), a non-profit organization created in 2007 by the organizers of a 2006 Nowruz festival as an umbrella organization to house Tirgan and any future events they may choose to plan (as of 2015, Tirgan remains their sole program). In 2011, Tirgan's organizational structure involved an executive office of directors, composed of the CEO and the directors of five main departments: artistic, marketing & sales, public relations, administrative, and operations. The festival was run entirely by volunteers in these departments. The CEO, directors, and other volunteers all juggle full-time careers alongside their Tirgan duties, whether as full-time students or in professional fields such as architecture, software engineering, law, and marketing.

Figure 18. Volunteers for the Tirgan 2011 Operations Team meeting at the Harbourfront Center. Photo © Amy Malek

The festival thus relies on the time, dedication, and labor of nearly three-hundred part-time volunteers, most of whom begin meeting nearly a year before the actual event to plan fundraisers, artistic programs, marketing strategies, ad campaigns, publicity opportunities, logistics, and outreach opportunities that lead up to the actual four-day festival. A group this large requires clear and precise organization, a particular challenge given that the festival has

also implemented a self-described transparent "open-door policy," bringing on volunteers throughout the year without restrictions or pre-screening, and enabling them in multiple levels of decision-making within the organization's structure.

For the 2011 festival, the five main departments and their subcommittees met weekly for nearly 11 months. While volunteers came with a range of experiences in these committees, most volunteers were first generation Iranian immigrants in their 20s, 30s, and 40s who had migrated to Canada within the previous 5-10 years. Meetings were thus conducted almost entirely in Persian. Several volunteers confided to me that their primary motivation to join Tirgan as a volunteer was to meet new people. As one volunteer put it, the mission of working towards a common cause that they loved – Iran and Iranians – and meeting weekly for several months meant they built a strong camaraderie that has lasted through several iterations of the festival.[12] The weekly meetings offered a consistent social outlet and their new "Tirgan Family" (a term used by volunteers and taken up by the organization itself) served as a panacea to the absence of strong familial support structures they had left back in Iran. The phrase "Tirgan Family" thus put into words the feeling of belonging formed in the group as one of fictive kinship, supplementing the kinship ties dimmed due to migration with those found in community organizing towards a common cultural goal in diaspora.

Volunteers shared that Tirgan was either the first organization of Iranians with which they had ever worked, or the first with which they had worked that resulted in positive outcomes. Each time this lack of teamwork narrative arose, I asked what the volunteer felt the reason was for this perceived collective failure. In response, I heard hypotheses ranging from cultural explanations (attributing it to a lack of value placed on teamwork in the Iranian education system and labor force) to socio-political explanations (related to Iranians' experiences of living in a

[12] Shojaei, interview; translation mine.

hierarchical society that devalued collaboration and remained suspicious of neighbors and leadership alike, having felt the betrayal of more than one trusted national leader in recent memory):

> …One of the things that [Iranians] had very little of when we came [to Canada] was [trust:] no one trusted each other. The trust was gone, because of the [Iranian] government. Because one person named Khomeini came as a spiritual person and said that I will rescue you, and create a Heaven. And people trusted him 100%, and when he came to power he did exactly the opposite. And in my opinion this trust in our society in Iran was destroyed. No one trusted anybody anymore. … When I first got here, people ran way from each other. Iranians didn't want to talk to each other. Because when they were in Iran – those who immigrated here, why did they immigrate? Because they were suffering there. You know? Their neighbors would turn them in saying they are having a party, or have something [illegal] – and in the street the police would harass them and take them in. People didn't only leave because of the government, they left because of the people, too! Ourselves! Us! So when we came here, Iranians ran away from each other, they didn't want to speak to each other.[13]

Among these explanations was a perceived inability for Iranian individuals to share successes and the resulting spotlight fairly, as well as a perceived lack of trust between Iranians who believed that partners were only working together for self-interest, prioritizing personal benefit far above the common goal. While a lack of unity could be attributed to political differences and other divisive issues that impact large-scale cooperation (as Amouzgar, Tirgan Director of Public Relations in 2011, was quoted as saying in popular Iranian-Canadian newspaper *Shahrvand*, cited earlier), a lack of trust and good faith was relayed to me during retellings of how a partnership had dissolved over a disagreement or an event had failed due to mistrust. In these cases, failures were attributed to a lack of teamwork, a sentiment echoed by Tirgan Director of Marketing in 2011, Nima Ahmadi:

> We [Iranians] haven't learned to play well with each other. … For example, if I want to [organize] an association for all the [Iranian] lawyers, we would never come to an agreement. Even though they are lawyers and know law and law would give them a framework, they can't come to an agreement that, 'Okay, we

[13] Mehrdad Ariannejad, interviewed by Amy Malek, August 18, 2011; translation mine.

> want to do *this* thing.' We are not good in teamwork. That's why we are very, very [weak] in the mainstream.[14]

Here, as in Amouzgar's observation, the inability to successfully come together towards a common goal was framed as the ultimate reason Iranians did not have a voice in mainstream Canadian society, an important goal for all immigrant communities wishing to gain resources and legitimacy in their new homes. Yet, as an organization, the Tirgan Family appeared to have several of the characteristics so many of my interviewees said were lacking among Iranian organizations. In the numerous weekly meetings I attended across several different departments of the 2011 Tirgan planning committees, I noted their use of hyper-structured meeting strategies that involved detailed printed agendas distributed to all participants, an open approach to brainstorming, idea gathering, and assignments by and to volunteers, clear deadline and goal setting, and a consistent and transparent method of following up on team goals like sponsorship numbers, outreach status, and media mentions. I also observed the substantial progress and positive results of these approaches: with a few exceptions, volunteers tasked with assignments at the weekly meeting returned the following week having completed the task or having made reasonable progress. When I suggested to Ahmadi that Tirgan's effective meeting and organizational strategies seemed to counter his claims, he answered:

> In the case of Tirgan, it's not us, it's Harbourfront Center. See, you can't beat Harbourfront! We have joined and we become one. … And that's why we are very successful in the mainstream. If we wanted to do this by ourselves, I can guarantee you it would be a disaster. … Because we can't really perform very well in a team. Tirgan does well, but because …Harbourfront Center gave us a template and we adopt this template as best as possible. But if we wanted to create our own template… we are not in a stage yet to have our own.[15]

[14] Nima Ahmadi, interviewed by Amy Malek, August 20, 2011.
[15] Ahmadi, interview.

Community-Building through Community Partnerships: Harbourfront Center

Harbourfront Center (HFC) is the largest arts and cultural facility in Canada. A 10-acre site at the heart of the Toronto waterfront that attracts over 17 million visitors to its over 4,000 events per year, Harbourfront is a non-profit organization governed by a 26-person community-based, multicultural volunteer board of directors. With a self-described multidisciplinary artistic and cultural focus, HFC receives a third of its operating budget from government grants, leaving approximately 2/3 to be raised by its self-described "strong entrepreneurial spirit," a mix of corporate sponsorships, on-site restaurants, management of its site (including two marinas, several parking decks, and a number of tour boats), summer camps, merchandising, and fundraising (HFC Summer Partnership Handbook 2013). At the core of its mission is a mandate to offer free or low-cost public events that introduce Toronto audiences to contemporary cultures, artists, and art forms that may not otherwise be available in commercial venues catering to mainstream Canadian audiences.

As part of this mission, the Center developed the Community Partnership Program to support local communities in producing programming at the Center. Tirgan is one such program, and Ahmadi directly attributes the festival's success to the in-kind support they received from Harbourfront:

> Harbourfront was a great partner to have because they were doing this for many years and they knew what to do. So we trusted them and they taught me personally a lot about the process, about the system. Before that, I was doing many, many different events, but I never had drawn a workflow chart. I had never said that by this date I need this, and by this date [I need that…].[16]

This access to expertise enabled Tirgan's organizers to put on a good program, but beyond that, the organizers of Tirgan and the volunteers they helped train emerged with hands-

[16] Ahmadi, interview.

on experience with long-term planning, goal-oriented processes, team leadership, strategy development, and project management – all practices that were permeated with discourses of democratic values, collaborative processes, and team cooperation. Harbourfront's template and corresponding emphasis on collaboration with local immigrant and cultural communities works to not only ensure the public's awareness and support of multicultural values, but also, and perhaps even more importantly (and less obviously), it works to implement certain practices among the mostly first-generation immigrant volunteers and community members who organize them, and thus to contribute to the formation of better-integrated Canadians. The perhaps unintended consequence has been the strategic utilization of these new teamwork skills to unite a diaspora community beyond those productions and towards diasporic ends, be they cultural, social, or political.

The CEO of Tirgan, Ariannejad, described the process of festival planning at an Iranian diaspora conference in 2012: "There's a process we start a year and half before [the festival], and all of [the three-hundred volunteers] go through this process. And I think this process is as important as the outcome, which is the festival. We learn how to work together, how to learn from each other."[17] Given Ariannejad's claim to the primary importance of this process, a sentiment repeated by other festival directors in interviews, it appeared that the directors – none of them artists by training in 2011 – were perhaps primarily concerned with these behavioral impacts of the festival beyond its important impact on Iranian artists, culture, or a mainstream presence in Canada. If diasporic citizenship relies on practices that engage with shifting notions of social and cultural belonging, Ariannejad's articulation of the process of organizing Tirgan as "learning teamwork and enjoying its benefits" alongside claims that the festival serves as a positive and unifying force for Iranians in Canada and beyond, suggests that the practices of

[17] Mehrdad Ariannejad, presentation in Los Angeles, October 14, 2012.

teamwork, collaboration, and cooperation for a 'greater good' in the Canadian sense are being imagined by organizers as tools for diasporic citizenship – the "virtual nation" of Ariannejad's dreams.

The Unifying Role of Arts & Culture: Tirgan, Multiculturalism, and the Development of Diasporic Citizenship

> Art and culture, unlike politics, by nature provide for a medium where we can all unite, with one goal, and that is to spread and share our appreciation for the beauty and brilliance inherent in Iranian art and culture with the world.
>
> – Behrouz Amouzgar, Tirgan Director of Public Relations, as quoted in *Shahrvand* newspaper (Zerehi 2011)

> With the size of the Iranian diaspora estimated at over 4 million people, I'm certain that our work will continue to be well received here and abroad. At Tirgan, we're focused on showing the colorful and hopeful face of Iranians to the world and no medium can do this better than art. I hope we continue to expand and reach more and more people.
>
> – Mehrdad Ariannejad, Tirgan CEO, Opening Ceremony of Tirgan, July 22, 2011

In these public statements, Ariannejad and Amouzgar repeated a general feeling that "art and culture" is not only the one thing all Iranians can agree upon, but also that it is the ideal medium through which non-Iranians can come to know the 'goodness' of Iran. Rare indeed is the occasion of an Iranian argument over the value of classical Persian poetry or Nowruz; even more rare might be a debate in diaspora over the merits of sharing these Iranian cultural features with non-Iranians. Amouzgar emphasized this notion in describing his motivation for volunteering with Tirgan:

> I noticed a fragmentation within the community, and I noticed that you have to find commonalities to bridge them, bridge the gaps and get together and work on a common goal. **One thing I realized was that when it comes to art and culture, it's much simpler to find that commonality because it's something that all of us are proud of. I haven't seen Persians who make fun of our art and culture. I mean, really our history, art, culture is really what we have to be proud of.** There's a lot of other things to be proud of, but this is what we all

> have in common. On the other hand, I guess the polar opposite is politics, right? When it comes to politics we all have our different opinions, and it's really difficult to convince each other that, you know, what I say is right or what you say is right or maybe we should pick something in the middle. So that's something that I really liked [about Tirgan], and I noticed that one thing we need to learn is to work with each other, and find a commonality. **I realized that this [arts and culture] was the best framework to exercise that.** To implement that community building exercise, right? What better environment than a place where you're talking about beautiful art and culture. It gets a lot easier to satisfy our differences.[18]

For Iranians in locations with multiculturalist governments, the sharing of arts and culture by immigrant and diaspora groups is considered fundamental to developing a presence in the "mosaic" of national multicultural life. This sentiment is strong in Canada, and particularly in Toronto, known as its most multicultural metropolis. Yet, as Amouzgar insinuated, even in this environment, the multicultural model alone is not enough to ensure community unity and development. Fellow director Shojaei was careful to press this upon me in our interview as well, when he noted that Canadian multiculturalism is helpful, but it was that people themselves working for Tirgan made it happen as it did. Toronto is great, he told me, because it will energize the organizers, but these policies need Iranians who are willing to work to make it happen.[19] Much like Rani Kasapi argued in the Swedish case, there is a pervading sense among the organizers of cultural events that fulfill goals of multiculturalism policy that such policies should only be viewed as a prerequisite for intercultural performance; it does not guarantee it. Policy requires implementation, she argued, which requires the labor of the "right people at the right time in the right place" to be done successfully, and perhaps more importantly, in ways that do

[18] Amouzgar, interview; emphases mine. To be clear, other "cultural" features are not so above debate, as demonstrated in Chapter 3.
[19] Shojaei, interview; translation mine.

not fall into the trap of "shallow" representations for which celebration multiculturalism is so often critiqued.[20]

Figure 19. Tirgan volunteers celebrate with their youngest member after the final event of the 2013 Tirgan Iranian Festival. Photo © Amy Malek

Through their focus on contemporary Iranian arts and culture, the three Tirgan festivals to date have featured cutting edge Iranian artists who are considered 'up and coming' and who may be performing in Toronto for the first time. While the organizers are careful to include a number of Toronto-based artists, the majority of artists at Tirgan are flown in from the United States, Europe, and the Middle East. By providing a Canadian venue for these international artists, Tirgan extends the reach of diasporic artists and creates connections laterally across diaspora spaces. Among these artists "on the verge" are those who are innovating in cultural hybridity (e.g. London-based Ajam Band, New York-based Ida Saki, Los Angeles-based Rana Farhan, Stockholm-based Nima Kiann, or Iran-based Radio Tehran (now Toronto-based)) alongside those who are reinventing traditional music (Los Angeles-based Sepideh Raissadat), Iranian cuisine (Washington, D.C.-based Najmieh Batmanglij), theater (Paris-based Shahrokh Moshkin Ghalam) or dance (Washington D.C.-based Silk Road Dance Company).

[20] Rani Kasapi, interviewed by Amy Malek, May 30, 2014.

This focus on new and contemporary arts and culture may be of some importance to the organizers of the festival, but it is also mandated by the terms of the community partnership that ICCAC/Tirgan holds with Harbourfront Center. As Melanie Fernandez, Harbourfront's director of community partnerships, put it:

> Our mandate is both as a contemporary art center and with a community engagement principle. So it's interesting because our mandate is contemporary. So it's not looking back at heritage kinds of things. It's looking at who is and what is Canada today, in a global context. Which is why we work with international artists to explicate some of the ideas and why that's really important to us.[21]

Thus, the Center's mission, established in 1972 (the same year as the establishment of federal multiculturalism in Canada), is to open a space for contemporary international artists and performances for Canadian audiences. It is therefore a particularly strategic venue for groups looking to promote diasporic unity and, in its procedures, applications, and partnership guidelines, Harbourfront Center in fact encourages this motive, whether this is intended or not.

As Fernandez intimated, Harbourfront's stated vision is to be "a vibrant home for the culture of our time" that promotes multiculturalism, and HFC articulates its intended constituency as follows:

> Canada is a country of cultural, racial and linguistic diversity, and nowhere is that diversity more evident than in Toronto. Harbourfront Center reflects and builds on that diversity in all of its programmes, promoting multiculturalism and racial harmony, especially in its work with community groups. (Harbourfront Center 2014)

The emphasis here on diversity led to the creation of the Community and Educational Programmes Department (CEP),[22] which partners with some 450 community and cultural groups

[21] Melanie Fernandez, interviewed by Amy Malek, July 19, 2013.
[22] It should be noted that "multicultural" or "multiculturalism" is not mentioned in these application materials, largely because the director of the partnership program views the term as problematic, opting instead for "diversity" (Fernandez, interview). Derek McGhee (2008), Will Kymlicka (2012a) and other scholars have noted this retreat from the term, rather than from its principles, and have countered claims regarding the "failure" of multiculturalism globally.

annually to organize events at Harbourfront. In these partnerships, community or cultural groups (this could include ethnic minority groups, but also groups organized around the appreciation of techno music, for example) provide artistic vision, production finances, and volunteer staff, while Harbourfront Center provides venues and administrative, media, and production support. The Harbourfront Center website presents the following statement that suggests the organization's role in the practical "on the ground" implementation of the Canadian state's multiculturalism project:

> Harbourfront Center provides professional resources to support the development of artistic efforts in these communities. By offering a variety of performance venues for their use, as well as programming and production assistance and promoting them to a large and diverse audience, Harbourfront Center helps artists reach beyond their own communities to a broader public, raising awareness of their cultural traditions. (Harbourfront Center 2014)

Community organizations apply to partner with Harbourfront through a competitive application process, and CEP then selects – along stated priorities and guidelines – which community groups with whom to partner. Through their orientation meetings and application and selection processes, even before groups are selected to receive support, CEP influences which artists will be proposed, and thus *how* groups will represent their communities in these application materials.

Thus, HFC, through their innovative CEP program, are intimately involved in the mainstream representations of several ethnic minority groups in Toronto. Not only does this representation begin at the application stage (Tirgan's case illustrates this), it goes beyond that to international artist selection, a focus on contemporary styles, and an insistence on diversity of artistic genres. This contemporary focus lies in interesting tension with the insistence on raising awareness of traditions in a given cultural group (however defined). The Tirgan Iranian Festival

provides an exemplary case for the influence of these models of community participation that serve simultaneously as brokers of in-kind support and of multiculturalism.

Conflicting Beginnings

What is now a four-day festival that draws over 130,000 attendees from across the Iranian diaspora, Tirgan began as a one-day event in 2006 at HFC in honor of the Iranian New Year, Nowruz, organized by a group of young Iranian immigrants, among them, musicians, dancers, playwrights, and students. The event was a breakout success that led to a variety of outcomes, chief among them the desire by both HFC and the group members to continue to offer cultural events – but also a disagreement about how to do so. These original members (of whom I interviewed four) tell varying stories as to how the disagreement proceeded, but the result was consistent: several members of the group moved forward with the idea to apply for a long-term community partnership with Harbourfront Center to put on a recurring summer festival in the heart of Toronto. And out of this conflict of interests, visions, and ideas, Tirgan was born.

The nature of the conflicts between founding members who resigned and the several leaders who remained to establish Tirgan is an important example of the ways in which art and culture are, of course, not immune to the lack of trust and experience with teamwork so acutely felt by many Iranians in the global diaspora. What prevented this particular group's disputes from resulting in collapse of the event altogether? As one of the former founders recounted to me, the intervention of Harbourfront Center and its insistence on certain management processes provides the answer.

The frequent disputes among the Iranian group covered a vast territory of collaboration woes. They experienced falling outs over artist selection: which artists were professional enough to be invited to perform, which artists should "truly" represent Iran in press interviews, and even

which artists were more or less "Iranian" or "Canadian," revealing different opinions about the larger multicultural project. There were interpersonal conflicts and jealousies over receipt of public credit for their work and over whose images appeared on the website, as well as over whose ideas were favored by Harbourfront's representatives. All of these were exacerbated by a system of working that involved decision-making by consensus and majority vote alone – an attempt to apply democratic principles to decision-making on a large scale. The result, however, was confusion over whose job it was to handle various tasks and repeated rounds of in-fighting, alliances at cross-purposes, and accusations of back-stabbings. A former member of this group described several of these occurrences to me in detail, concluding: "There was all this gossiping and cattiness [*khālih zanakī*] in the middle of this supposed "community" organization – can you imagine? I didn't realize at the time that the reason we were all fighting was political, but it was."[23]

The program director at Harbourfront recognized the ideological foundation for many of these problems, telling me: "They were a little too democratic at first – it was a student group thing. Sometimes you have to get things done." (Fernandez 2013) The coordinator most in collaboration with this initial group in 2006 also saw things come to a head as she continued to emphasize the nature of collaboration just days before the event – months of 'collaborating' had not produced a well-oiled machine. By the end of the Nowruz festival, their attempt to implement democratic principles and develop projects with egalitarian methods of teamwork resulted in a wildly successful festival, but a fully fractured, exhausted, and disillusioned team.

This experience left several founding members fed up and unsure about a future program. A few others of the original group had strengthened their relationships through the process, and decided to submit a proposal for another, larger summer event at Harbourfront. Ariannejad was

[23] Interviewed by Amy Malek, June 6, 2011.

one of these original members, and he led this latter group. He suggested to me that the growing pains of this first event led to his resolve to emphasize leadership and structure, one that Tirgan relies upon today:

> The first event we organized, it was really difficult. When we put it on in Harbourfront, I was always critical that, look, when you execute a project, one person needs to be in charge. You can't just do it all together, as a team. But in IAUT [Iranian Association at the University of Toronto] that is how they worked: as a team. There would be a board and the board would say ok, you go do this thing; and then any decision that had to be made they had to take it [back] to the board. For a small project, this is executable. But for a large project, it is no longer executable. … Because over every thing we had to have a debate. … That event was organized with 1001 problems. …So for the next one I thought I, myself, would like to invite people who can work together to be a team and work together. … So I brought them all together and I said very directly, it's like this: If you want to work like this [by consensus], by all means go ahead, but I'm going to go do *this*. So I and those who could work together… we made this team and invited some others and put on the second event [Tirgan 2008]. And then they slowly realized that if there is someone there called a leader who we trust and doesn't take advantage, it's good. It's not bad. They experienced that. And then saw that this is a good way and [more people] came forward. If not [for that], after the revolution of '57 [1979], the word leader [*rahbar*][24] had made people want to run away. … Leadership, the meaning of it in our community, had become negative.[25]

This negative connotation of the word *leader* (*rahbar*) in Iranian communities in diaspora is something I heard multiple times. For example, when discussing youth leadership camps common in North America, Iranian parents viewed them suspiciously – why would they want to pay for their child to become a *leader*, of all things? Harbourfront Center's training, whether direct – as in the case of the Nowruz event outlined above and the first iteration of Tirgan – or through Tirgan's directors, has had a role in reversing this notion in the Toronto community. The impacts of educational efforts like those in the "school" of HFC's Community Partnership Program have included increased participation by Iranians in civic organizations, in leadership

[24] *Rahbar* is the Persian word for "leader," but also one of the names associated with Ayatollah Khomeini (along with *Imam*).
[25] Ariannejad, interview.

roles in the community, and in coordinating efforts at organizing events like Tirgan in other parts of the diaspora.

Practices & their Effects: The arts as political antidote

Multiple groups have benefitted from the success of the Tirgan Iranian Festival. For Toronto Iranians, the festival offers an array of important outcomes. One of the primary original goals of the organizers was to counter the negative imagery of Iran and Iranians in the national and international media, offering their interpretation of 'the real Iran', through arts and culture. Tirgan's Artistic Director in 2011, Maria Sabaye Moghadam, was also one of the original organizers with Ariannejad, and she described the initial motivation for putting on events at Toronto institutions, such as the University of Toronto and the Harbourfront Center, as a matter of countering media stereotyping:

> In 2003, I emailed [a newsgroup of Iranians in Toronto] and said, 'Let's do a cultural event. Let's do something that puts a face onto the name, *Iran*.' This was during the time where Zahra Kazemi, the Canadian-Iranian journalist was killed in Iran so the papers were full of "IRAN KILLS JOURNALIST." Iran, Iran, Iran. And it was always continued by something negative. And I wrote this email, and said, 'You know, the name Iran, itself – not necessarily the government – is usually mentioned with something really negative, very ugly. Let's do something cultural. Let's put a face to this name, to this word, *Iran*. Because people can relate to culture quite easily, let's just show another face of Iran.' Because when they say, 'Iran does this, Iran does that,' naturally, as an Iranian, I feel somehow associated.[26]

Several of Tirgan's volunteers repeated similar motivations and beliefs about arts and culture by telling me about their experiences with non-Iranians who were looking for something beyond the negative media images of Iran that were readily available. In one case, this was accomplished by encouraging his non-Iranian acquaintances, colleagues, neighbors, and friends to attend Iranian cultural events:

[26] Maria Sabaye Moghadam, interviewed by Amy Malek, August 18, 2011.

> If someone asks me about Iran, I just tell them, 'I think you should come to this performance.' There's 53 of them [at Tirgan], and I try to figure out which he or she will like: 'These are the details, I'll reserve a seat for you, why don't you come and watch it?" Art and culture is a universal language, you don't need to say much; they can just sit there and watch a performance. Our goal is that next time they hear 'Iranian,' that's what they remember and not what they see on the news.[27]

Apart from a somewhat simplistic view of culture as a universal language, these goals of cultural diplomacy are common to diaspora groups and, given the long contentious political relations between Iran and Canada, the U.S., and many European countries, particularly so among Iranians (Malek 2011). The festival therefore offered Iranians in Toronto and beyond the opportunity to show their neighbors, colleagues, and politicians a prideful representation of their cultural identity.

Figure 20. Diaspora space is made visual in this marketing campaign for Tirgan 2013, where Iranian monuments are drawn into the Toronto landscape. On the left, Tehran's Milad Tower is blended with Toronto's CN Tower. On the right, Isfahan's famous bridge (*Siosipol*) is drawn across Lake Ontario. Images © Tirgan Iranian Festival/ICCAC

In addition to these potential benefits, volunteers and organizers in this community partnership gained skills and experience, friendships, and new networks with both Iranians and

[27] Behrouz Amouzgar, personal communication with author, May 25, 2011.

non-Iranians involved in the production, while Iranian attendees gained the experience of a four-day event of art and culture that worked to replicate the feeling of being in Iranian spaces – a sense of belonging that is made possible by physical features at the event (like the *chāīkhānih*, a traditional tea house presented at Tirgan 2011 and 2013), as much as the co-presence of over 120,000 fellow Iranian attendees, an unprecedented gathering outside of Iran.

But beyond this, the Iranian community in Toronto gained practice and precedence for organizing themselves, a vital tool for future collaborations, whether in organizing community efforts to gain support for local projects, sponsoring community-wide responses to emerging events in Iran, or to coordinating disaster relief efforts with other parts of the diaspora. In this way, culture becomes a training ground for future political work, much like organizers in Stockholm aimed for in Chapter 3. In the Toronto case, long term benefits of increased participation have appeared in the number of Iranians running for elected office in 2014 supported by Iranian-Canadian volunteers, and the creation of, or renewed interest in, civic organizations aimed at community professionals or youth. Similarly, the community gained recognition within the city of Toronto – both from fellow citizens and from political officials – as a community that is organized, mobilized, and engaged with its city. Such recognition is critical to the success of future community projects, fundraising, and political ambitions, particularly after having learned the lesson that collaborating with Canadian organizations and officials leads to positive rewards – not always the case 'back home.'

The Canadian state and local and provincial governments also stood to benefit from the model developed by Harbourfront and implemented with such success through Tirgan. Apart from the economic benefits drawn from the upwards of 130,000 attendees to the four-day event at the city's harborfront, the financial and in-kind support of government institutions and their

intermediaries can also create much-needed feelings of goodwill among recent immigrants and refugees. Some volunteers recognize the support of Tirgan by Canadian as the kind of support their homeland failed to provide for them, as articulated by Shojaei:

> Now when I look at it – aside from thinking I can do something small for Iran – [volunteering for Tirgan] did a lot for me. I'm much calmer. Much more comfortable. I have a much better feeling about Canada. All that anger/resentment (*khashm*) that I had, it's as if it's gone now. Because first of all, we did this large event, and not that it was some major thing, but to be honest, until now I hadn't done anything at that level for any country, not Iran, not any country. And second, Canada had offered a ton of possibilities – the truth is they made a budget available, they offered the Harbourfront space, a lot of possibilities.[28]

Though her work focused on political participation among immigrants in Canada, Bloemraad nevertheless suggested that such an outcome was likely: "The existence of services positively influences immigrants' understanding of their relationship to the state and their sense of citizenship, and the actual monies transferred to community-based organizations help establish and sustain institutions that can promote political incorporation" (Bloemraad 2006: 122). The result in Shojaei's case is someone who still feels deeply Iranian, but no longer harbors resentment towards Canada for negative experiences early in his immigration experience. Several Tirgan directors also noted the absence of this kind of support in the U.S., noting the opportunities that Canada provided were therefore exceptional even if, ideologically speaking, all countries (e.g., Iran) 'should' offer them. This increased sense of belonging in Toronto leads also to becoming more active participants in society, whether as entrepreneurs, donors, volunteers for local political campaigns, and in some cases, even political candidates themselves. The Tirgan Family therefore works to facilitate incorporation not by silencing cultural connections to Iran through insular celebrations of exile culture, but by fostering these Iranian connections in "the Canadian way" that Ariannejad touted at the 2011 Opening Ceremony:

[28] Shojaei, interview; translation mine.

introducing newcomers to fellow co-ethnics and their new communities through a thoroughly Canadian process of organizing, volunteering, and communicating, whether in English or Persian.

"People Get Inspired": Tirgan's Diasporic Reach

A program like Tirgan is unprecedented in the wider Iranian diaspora. As noted above, the Iranian diaspora (inclusive of Toronto) benefits from Tirgan's creation of performance venues for diasporic artists and performers to reach global audiences. But beyond this, and in addition to media coverage by outlets like BBC Persian, Voice of America, and other satellite television and online news organizations that reach broad diaspora audiences, Tirgan has made particularly focused efforts to spread the word of its activities to the global diaspora through grassroots networking. Tirgan's affiliates program (in which prominent individuals, non-profit organizations, and student groups around the world can show their nominal support for the festival) and its PR department (which reaches out to Iranians via social media, traditional media, telephone, and in person), were joined in 2013 by live webcasts of its events available to anyone, anywhere with an internet connection.

The actual impacts of these efforts was first made clear to me in 2012 when, while conducting fieldwork among Iranians in Sweden, I learned of plans for a Tirgan festival in Stockholm. This came as a shock – before the 2008 event in Toronto, no event called Tirgan had been celebrated on a large scale in Iran or outside of it since the flight of most Zoroastrians from Iran in the tenth century. It was clear that the Toronto event had inspired action in Stockholm. This was later confirmed to me by the organizers of the Stockholm event when I began attending their planning meetings. Tirgan.se was quite different than the Tirgan Iranian Festival in Toronto: a one-day event, it featured local Iranian performers on a single stage erected on a

soccer field lined with sponsorship tents, food vendors, and a bouncy castle for kids. It was produced by an Iranian-Swedish commercial concert producer in partnership with an Iranian student organization – notably, the same student organization who volunteered with Eldfesten, featured in Chapter 3. These students were open about the ways in which participation in Eldfesten had taught them about how to plan and coordinate events, hold open and transparent planning meetings, and listen to all opinions before taking a vote. The difference, of course, was that Tirgan in Stockholm was not funded by large Swedish institutions or even intermediary community partners, and thus also was not held to the same standards, whether in professionalism or artistic merit. The students met independently and had no say in what happened on stage, but worked hard nonetheless to put together the logistics (and literally put together the tents) on the festival grounds. The Stockholm Tirgan festival was considered a success, drawing some 10,000 attendees in its first year, and it has continued annually ever since.

The Stockholm iteration of Tirgan was not the only influence Tirgan had on the diaspora outside of Toronto. Moghadam, the artistic director of the 2008 and 2011 Tirgan festivals, noted that she often received calls from Iranians outside of Toronto and Canada asking to know more about how they worked:

> I received a lot of calls from people in other cities and they say, we want to do such a thing, but it's too early for us to do a four-day event. So I talk to them just the way I talk with you. I tell them this is what I did, this is how we did it and if they ask my opinion, which they usually do, I'll tell them, 'I think *this* may work better for you at this stage,' or you know, to limit the number of disciplines or basically, just do it on a more limited version until you build enough to grow and expand. So, I'm sure that Tirgan has gone far beyond Toronto. I know in other cities, they're trying. At least looking at doing things in that line.[29]

Ariannejad confirmed this as well, noting that the impacts spread beyond North America, to Australia, and even back to Iran:

[29] Moghadam, interview.

> I think people get ideas from each other from afar. For example, now that we have Tirgan here, now in Australia they are organizing it, if small. … People get inspired. We do something and I'm sure that the Tirgan that we put on here has an impact on Iran. I'm sure about it. Because if you are a youth in Iran, you see all this violence, unhappiness, no hope for the future, and your economic situation is – you have nothing to be happy about. But then you suddenly see a huge festival at a global level, happening in Toronto. A festival that is promoting the art and culture of Iran. I think it lights a flame of hope in you. You think, 'there *is* something.' Everyone who sent in stories for our short story contest – because they don't appreciate it in Iran – [those writers] think that, well at least *somewhere* appreciates us.[30]

Ariannejad's statement reveals a sense of duty to fellow Iranians that Tirgan fulfills – similar in fact to the sentiments of several of the Eldfesten organizers who viewed their work as a contribution to Iran. Shojaei also shared this feeling, and added that Tirgan not only "belongs in Iran," but that the festival, and by extension Canada, had offered Iranians in diaspora with opportunities he felt they did not or could not receive in Iran or from the Iranian government.[31] The result was that he felt a greater sense of belonging and duty not only to Canada, as described above, but also to the Iranian diaspora, a clear example of the contribution of Tirgan to diasporic citizenship:

> [Canada provided] a lot of things that were the duties of the Iranian government …from a logical point of view; it was the duty of the Iranian government [to provide these things]. …It's the responsibility of any government, when it's using its budget, whenever they have a massive budget in their hands – a Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Guidance, etc. – they should support activities, whether inside Iran or outside…. It is my opinion that what a government must do for its country, Canada did this, in part, for us. … And so, overall, by working with Tirgan I have a better feeling towards the Iranian society, and towards Iranians outside of Iran.[32]

[30] Ariannejad, interview, August 18, 2011. Leading up to its 2011 festival, Tirgan ran a Persian language short story contest that garnered numerous submissions from Iran. A collection of those stories was published in 2011 as a book entitled, *Tirgan Stories*.

[31] An issue Shojaei alluded to here is that such an event doesn't occur in Iran itself; this was expressed by several Tirgan volunteers, who saw Tirgan in Iran as a future goal.

[32] Shojaei, interview; translation mine. It is important to add that Shojaei continued to say that, despite feeling it was the Iranian government's responsibility to support programs like Tirgan, whether inside Iran or out, he did not want their help: "Because it's a government that for 32 years has harassed our artists both inside and outside of Iran. There's no reason to then go to this government and say, 'Support our artists!'"

As both Ariannejad and Shojaei expressed, the development of organization and teamwork skills among Iranians in Toronto does not just stay in Toronto – as people move (indeed many of my interlocutors in Toronto in 2011 are now living in the U.S., the Middle East, and Europe) so do their ideas, beliefs, and skills. Knowing this, in a planning meeting in 2011 several members of the Tirgan PR team expressed concern to the director (Amouzgar) about copycats – having worked so hard to build the "brand" of Tirgan, a holiday that had not been celebrated by most Iranians in centuries, shouldn't they now protect it through legal copyright? A debate ensued, with some volunteers agreeing that this was a good idea to be pursued, while others found it preposterous, arguing that even if Tirgan wasn't celebrated widely before their festival, "You can't copyright Christmas!" – and thus you couldn't copyright Tirgan, either. Importantly, however, the response from Ariannejad and Amouzgar did not rely on taking a position regarding these conflicting understandings of cultural ownership. Instead, in the meeting, Ariannejad argued that spreading the revival of Tirgan across the diaspora was actually a long-term goal that offered new possibilities for diasporic collaboration. Amouzgar reiterated this to me in our interview:

> One of the reasons we haven't gone down the route of exclusivity or, you know, trademarking Tirgan… is that we want people to be able to celebrate it everywhere. … You know if another Tirgan festival pops up somewhere in Europe, hey, we'll be happy. It's great.[33]

Conclusion

The day before the 2013 Tirgan Iranian Festival in Toronto, I asked the Harbourfront Center's Community Partnerships coordinator how this Iranian group compared to other community groups with whom she has worked. She answered that the Iranians stood out for two reasons: first, because they were generally middle class, educated, and entrepreneurial, as

[33] Amouzgar, interview.

opposed to, say, working class or migrant laborers typical of other communities with whom she had worked; thus they had certain skills, educational background, and experiences (cultural capital) which could be counted as advantages from the outset. The second thing that stood out to her was that the Iranians produced one of the most successful of all festivals in the busy summer calendar at Harbourfront; only Canada Day drew more attendees.

It is significant that this successful event began with a group of educated, artistic, and professional Iranians aching to work together democratically, and nearly failing the challenge. As Fernandez had noted, they were "almost *too* democratic." This perceived need to "over-do it" on the democratic practices and pedagogical emphases was, according to volunteers, likely the result of negative political experiences before migration and thus a very self-conscious effort to "practice democracy." Rather than considering these rehearsals for democracy as pedantic or inefficient, they were taken as critical forms of practice. What the directors of Tirgan left unsaid was what this practice was preparing Iranians for — whether for successful teamwork in coordinating future cultural events, in organizing local relief efforts when disastrous earthquakes strike Iran, in running successful campaigns for local office, or as Swedish-Iranian producer Mansour Hosseini had insinuated, leading a democratic society in a future Iran. The Iranian community's experience with Harbourfront Center demonstrates that support from the multicultural state through intermediaries like HFC, arts councils, and local and provincial governments is crucial for the development of both local and diasporic citizenship, regardless of what direction their citizenization takes.

Through the production of events celebrating arts and culture, Iranians in Toronto are mobilizing the resources offered by the multicultural state — resources not offered by states that did not make multiculturalism an official cultural policy, whether as in Iran or in the U.S. — to

not only become more connected to Canada, but also to foster and expand diasporic citizenship. Thus, local multicultural policy is not incidental to the development of diasporic citizenship in the Iranian diaspora, but can in fact be vital to it. The impacts of events like Tirgan on the local Iranian community, the Canadian state, and the diaspora are numerous and reach well beyond the stated interests of the nation-state.

To be sure, Iranians in Toronto are learning how to navigate Canadian political structures and avail themselves of resources offered by the multicultural state. In the production of festivals like Tirgan, community partnerships also enable the development of practices like teamwork, collaboration, and community outreach. The practices needed to produce the festival are therefore themselves produced by the festival. But it's not only local Torontonians who are watching and benefitting from this effort. As Iranian-Canadians are learning, teaching, and encouraging these practices in their communities through the Tirgan Iranian Festival, a chain of impacts extends from the heart of Richmond Hill and downtown Toronto across North America and out to the rest of the diaspora. As I demonstrated here, Iranians in other parts of the diaspora have taken notice, citing Tirgan as a model for their own projects as they reach out, attend, and comment on the event, its organization, and the cultural forms and performances it features, building both a sense of diasporic belonging and its attendant practices.

I found that developing teamwork, fostering collaboration, and the formation of cooperative systems and behaviors were integral to the production of these large-scale cultural events. The Tirgan Iranian Festival, specifically, was both *produced* and *productive*: practices of teamwork and collaboration produced the festival, but the festival also produced these practices. The results for the Iranian community in Toronto include a successful public cultural event in which they are recognized by the city and country — its citizens as much as its politicians — as

an organized, committed, and resourceful bloc within Toronto's multicultural public sphere, a critical accomplishment for an immigrant community seeking greater influence both domestically and internationally.[34] But perhaps less obviously, the festival also results in the production of a set of practices that can be mobilized beyond the cultural sphere, beyond the city of Toronto, and beyond its Iranian community – across the diaspora.

[34] The 2014 mayoral elections in Toronto offered a glimpse at the growing influence of Iranians in Toronto, as all three mayoral candidates participated in a debate for the Iranian Canadian Congress seeking Iranian support, while Iranian candidates won party nominations for 2015 Federal elections (e.g., Ali Ehsassi in Willowdale).

Conclusion

The designation of *diaspora* as a category of practice, as suggested by Brubaker (2005) and Dufoix (2008), requires attention to the ways in which diaspora can be a tool of self-identification and becoming as much as a tool for analysis. In many ways, then, practice has been at the heart of this study. Through ethnographic attention to the practices of diasporic Iranians, including the dual ways in which those practices are both produced and productive, I have shown that the "doing" of diaspora involves a processual sense of belonging that is engaged with lateral networks across diaspora communities. More specifically, I have demonstrated that diasporic citizenship turns on the relationship between processual becoming and practice, and that state cultural policies aimed at integration of immigrants and their descendants are erstwhile producing practices that promote this diasporic citizenship. In this sense, the citizenization processes produced by multicultural policies, which Kymlicka (2012a) has argued is inherent to such policies, are not only oriented towards the state, but also towards the diaspora.

Anti-essentialist critics of multiculturalism have argued that multicultural policies encourage essentialist constructions of groups such that, despite stated intentions, immigrants face a policing of cultural practices that forces them into "a regime of authenticity" (Phillips 2007: 14). They view festivals as events that put this regime of authenticity on stage, enabling the liberal majority to feel good about their tolerant and cosmopolitan lifestyles while consuming shallow representations of essentialized culture – all the while ignoring the real problems faced by immigrants. But just as *diaspora* is more usefully considered as a category of practice, much the same can be said for the notions of *culturalism* and even *multi-* or *interculturalism*. Attention to the practices and stated and unstated affordances of these approaches to culture highlights the relationship of culture and belonging among diasporic Iranians.

While Baumann's 1996 study of Southall presented a case where state policies rewarded culturalist presentations of diasporic selves within just such a "a regime of authenticity," my study of Iranians in Stockholm illustrated a case where some Iranians' dramatic appeals to a culturalist perspective threatened to *prevent* Iranian cultural workers from benefitting from state support. Thus, even when states neither require nor encourage culturalist or essentialist representations of immigrant and diasporic culture, there are those who nevertheless remain adamant in their views of cultural ownership and protectionism. Neither perspective (e.g., culturalist or interculturalist) is more or less "diasporic;" this kind of assessment against an ideal type is precisely what diaspora-as-category-of-practice disarms. Rather, they are prime examples of diasporic practice that demonstrate the processes of becoming and belonging at stake vis-a-vis state cultural policies.

Policies operate in unexpected ways, often with unexpected outcomes. When considering the impact of multiculturalism and cultural polices on immigrant and diasporic incorporation through cultural production, attention to practice reveals that policies produce more than just cultural performances; policies also produce practices. In the case of Stockholm, cultural policies created opportunities for democratic rehearsals, which in turn led to intense debates between Iranians about democracy, culture, and integration vs. the preservation of difference and Iranian identity in a multicultural society. In the case of Toronto, the largest festival of Iranian arts and culture in the world is made possible through multicultural policies that enabled a community partnership between a Canadian intermediary cultural organization and an Iranian diasporic cultural organization. This partnership has provided the Iranian community in Toronto with an impressive cultural event, but also with a "school" (Bloemraad 2006) teaching teamwork and collaboration to the festival's three hundred volunteers. Thus, the production of the festival is

itself productive of key practices that have enabled Toronto Iranians to organize for political and cultural efforts in Toronto, increasing a sense of belonging to Toronto and Canada, but also to the diaspora itself.

This sense of belonging and duty to the diaspora and to Iran are integral to notions of diasporic citizenship, and are at the forefront of Tirgan organizers' minds. This is no secret mission; while state policymakers may not expect such an outcome, Tirgan's leaders have made their multiple goals for off-stage outcomes explicit. A video that was posted on social media by a Tirgan volunteer showed the CEO of the festival speaking to a celebratory gathering of volunteers just one week before the 2013 Festival:

> This festival has been successful thanks to the presence of all of you. And to the energy that you've all put into it. And I think the reason is the love and affection we all have for the culture and arts of Iran and for IRAN. And that's why we have all put in so much energy and worked so hard, to bring about such a thing. But! Let's not forget one thing. And I'm saying this seriously, I'm saying this today in front of everyone, that if right now — with one week left until the festival — if I, as an average person in the festival [i.e., he is a volunteer, not just the CEO], would have to trample upon one of my moral principles or upset a friendship over this, then I don't want this festival. I don't want it's finished product. Because the process that we began, from the very beginning until we reach the festival itself, is *as important*, and maybe even more important, than our goal. It's true, **our goal is the creation of a festival; but it's [also] the creation of friendships, it's changing our culture, it's improving our relations [with each other], it's being united together**. If this wasn't how it was happening, if it had to be that I had to do something at any cost just to make the festival run well, then I don't want this festival. I just wanted to tell you this point.[1]

In both Toronto and Stockholm, the intended outcome of policy and its state intermediaries were the same: a public festival. But the unexpected outcomes point to important differences between national politics and histories of pluralism in Sweden and Canada. These distinctions – e.g., of a largely homogenous state with a history of socialism and a large intake of refugees in Sweden vs. a federal state with colonial settler history and a points system drawing

[1] Mehrdad Ariannejad, speech to Tirgan volunteers, July 12, 2013; emphasis mine.

skilled migrants in Canada – contributed to different trajectories in the development of multicultural policies which, though they may appear similar in policy indices, presented Iranians with different modes of participation and institutional support, leading to different outcomes in terms of both the festival and processes of citizenization. Both festivals impact immigrant belonging and representation in the public sphere. But where Tirgan can only operate through commitment from a large number of volunteers who spend months raising funds from (and spreading the word to) the growing Toronto Iranian community, Eldfesten is by and large financed through intermediaries of the Swedish state and coordinated by professionals in collaboration with a dozen or so association representatives. In Toronto, the "school" of Tirgan contributes to increasing participation by the Iranian community in civic and political spheres, whereas in Stockholm a much smaller group of committee members are learning lessons in democratic processes but have had a much larger impact on the cultural attitudes of Iranians there.

Drawing on Bourdieu, I have attended to the roles of the state, its intermediaries, non-profit institutions, and businesses as much as to the importance of individuals and the importance of agency in processes of cultural production. Studying the field of cultural production in diaspora required a multi-sited but also a multi-scalar approach. Policies and the institutions that implement them impact individuals and communities in important ways but, as I have demonstrated here, the role of individuals and their interests are equally impactful. Though both festivals involved intensive planning and preparation, neither state required that lessons in democratic practice and teamwork were required in exchange for their support. (In Toronto, Harbourfront coordinators even suggested Tirgan organizers were initially "almost *too* democratic.") In that sense, the co-incidence of these schools of democratic practice through

cultural festivals is likely more telling of the experiences and practices of the Iranian communities and individuals involved in them than of similar imperatives between the Swedish and Canadian state.

In the Swedish case, Iranians are debating culture, tradition, and authenticity through their community meetings, cultural productions, and interactions with Swedish cultural institutions. In Eldfesten, the intent is not only for Iranians to work together to produce a cultural festival, but explicitly to learn and rehearse the practices of democracy through its production: not only how to run meetings, but how to do so in open and transparent ways that emphasize the importance of seeking and incorporating the opinions of community members from differing political and economic corners and multiple generations, each with their own interpretations of "culture." These debates offer a case in which culturalist interpretations are mobilized by some Iranians, but not because they were imposed by the "cultural straitjacket" of the state's cultural policy, nor in order to curry favor with the state in order to gain access to resources, but rather as *resistance* to Swedish policies that, in 2012, favored intercultural approaches and cultural mixing. In this way, Swedish-Iranians with culturalist motivations and anxieties are being challenged by fellow Iranians who have mobilized support of national institutions charged with implementing multicultural policies. Through this participatory community engagement, Iranians in Stockholm are rehearsing democratic processes by revising and experimenting with cultural attitudes and forms.

Critics of multiculturalism have been dismissive of policy-funded cultural programs like festivals without having studied the transformative impacts that the production of public festivals can have off-stage and in their after-lives. Ethnographic research reveals that, while cultural policies may create competition for funding, they can also lay the groundwork for cultural

contestations over the fixity and boundedness of culture, the rights of representation, and understandings of cultural identity. These in turn open the possibilities for intercultural exchange and integration – two key objectives of Swedish multicultural policy.

In late 2014, a new Swedish Government bill on cultural policy shifted the country's cultural policy priorities and, following national elections that resulted in the largest gains yet for anti-immigrant parties, the 2015 budget approved by Parliament has drastically cut funding to certain cultural policy areas. According to the Council of Europe Compendium, the government stated three cultural policy priorities: "the right for children and youth to have access to cultural experiences and artistic expressions; preservation and display of the Swedish cultural heritage; and to promote a better situation for artists and creators" (Harding 2014). This new policy direction appears to have removed all language related to international or intercultural efforts in favor of preservation of "the Swedish cultural heritage." This shift and accompanying decline in national funding to cultural areas is perhaps indicative of a larger shift to the right in the country. As the Swedish immigrant population continues to grow (the government has recently committed to admitting additional refugees of the Syrian war), it is likely that debates surrounding multiculturalism and cultural policy will continue to be at the forefront of Swedish politics.

Future Directions

The largest and most well-known diasporic festivals of Iranian art and culture may take place in Toronto and Stockholm, but, perhaps paradoxically, these cities are not home to the largest or most established Iranian diasporic community (at least not yet). Referred to colloquially as *Tehrangeles*, Los Angeles is widely acknowledged as the unofficial capital of the Iranian diaspora. Since the 1970s, Iranians have built ethnic enclaves, created ethnic media, and made their literal and figurative mark on the city. L.A. is known by Iranians for producing

Persian-language TV and music, particularly *Los Angelesi* pop that is distributed worldwide via ethnic satellite television – a genre that was first developed by L.A.'s Iranian community (Naficy 1993). Despite being considered the center of the diaspora's cultural production and one of its main centers of wealth, to date, this sizeable entrepreneurial community has neither produced a large-scale public cultural festival like Tirgan or Eldfesten, nor elected a state or federal politician to represent it – both noted markers of political engagement and inclusion that have been achieved by other ethnic communities in L.A. and by Iranian communities in other sites of the diaspora. What different practices, modes of representation, and methods of resource mobilization account for this discrepancy? How do local contexts of politics, race, and religion in "majority-minority" Los Angeles contribute to Iranian-American diasporic practices? And has the absence of a coherent federal multicultural policy in the U.S. had deleterious effects on these practices among Iranian-Americans?

The significance of the material and symbolic resources offered to immigrant groups by multicultural states like Canada and Sweden is perhaps best evidenced by a case of its relative absence in Los Angeles. Though successfully run for nearly 15 years by a non-profit volunteer organization, the failure of a large Iranian cultural festival in Southern California was due in large part to financial and organizational challenges to its growth that ultimately resulted in its discontinuation in 2012. Because the Mehregan Festival of Autumn in Orange County, California relied on ticket sales to cover the expense of the festival (including space rentals, equipment rentals, AV/technical labor, and artist costs), the organizers found they were unable to continue. The reliance on ticket sales also forced the organization to feature artists who they hoped could guarantee strong sales of expensive tickets; this usually meant consistent invitations to local Los Angelesi pop artists. That such an event struggled to book the biggest names or the

newest acts, even local to L.A., suggests another form of cultural straitjacket, this time imposed by the market.

As demonstrated in Chapter 2, states in the Global North have attempted a range of approaches to multiculturalism in an effort to manage immigration-driven cultural pluralism. The United States, however, represents a plural society without a formalized federal multicultural policy. While demographically multicultural, the U.S. could instead be described as having evolved a form of neoliberal multiculturalism, wherein the government works to mark (rather than undermine) cultural difference, thereby encouraging minority participation in the neoliberal project (Hale 2005; Melamed 2011). Comparative studies of immigrant incorporation in the United States and Canada have demonstrated that their differing policies and attitudes towards multiculturalism have resulted in strikingly divergent rates of naturalization among comparable immigrant groups (Bloemraad 2006). Given its relatively early experience of Iranian immigration, its large and culturally prolific Iranian population, and yet its failure to produce large public events or elect a federal representative, the Iranian communities of Southern California offer an ideal comparative site with those I have offered here, marking a fruitful direction for further research. Studying the impacts of these differing orientations in the realm of cultural policy will prove helpful for contextualizing studies of theory, policy, and demographics and for gaining understanding of the everyday realities of immigrants' lives.

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