CHILDREN MAKING MEDIA. CONSTRUCTIONS OF HOME AND BELONGING

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What breaks first in the process of migration is the family, nuclear or extended. How children see themselves positioned within family relationships is a key theme in the lives of children in the process of migration and settlement. This has been one of the central themes of a European research project on Children in Communication about Migration (CHICAM).[1] The project aimed to explore and develop the potential uses of media and communication technologies as means of empowering these children and enabling them to realize their potential. The research was carried out in six European countries: Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Italy, Sweden, and the Netherlands. CHICAM was conceived as a form of action research, combining ethnography and analysis based upon social and cultural theory. Media clubs were established in each country accommodating children in making visual representations of their lives and their experiences in their new locations over a long period of time (one school year) using photography, digital video and internet.[2] The research centred on the children and prioritized the children's view of their lives, families and migration experiences. The children came from very different countries and continents: Africa (Congo, Somalia, Ethiopia, Angola, Morocco), Latin-America (Colombia, Ecuador, Peru), Asia (Iraq, Syria, Turkey Afghanistan) and Europe (Kosovo Albanians). Most families came as refugees or asylum seekers, some other as immigrants under labour migration law.

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1   CHICAM was a three year European research project funded by the European Commission. Theme: Improving Human Resource Potential and the Socio-economic Knowledge Base: New Perspectives for Learning (Framework 5). It was coordinated by the Institute of Education, Centre for the Study of Children, Youth and Media, University of London. The project began in November 2001; it ended October 2004. See Application to the European Commission, Institute of Education, London, 2000. Also: Project Deliverable nr 1, London, April 2002 and CHICAM web site www.chicam.net.

2   Also see Kolar-Panov (1997) on the use of technology and the media (video in particular) in creating links between separated communities and places. The British and German partner had previous experience in enabling and researching self-made media production. See Buckingham, Graham & Sefton-Green (1995) and Buckingham (2001) as well as Niesyto (2003).

What the children said, how they acted and how they negotiated and challenged their places with each other and within social institutions were the foci of the research. The project was designed as ethnographic research and involved the production process, audience reception and the productions themselves. It has generated a range of original data that will be presented in this article. They provide new insights into the experiences and perspectives of migrant and refugee children. In this article we would like to discuss these insights, drawing out the wider implications for practice and policy that the results of this project highlight.

In our attention for the child and its environment we follow Bronfenbrenner (1979) who, in his view on ecological psychology, suggests that interactions with others and the environment are key to the development of children, and that we all experience more than one type of environment. The types of environment that apply in particular to our research are the "microsystem" (referring to factors located in the immediate environment of the child: family, friends and school) and the "mesosystem" (describing the way in which factors in two or more microsystems interact such as the connection between a child's home and school).[3]

The experience of migration is what first and foremost informed these contexts. Living in the Diaspora, the children participating in the project and their families in the project all had experienced some degree of disruption and discontinuity. In the new country new bonds were created that allowed for establishing new forms of continuity and for a redefinition of the notion of "home." In cases of Diaspora and disruption the family is the only mediator between the past and present that people can hold to. In the new country precisely the family becomes the site of negotiating identities for the children as they deal with the obvious cultural tensions between the "old" and the "new" world that they are bringing into the home. Vansina in his study of oral culture (1985) refers to "double portraits" and draws a distinction between private and public image. According to his analysis, the public facade is formed according to roles, social status, values and principles, while the private image often contains contradictory memories and reveals hints of fear and doubt. In the media club productions, the children often created small counter-histories that contained both worlds and expressed things previously untold.

In terms of constructing the notion of family and belonging as well as in terms of references to the past we consider instrumental the analysis of Bourdieu's *habitus* (1977), as the non-static, but rather subject to change set of predispositions which in turn affect actions and evaluations as a second, hidden nature or a "forgotten history." Strategies of survival of refugee children, as well as the paths of their memory are often rooted both in their current situation of uprootedness, as well as in their pre-migration *habitus*. Both the new and the old *habitus* form and reform, informing one another, the con-

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3   Bronfenbrenner further distinguishes the "exosystem" (the wider social environment such as the neighbourhood) and the "macrosystem" (the larger social cultural context).

text within which new actions and reactions could be invented. A lot of this information revealing pre-existing structures as well as new strategies was revealed not through the formal research roots, but rather through shared informal social instances.

Children are active agents in making meaning in their lives and in negotiating their identities through their social interactions. In the context of migration, ideas of family and friends often differ from the mainstream culture or transform to fulfill new social and emotional needs. How these processes of change in family and friendship are understood and negotiated within school are then of crucial importance and were reflected in the work done by the children of CHICAM in the clubs. As family is a key issue here, we will be primarily drawing on the family theme.[4] With the help of some illustrative examples from the media work done by the children we will discuss the interrelations of conceptions of home and cultural identity as perceived by refugee and migrant children as they are being re-established in the new country.

Concepts of identity

There are different dimensions of identity that are intertwined in children's life; they concern both the need for identification[5] and a growing consciousness about their role in social life. Social identity articulates the relationship between the individual and his or her social environment. It has become popular among academics since the end of the 1980s and early 1990s, a period referred to as the late modern era[6] that places identity, more specifically ethnic identity, in the forefront. As Giddens (1991) points out, the need for identity has increased and the process of identity construction has become more difficult and complex. One set of factors in this respect is the experience of migration and globalization. People encounter others with different histories, ambitions and needs and as a consequence they are getting involved in a continuous process of redefining themselves in relation with others. This process of identity building and of "finding oneself" is one of active intervention and transformation (12). The world of modernity enables the creation of space for more and more intimate personal expression. According to Giddens "modes of behaviour and feeling associated with sexual life have become mobile, unsettled and open."[7] Hall & Du Gay (1996) convincingly argue how identity not only becomes an understanding of being, but also of becoming. If this also applies to individuals, the main focus here is on cultural identity as a

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4   The authors Christopoulou (Greece) and De Leeuw (the Netherlands) were responsible for the family theme in the project. See: Christopoulou & De Leeuw 2004.
5   The work of Erikson (1969, 1974) on this is leading.
6   Giddens 1991.
7   See Giddens 1991: 12. Giddens refers to the research work of Wallerstein & Blakeslee 1989.

complex of collectively experienced values and standards that allow for a group or community to imagine itself or to be imagined by others. All groups and communities are imagined and they tend to be quite different in their style of imagining.[8] As there is no such thing as the objectivity of differences, the process of identity construction concerns the production of meaning that is given to differences between groups. Hall, a leading scholar in the field of cultural theory and identity politics, distinguishes between an essentialist approach (the one true self) and a non-essentialist (dynamic) approach, based on differences. In his view cultural identity primarily is organized around points of difference as it speaks to "the different ways we are positioned by and position ourselves within the narratives of the past."[9] This means that our identity changes when our history will be told in a different way.[10] The manner of telling is as important as what is being told.

In giving voice to underprivileged minorities we can at the same time bring recognition to spoken cultures, such as those of immigrants in societies dominated by the written word. As soon as we recognise the value of the subjective in individual testimonies, we challenge the accepted categories of history. We reintroduce the emotionality, the fears and fantasies carried out by the metaphors of memory.[11]

Identity can not be reduced to a fixed and finished object, rather it is a continuously shifting position. In post-modern debates the key word here is "hybridization", which we prefer to use over "creolization" and "syncretism" as it refers to a shifting within and between structural and cultural discourses.[12] What they share is a recognition of difference and a belief in the production of something new.

There is however another side of the picture. Hybridization of cultures also undermines old certainties and the fundamentals of identity. This is especially true for families living in the Diaspora for whom these fundamentals are crucial. To put it differently, people may have problems with the dynamics involved in the process of identity construction and they may feel the need to look for foundations. Especially in the context of migration this position needs further discussing, as the encounters between different groups of people are no longer just temporary. This is the main reason why Baumann considers cultural identity a dual discursive construction: "all having of culture is a making of culture, yet all making of culture will be portrayed as an act of reconfirming an already existing potential."[13] In order to understand the new migratory societies all over the world both the essentialist and non-essentialist ap-

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8 Anderson (1983) offers a fundamental text as to what he considers "imagined communities."
9 Hall 1990: 225.
10 Also see Tonkin (1992) in her analysis of the construction of identity through the reconstruction of the past.
11 Raphael & Thompson 1990: 2.
12 Barker 1997: 192 and further.
13 Baumann 1999: 2.

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proaches are relevant. Where you are and where you belong to are not by definition synonymous. However, the awareness of the "old place" (of origin) might be heightened in the context of moving from one such (familiar) place to a new place in the new society (one that is unfamiliar).

In the context of migration people are confronted with several degrees of discontinuity. As their notion of identity is undermined they apparently start looking for continuity in order to feel "at home" again. In the new space people feel the need to relate themselves somehow to the past. Identity thus is a question of memory and of memories of home in particular.[14] In the context of migration identity construction is informed by both past memory and current experience in the new place. The notion of home is being articulated in particular in the concept of family, yet imagined.

The very definition of family came into question all through the research, as it was often both things: the family *here,* as well as the family *there.* In the course of the research the children (and ourselves) used different definitions of family at different times ranging from nuclear family to extended family. In order to accommodate different conceptions of family and to incorporate the current domestic circumstances of the children, we have used the concept "domestic group" interchangeably with that of "family" in reference to the current situation of each child, meaning the significant bonds between people living under the same roof and sharing daily routines and events. We have noticed that domestic groups were of crucial importance and were often created in order to secure basic necessities and to provide an otherwise lacking framework.

Constructing family narratives

As the children were reluctant to share their memories and to reveal information related to their roots and their past in the club, most clubs used the format of the family tree to bring the past into the club smoothly, to accommodate Diaspora experiences and to construct a family narrative. Drawing a family tree gave a lot of information, not only about the family members and the family history, but even more so about how the format of the tree, allowing for the representation of dynamics and emotions involved in migratory history, was used by the children to construct a family narrative. Their concept of family consisted of different generations, of people here and there, of people dead and alive, of people whose names they could not sometimes recall as well as of friends. As examples from different countries may illustrate the actual shape of a tree provided a shelter to their own "imagined community." Different colours and shapes, the use of graphics, photographic portraits as well as print in various languages offered us glimpses into their private lives and their living memories.

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14 Morley & Robins 1995: 91.

Stivan, a 13-year-old boy from Iraq, who came to Greece as an unaccompanied minor in order to escape the army, leaving all his family behind, draws a tree with thick brunches with the names of his four siblings under his own, and the names of his parents beside those of his dead grandparents. "When I say mum or dad, I feel that they are all I have," he writes. All of a sudden, in the printed form, there is an outburst of emotion that spoken words – the very obstacle that we had been trying to surpass – did not allow. Stivan does not know yet how to read and write in Greek, as, instead of joining school he works double shifts in order to support himself and his family in Iraq. He asks his cousin who is fluent in Greek to write for him. He puts her picture as well as those of his other relatives who are currently living in Greece in his family tree page. He then qualifies his choice: "[...] because they are like my family."

For Stivan, as well as for many migrant children the difference between "my family" and "like my family" represents a fundamental break in their private lives. "My family" is what they have known as such since they were born, it is what they remember from their country of origin. Furthermore, it is most likely what they are now missing, the unit that broke because of or along the journey of migration. Even if they are fortunate enough to live in the new place with part of their family or even with their whole nuclear family, they are almost always separated from parts of the wider structure that they have learned to recognize as "my family." All migrant families in a sense are broken families.

"Like my family" on the other hand, is what they have come to recognize as family in the new place, out of choice or out of necessity. Distant relatives, friends, party comrades, companions in the journey or in the camp, neighbours can all be part of the new family structure, as they are the ones to whom they may turn when in need, and their lives are often intertwined.

This division informs identity formation from the early stages of childhood. Bourdieu, treating kinship relations as "something that people *make*, and with which they *do* something" (Bourdieu 1977: 33–35), distinguishes between *official kinship* and *practical kinship*. He characterizes the relations practical because they are "continuously practiced, kept up and cultivated, in the same way as the geometrical space of a map, an imaginary representation of all theoretically possible roads and routes is opposed to the network of beaten tracks, of paths made even more practicable by constant use" (37–38). In the same sense, for refugee children, their notion of family is defined upon these beaten tracks, either with those who are far away or with those who are right beside them, sharing the difficulties of building a life in a new country.

In another page of the family tree book of the Greek club, Semset, an 11-year-old girl from Turkey, uses the photo of her mother holding her best friend, standing beside a satellite antenna (the latter representing the constant link with the country of origin, hence fortifying the memory and sustaining the connections). Above it, there is another photo of the mother with a boy (Semset's friend) and two adult men whom she calls her uncles although they are not related by blood but rather by friendship and solidarity through a mu-

tual affiliation to an outlaw political party. The use of family terms in addressing members of a wider social network is a common practice in such circumstances. It further denotes the importance of the concept of family as an "umbrella" under which one feels protected and secure at times of exposure and insecurity. When the family itself does not exist either at all or in the way it used to do, one has to re-create it with whatever means are available. This is comparable to van Boeschoten's point in her study of exiled children and their separation from their parents in the aftermath of the civil war in Greece (2000), about identification with their peer group instead of their family and the re-invention of their identity through this affiliation[15]. For migrant children this is a common experience whereby something which is "remembered" but may no longer exist as such, becomes substituted, "re-membered" and reconstructed in a new context.

In the Swedish club Shpresa, a girl from Kosovo Albania, talked about her relatives all around the world, from the United States to Norway, something she seemed to be quite proud of. On one occasion, when the researcher was talking about the Greek project on family trees, Shpresa spontaneously started drawing a family tree on the blackboard, just as if she were a teacher. In a short space of time she had outlined her family history of at least 68 people: aunts, uncles and cousins, etc, all of whose names she knew. In the middle of the tree, she put down her own name as if she were the most central figure. She also mentioned with a smile that one uncle had two wives.

In most clubs information coming from drawing a family tree was more relevant to the children's interpretation of family than actual statistical data. In the same way the immediate family was conceptualized as people the children cared about and whose loss made a difference in their lives. Besides nuclear family members, these can also include grandparents, uncles, aunts, etc. Quotes from an interview in the Italian club where six children, which is half of the Italian club, were fatherless may illustrate children's considerations revolving around the concept of the domestic group.

Carmen:	Why is it always the men who leave?
Antonio:	Yea! So why do they have kids!?
Marisol:	Before, they go 'Oh, you are so beautiful, etc, etc' and then...
Renato:	I still have a mother and a father.

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15 There is a whole body of literature regarding Greek refugee children in the Balkans in the aftermath of the civil war, referring to questions of identity and identification in the context of Diaspora. See: van Boeschoten 2000; Brown 2004; Ristovic 2002; Faubion 1993; Brown & Hamilakis 2003. In the Netherlands however research regarding migrant children so far focuses more on labour immigrants, not so much on refugees. Besides most of it is in Dutch. One of the exceptions is: Crul, Lindo & Pang 2002.

Antonio: My father gone when I was two years old I can't remember him, my brother can but I can't. One night I dream he was on a motorbike going around and then I discover that yes, he had a motorbike, but it was a bad dream because I was trying to see his face but couldn't.

Marisol: I'm not going to write my father's name because is not important. My mother wants to get married again.

A Somali boy, Kambooye, in the Dutch club seemed very well aware of his roots. Though he had never seen either his great grandfather, or his grandfather, he knew stories about his ancestors and it was through these stories that his ancestors remained present in his memory. It was very obvious that his ancestors appeared in his family tree. Also for Sarah in the German club, drawing a family tree provided a way of (re)defining her own relationship to her German and American relatives. She told the researcher that she dreams in German and that in her dreams her American father from whom she lives apart also speaks German, which he is not able to do!

In some clubs also photographs proved to be useful media to help to construct a family narrative in cases of disruption. Ibish was the only member of the Swedish club who showed family photos from Kosovo. On one occasion after a couple of months in CHICAM he brought in a set of pictures, which were well thumbed. They were taken during a trip to Kosovo when the whole family visited the village they used to live in. Several pictures were focused on the remains of their house, which was burnt down during the civil war. It was originally a farm surrounded by buildings. Then there were pictures showing how his father was building a new house. One picture featured a small cottage in woods. It looked new. It was a cottage that they had been given as aid after the war and were supposed to live in during the restoration of the farm. Ibish said that the house was of poor quality and that the roof leaked. Other pictures were very beautiful; a lake or parts of a bay. Though the village was not on a map, Ibish pointed out the spot. He also noticed that the text on the map was in Serbo-Croatian language. During the club activities, Ibish returned to his memories from the village more than once. He also made a drawing of the village and the graveyard, where his grandfather is buried.

These experiences tell us a great deal about the "economy of memories" that migrant children adopt. In most family narratives, there was a definite emphasis on positive rather than negative recollections. There was often an observable need to leave out what was perceived or experienced as negative, painful and destructive, either by suppressing it or by alternatively shifting the focus to reverse feelings, some of which were constructed in retrospect. We experienced how the CHICAM club could offer a space to reconstruct family history with the help of audiovisual media. What is kept in the memory, is what can free the imagination and the projection into the future: the strength, the courage, the persistence, the lack of fear. All these past things could be utilized in the present. What is kept is what can be used. The rest is discarded, forgotten, repressed, or left unspoken. Almost all children showed this "econ-

omy of memories" at very specific moments during club work, and it was clearly in operation in their families as well. Family history was thus a defining factor in this kind of memory work. It is not only where one comes from, that defines one's identity in the present; the stories that are told about one's origin, and the (big) picture created by these stories, also contribute to the notion of "who I am" at a certain moment in one's personal history.

Negotiating memory

Negotiating memory is a complex activity. On the one hand, the reconstruction of past life serves to keep one in touch with the "positive" aspects of life in the country of origin. On the other hand, it also brings forth "negative" experiences, which are not always easy to deal with. Memory has to keep one's origins alive. At the same time it has to provide explanations and justifications. This implies a constant and determining conflict. As a result, the memory of the family is often strictly kept within the household borders and the private sphere. CHICAM club work helped to bring these memories into the public sphere and to bridge the gap between private and public. Many a time, CHICAM became the space where things that would not be easily brought up at home or at school, were expressed and discussed.

Memory negotiation is also a very sensitive area and plays an important role in the process of identity building. At the same time it makes it difficult to comprehend the past of the family. Remembering relatives, places and friends in fact always added a melancholy mood to the children's narration, along with feelings of loneliness and loss. For example Eritria from Ethiopia in the Italian club said: "I arrived here two years ago, with my mom, my father and my brothers [...]. I'm so lonely; poor me! All of my stuff is still over there. They weren't able to bring it here, pictures, dresses [...]." Even though her nuclear family was in Italy, she felt alone. Besides this melancholy, there was also a will, even necessity, to present the country of origin as a pleasant place – a space of harmony, joy and freedom: memories were filled with romantic notions of the home country, focusing on positive aspects.

Photographs seem the most concrete proof of a family living "there." The children in several clubs confirmed their importance. Kambooye from Somalia in the Dutch club: "you should only know how often we look at them!" This was also true for Beaugarçon from Congo. Both their families seemed to use photos to keep memories of the family "there" alive and to tell stories. Most children in the Dutch club had their own photo album, some even had their own photos. Hakan in the German CHICAM club kept photographs from Turkey in a metal box, which revived in him positive memories of a harmonious family life. Though some children pretended there were no photographs to be taken to the club (as with the Syrian Kurdish kids in the Greek club), their existence and importance became clear when the researcher visited the family: actually there were a lot!

How families dealt with photographs may illustrate the very different ways of negotiating memories both by the children and their families. These are partly due to different experiences of Diaspora. We will discuss several cases. The first case illustrates how even absent pictures can be an incentive and a tool for recollection. Mozde in the Greek club remembered her journey from Afghanistan to Greece, one evening during an informal interview at her parents' kiosk where she occasionally works. She had not mentioned anything about it before and had evaded the question. This time, after briefly claiming not to remember, she began by contrasting there to here in terms of friends and explained how the pictures of the family got lost on the journey:

"We knew too many people there, we had friends and relatives, cousins, uncles, aunts, but mostly uncles. They have now spread everywhere. I do not remember them any more, not even their names."
'Do you have pictures of them?'
"No... they got lost."
'How did they get lost?'
"On the journey."

She explains how she was walking along with her parents while they were carrying her younger siblings. The journey companions were helping them carry their luggage.

We did [manage to get here], but the others didn't. They were following but they could not keep up with our pace. They were left behind. We kept going. We went on. They stayed behind. We don't know what happened to them. That's how the photos got lost. They were helping us carry our stuff. When they stayed behind all that got lost. We were the only ones who managed. Just us. Our family.

Mozde narrates in a structured way: from there to here, "us" versus "the others," "me" as opposed to the "rest of the family." Mozde in her mind associated the loss of the journey companions with the loss of their photos and the disappearance of her past. As she thrust forward, her past withdrew. The faces on the photos (along with the faces of all those left behind) were fading away. The past for Mozde was another country.

In the Dutch club children made a family video using existing photographs. Two Iraqi brothers, Elias and Simon, only brought a few pictures from home. Both boys had great difficulties in remembering who the people were. Their struggle is reflected in the silent intervals in the story, told by Elias, to go with the pictures in the video. The obvious lack of memories had a reason that became clear when the researchers visited the family. Their mother clearly stated that she did not show the pictures to the children, because she did not want them to form a picture of life and family there: "I really don't know if I am right not showing them the pictures. But for the moment we want to focus on the Netherlands and try to build up a new life here and leave life in Iraq behind. I am reluctant to tell much about Iraq, because I don't want the children to long for a certain image of Iraq that they possibly

will never experience. That is not realistic." The family was strongly living in the here and now. To some extent they hid a part of their history from the next generation, while expressing a parallel anxiety about adapting to a new reality and leaving the old world behind.

The reworking of pictures, absent or present, also helped to (re)define their own relationship with the past. Not only photographs, but also other "media" (drawings) and less obvious activities, such as travelling, helped to trigger memories about journeys and places where the children had lived. When the Swedish researcher was driving Hana, a girl from Kosovo Albania home, she started to talk about a journey to Kosovo, when the whole family was assembled. That was a happy moment in her life. The best thing was the car trip itself and that they had stopped and slept over on three different occasions. But when they arrived in Yugoslavia, they had to drive across the mountains, and then her father was afraid. When drawing a childhood memory, Hana was composing a picture of a couple seen from behind, sitting on a sofa and watching a blue-green sea or ocean. It was her family on a visit to Kosovo. A year later, in a series of photos from her summer holiday with her mother in Kosovo, she returned to a similar composition, where her mother is sitting on a stone in the sea or ocean. The scene with the parents at the lake seems a projection of a romantic dream about Kosovo, cultivated by the parents, a dream they wanted to preserve and which helped them to overcome all the horrible events that took place there: an idealized representation of "home."

In the German and UK clubs it turned out to be much harder to get to know how children had conceptualized the past, due to both the reluctance that the researchers displayed to deal with this and the fact that over the year family stories changed as in the UK club. Stories were told differently according to context. In the UK club Sahra from Somalia was very willing to speak about her family and their lives but it became clear that what she told was not the present reality but the stories now past, stories of happier times. She told these stories to maintain an image and to help herself through the present bad times. In a video made at the very beginning of the club she showed photos of her family (particularly her father who had died) and talked about Somalia. That film is very much based in the past.

David from Angola maintained his silence on his past throughout the year but even then his changing attitude to his present and future meant that in some ways he was reassessing his past or his relationship with it. Haamid took a long time to talk about the family he used to live with in Guinea and then he did it mainly through drawings representing the village and the house he had lived in with his family, and some family members. Being reunited with his father was a major factor in how he viewed past and present. However, he never spoke about his mother.

Meroe, a girl in the Italian club from Ethiopia who does not live with her parents in Italy, showed a drawing made for her grandparents with some greetings written in Italian. She had apparently lost her mother-tongue language, having arrived in Italy six years ago. When the researcher asked her if

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she was going to send the drawing on, she said no, due to both the language barrier and the great amount of time that had passed since the last time she communicated with her grandparents. She kept the drawing for herself on her bed, often touching it tenderly. As we see in the above situation, loving memories can also hurt. Silence is also very significant in this context.

What stands out from the experiences in all clubs is that an important aspect about memory negotiation is the family situation as such: children who have no family at all or have a really problematic one encountered more difficulties when elaborating ideas of past experiences abroad. Not only was the symbolic aspect of the connection complicated, but also the technical one was quite intricate. Children who had good relationships with parents enjoyed more occasions to keep in touch with relatives in their countries of origin, while the others did not. Some of the children in the Italian club had significantly poor relationships with their parents. Obviously in these cases they did not want the researcher to meet their family. The use of video, on the other hand, gave them a new chance to express the anger and frustration they lived with in a free manner. Some of them used the camera (and the CHICAM space in general) to "confess" bad ideas and difficult feelings about parents and relatives. The CHICAM Club became a space to free these emotions, while being a space well separated and protected from the family. Although some of these issues would be raised for children from any background, how family history is viewed and experienced by migrant children in particular is above all formed through the experiences of family distance, separation and reunification.

Memory and (questions of) identity

The negotiation of memory shapes identity. Self-definition in the new country is often characterized by referring to what is left behind. The roots may stand as a source of inspiration for the current life as well as a source of strength. On the other hand, the past may be re-invented and accommodated into the present, in order to create mechanisms of survival and new, hybrid identities, articulating positions drawn from a variety of discourses and sites.

Beaugarçon in the Dutch club had no autobiographical memories of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In order to create a family history, he invented stories that mixed the stories that were being told within his family and the ones he might have heard or read for example on TV or in the newspaper. He used these stories about the past repeatedly to develop his identity in the present: "I kept asking [my mother] when we finally could go there [Congo]. In the end we went for a vacation and to see some family. Everyone has a nice villa, but it is dangerous because of robbery. I have witnessed one myself." As it was impossible to go to Congo because of the political and military situation, the boy's mother confirmed that they indeed never went there. The difference between truth and fantasy did not seem to be relevant. Creating a fully formed picture was more important. Media helped him to fulfill this ambition:

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in the club, he made a family video with the help of existing pictures from the family and a "new story" along with these told by Beaugarçon himself. This combination of pictures and commentary made it possible for him to tell his family history as a continuous story in which the "there" and "here" are linked. We also noticed this link on a different level. He represented himself as an average teenage boy (clothes) who does not hide his African background, using African icons in his drawings, wearing family jewellery: an African chain that his uncle gave his father and his father passed on to him. On one of his video diary tapes he played a sort of African king, putting on a curtain for a cloak, and dancing.

In Beaugarçon's case, there is first and foremost an observable need to establish continuity between past and present in order to surpass the discontinuity of migration. The construction of a family history serves as a tool in this pursuit, bringing together, on a shared and recognizable ground, things that have been standing apart. The memory of his past is filtered through the knowledge of the present. On the other hand, his current situation becomes connected to his past and his roots, as though the one stems from the other through a smooth continuity rather than a disruptive discontinuity. In pursuing this, he is mixing truth and fantasy in order to construct his personal history and place it within a context. History and the past are re-invested with meaning through imagination. When the real links are missing and the explanations do not always come handy, imagination serves as a way of building bridges and holding together tentative, fragile and fragmented realities.

On the other hand, the pressures of adaptation may challenge habits kept for the sake of nostalgia and in order to sustain the sense of belonging. This is not simply a matter of cultural confusion. Living between and within two worlds and two cultures (or more in some cases) the children build hybrid identities, pertaining to more than one frame. This became visible when the children brought to the club music from their countries they liked to listen to, and stories related to the journeys they made to their home countries.

In the Greek club, the children were asked to bring an object from their country of origin and speak about it in front of the camera. This request caused some confusion to the two Turkish girls, Odil and Emine, who were born in Greece, as to what exactly we meant by "their country": this one or the other? They seemed to find it difficult to locate and define the concept "our country".

Odil: Which country?
Emine: This is our country.
Odil: We were born here!
Emine: Where should we bring something from?

Some children did not bring anything, told a story or sung a song (which they heard or learned in their country, but which was not necessarily representative of their country). The choices, however, were not always charged with personal meaning. Often, they depicted what they thought others wanted to see or

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hear. Beyond this schematic representation however, a lot of culturally embodied knowledge was conveyed (dressing in traditional costume, dancing in a ceremonial way) that revealed the dynamics involved in continuously negotiating between different identities. Michelle, for example, sung a French song, which she learned, at her French Catholic school in Congo. Her choice of representative things or images was defined in reference to her French educational background as opposed to the Congolese or the Greek. This was the dominant culture to which she was exposed, and at the same time, her "passport" to both countries: French education and Catholicism would be acceptable in both contexts, if not considered superior to the local.

The negotiation of memory was filtered down to a "symbolic" item that involved questions of identity. Claiming the right to pertain to different contexts and identities, as well as selecting their own dynamic of when and how, proved to be the determining element in the clubs, where the children set their own rules and acted accordingly.

Family representations

How the children experienced family life in the new country and the living between two worlds and two cultures, how they built not only flexible but also hybrid identities became visible in their representations of family life as such. The children articulated their own conceptions of home in the new situation both in terms of success and in terms of a continuous mediation between the old and new which appeals to different dimensions of identity as they are being experienced in children's lives: to mention the need for identification in becoming an adolescent, the notion of self-representation in relation with their closest peer groups and their particular ethnic background that is informed by experiences of disruption.[16]

In her family video show a girl from Armenia in the Dutch club exclusively used photos of the family having fun, showing affection towards each other. The photos were all taken in the host country. One of them even shows the family celebrating Saint Nicholas, a truly Dutch feast. The representation of the happy family life indicates the family's ability to adapt as well as the family's successful attempts to start a new life in a new country. A Kosovo Albanian boy in the Swedish club in his video essay *Mohammed's Family*, focuses on status symbols, such as electrical appliances and technical equipment in the kitchen as well as the computer and the two parable antennas. Material assets and economic status often act as symbols of integration and of doing well. Mohammed's choice to focus on them, perhaps more than indicating that the material standard of living was important for him, was an attempt to affirm and confirm to himself and to others that his family had earned its place in the

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16 See Erikson 1969, 1974; Giddens 1991; Hall & Du Gay 1996.

new country. In this particular cases identity was not so much a question of memories of the past, not so much a question of "becoming" rather in its emphasis on "economic success" it confirms identity in terms of "being," being well, being like anyone else.

Other video productions illustrate how "home" has become a site of negotiating identity. Sahra, the Somali girl in the UK club took the camera home to film in her house, at her local shop, on the way to school and with some friends at school.[17] She modelled the first section of her production on a show on MTV on which celebrities show the viewer round their homes. Her sister welcomes you at the door and says: "Come in, I'll show you my palace." Once we are in the house the girl guides the viewer through the living room (the TV is on and music is playing but no-one is there!), through the back of the house where the snooker table is. Then into the kitchen where food is ready on the cooker. There is also a stereo there "in case you get bored when you are cooking." As Sahra's sister goes round the house she lists all the objects in each room: bed, wardrobe, TV etc. Downstairs again and we are shown out of the house; "You've seen my palace now, so get your arse out here, go, go!" The video movies illustrates both Sahra's family oriented attitude and her orientation towards the new present. Also in interviews with the UK researcher the girl described herself mainly as "London-ish," while at the same time she pointed to her Somali identity in terms of food, however not in terms of religion or traditions connected with the past. On the contrary she rather stressed the fact that being in a new country for her meant the possibility of distancing herself from traditional rules especially as they apply to women. These decisions are closely linked to building new identities that help children to be part of their new lives. In Sahra's case this put her in conflict with some of her Somali community (if not directly with family members). She was building her own new future.

Often, under the pressure of their new peers and the influences of the new society as well as the media images which bombarded them with new cultural codes, there was a tendency on behalf of migrant children to dismiss what the family and the household symbolized.[18] The new role models in the country of residence as well as the children's exposure to other ways of family life, frequently led them to a questioning and a severe criticism of the family roles and rules. In addition to their passage to adolescence, this usually caused friction within the family. In the Italian club some of the children who were living in a convent even admitted that they were "ashamed of their parents." There were various reasons for this such as the cultural gaps, the language problems, but also psychological dimensions of identity formation can be observed here, such as the tensions in parent-child relationships especially on the verge of adolescence, their consequent need to keep a situation under their own control

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17 Description from the national UK report on family relations.
18 This is a clear illustration of Bronfenbrenner's "mesosystem" pointing to the interaction between relevant factors in the immediate environment of children.

and to affirm their own perception of themselves without the mediation of their parents.

However, when requested to conceptualize the "home" in the CHICAM club, most children chose to focus on the emotional relations at home and not on the material standard. The "home" was rarely represented as a site of material objects within which one lives. Even when material objects were carefully placed in a "homey" mise-en-scene the purpose was to communicate a feeling: to convey the warmth of the domestic space. In *Clara's colours and sounds* a Lithuanian girl in the UK club discusses the ambivalence of being in the new country, pertaining to both the past and present. In her film she shows objects that are a mixture of those that have great emotional significance, have associations with the past and also with connecting her to the past.[19] Others are entirely connected to the present. Each one can be seen as significant. They go in this order: a red heart object (filmed after a red decorative heart that her grandfather had sent her and that hangs on her bedroom wall), the blue wallpaper from her bedroom, a map, a cooking pot, a green bag she had been given, a soft toy, a pencil, a Winnie the Pooh clock, a picture of a monkey she has hanging on her bedroom wall. She has kept the film very personal to her but also quite anonymous and unconnected to her family and everyday life. It was significant that she did not want to include her family or in a sense locate where they were. The warmth of the domestic space was filtered through the girl's ambivalence about being in the new country, as she understood why they had left Lithuania yet feeling tremendous homesickness for "there."

In the Greek club, when explaining the pictures that she shot at home, Rengin, a girl from Turkey, admitted that she re-arranged the objects in the kitchen in order to make it "look beautiful." Her mother was standing in the middle of most of her pictures and also in the family tree page that she made, nicely dressed and with make-up on. Rengin was very eager to emphasize her mother's importance in holding the household together and taking care of the whole family. In the Swedish club, in a documentary on her home, a girl focused on family relations, her parents, siblings, for example a visit to her brother's home, where she put emphasis on filming his little baby son. She here had the chance to focus on emotional moments as when her mother was hugging the cute little baby.

What is emphasized even then, is the role of, for example, the mother in creating and maintaining the „hearth," the familial bonds and the closeness, which keep a family together despite disruptions and displacements. That after all is what each one of the children had to learn well and constantly keep in mind: home is where the hearth is.

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19 Description from the national UK report on family relations.

Notions of cultural belonging

Cultural identity is negotiated and redefined in the new place, even when the ties to the ethnic or religious background are strictly maintained. Cultural identity is a tentative concept, especially as it closely encounters a new world, new influences and new habits. The latter cannot but have a major effect upon the values and habits that were carried along, even in regard to day-to-day routines. The conflict between the old world and the new is one of the major issues that all migrant families or communities have to deal with. The role of the migrant child within the family and outside the family is crucial: cultural identities between different cultures, changing responsibilities, roles being sought and negotiated, all reflect upon the children even before the adults. The "hearth" was not a fixed place, rather became a site where cultural identity was negotiated and redefined in the new place allowing for the construction of flexible and hybrid identities, that enable the children to choose from the different cultural and social worlds they are part of. The "hearth" thus changes as the family encounters these different worlds. Family routines, events and celebrations are of vital importance in preserving the cultural identity of a migrant community and are often attended with more dedication than they would in the country of origin. The pace of life inside the household is kept with a remarkable similarity to that in the country of origin. When everything "outside" is changed, the "inside" of the household and the family life remain – or struggle to remain – the same. Clutching upon old habits and re-investing them with new significance is a vital process for people who have experienced major disruptions and discontinuities.

Many a time the children expressed the idea of food being central to their cultural identity. Eating is an important everyday ritual for most families, and a lot of time and energy is invested in this. The family table is the "hearth" around which the familial bonds are nurtured and sustained, and the time spent with family members and friends around eating is valuable for re-asserting the unity of the family, a unity often threatened by the shift in circumstances. Bodily memory sustains complex emotional ties. Although the children were exposed to local dietary habits (such as fast food), they often expressed their preference for the diet of the country of origin.

Eating routines in most families followed as in the country of origin. Every meal is a shared event and the fact that it is prepared with the material and emotional ingredients that it has always been maintains and re-affirms a sense of consistence, collective identity and belonging. Food is emotionally charged as a family ritual. Masja, an Armenian girl in the Netherlands, declared in a rather representative way that family life for her "means sitting and eating together." All the children in the UK club talked about family outings, parties, celebrations. These were mainly with the family members.

From the children's stories about how religious holidays and events are being celebrated at home and within the community as well as from our direct observations, we have noticed how family routines (i.e. fasting) and traditions

are often structured by religion. Often religion plays the role of sustaining cultural identity and serves as a reminder and a fortifier of habits and traditions which were forcibly left behind. This becomes all the more important when "homelessness" is experienced in asylum seeker's centres where people wait for a (temporary) residence permit or to be expelled. For a Syrian girl in the Dutch club the experience of homelessness deeply influenced her perception of the world and her immediate future. She reworked her experiences in a drawn animation movie. In an interview she highlighted especially the rituals and religious holidays that were celebrated intensively and remembered vividly in the centre. These celebrations gave her something to hold on. The nuclear family was very close, besides she felt strongly related to other Syrian families. Here the notion of the (constructed) extended family comes to the fore, offering primarily a site of remembering the home country and of reconstructing an ethnic identity! She bonded both with children who shared the experience of living in an asylum seeker's centre and with children who shared the same ethnic background.

From this and other examples we noticed how cultural identity indeed was often experienced through religion; many of the children followed the standards and values connected to religion, at least to the family's way of practicing religious laws and rules. In some occasions where the parents declared to be atheist, the children may follow the religious traditions of their country of origin. Continuity in family life was also sustained through language. The children all spoke the local language in the public space, however nearly all spoke their mother tongue at home with their parents, most of who were not fluent in the new language. Language is a strong bearer of cultural identity; it contains the family stories and histories, it helps people to remain connected to a homeland. On the other hand, language is also a tool to develop a new sense of identity, to get connected to new communities. Concerning language, the children's role is crucial in respect to the rest of their family, as they are the ones who learn it first (mainly at school but also through the everyday use in the neighbourhood, playground or their other activities) and who in turn act as translators and mediators. The parents often have to rely on their children in coming to contact with the locals, something that affects the distribution and negotiation of roles within the family. For all families language seems to be an important tool in building the notion of continuity in family life as it is here and now, but also for some children language represents possible ways of being mobile, of finding their place in a global world; they preferred to speak English.

In all media clubs in the countries involved the representation of family life had two major aspects: on the one hand it was geared towards a constant attempt to sustain the family links that had been disrupted by the journey, while on the other hand it was directly related to the investment made in making a new start in the new country. These contrasting attitudes towards the family in terms of the family images that were projected by migrant children are significant in capturing the tension that they are experiencing. The conflict

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between the old world and the new is one of the major issues that all migrant families or communities have to deal with. Family life itself becomes affected seeking its place in terms of tradition and in terms of modernization in a global world. It could be argued, that often migrant children experience a split reality or learn to incorporate a dual discursive construction, caught between two very different worlds: that of the current country which is new and unexplored, and to some extent feared, and that of the country of origin which is often painfully left behind, yet mostly vigorously sustained within the family through both memory and desire. Private space is hence differentiated from public space. Different roles are allocated to different spaces. Family life in itself becomes a site of negotiating cultural identities.

Family as mediator between the private and the public

Inside the clubs, family life was not a constant reference, or an easily talked about subject. There were different reasons for this among which: traumatic experiences, being a teenager, having bad parent-child relationships, identity separation between family space and school space. Yet, how the children experienced family life and how they defined their role within the family, has become visible at many moments both implicitly and explicitly during our club work. It slowly became part of the ongoing discussions, but not before establishing a close relation of mutual trust. Even then, it was mostly discussed on an individual basis and not in the group. Access to family life for the CHICAM researchers was limited. The private space of family life was carefully kept separate. Besides we have noticed at some points a dialectical relationship between being a child or teenager and being a migrant. One way to deal with this seemed to clearly divide and segregate different roles into different spaces (outside and inside the family).

In defining their place as children within the family and outside the family, the children were challenged to negotiate between the demands of the family traditions and rules and the demands of the outside world. This also involves negotiation of new roles between the parents and the children. Parental intervention ranged from regulated freedom and autonomy to strict control. On the one hand, there is the fear of the unknown, which may lead parents to want to control all their children's activities in order to protect them and to avoid exposure to dangerous situations. On the other hand, having to survive with meagre means in a new country may require the participation of all the family members in subsistence activities. Family members have to rely on one another and show trust. Parental control may be direct and prescriptive or indirect and oriented. Instructions and advice were a common form of such control, as well as precautions or threats. Another equally effective way however is when the current situation is seen as much better than the alternative in the country of origin – thus cultivating a sense of obligation of the children towards their parents. The degree of openness and freedom that the parents al-

lowed in the family relations depended also on the degree of integration and social involvement and the existence of a wider social network. Inevitably, the new rules and circumstances increased insecurity and the fear towards the unknown. Parental control and regulations were usually related to the expectations of the parents for the future of their children. Migrant parents invest in the future of their children and in offering them the best possible opportunities, mainly through education. This may also offer some security in terms of their long-term plans. Almost contradictory there was often a high level of expectation in terms of fulfilling duties within the family (i.e. looking after younger children), when parents had to be away for work and that kept the children away from school. Taking on more responsibilities at a young age inevitably makes the children more autonomous.

The video production that the girls in the Italian club made, *Rules of Life*, discusses the dialectical relationship between being a migrant and being a teenager as well as the different roles children take up in different spaces. The articulation of their wish not to be treated as kids and to set their own rules, and at the same time the realization of their responsibility to look after themselves and to behave as adults fending for themselves are communicated as the main messages of the film. This is but one aspect of growing up in a new country. It illustrates how different dimensions of identity (e.g. psychological and ethnic) become interwoven even when they are addressed at different moments.

However many a time the domestic space itself becomes a place to explore different sometimes even conflicting roles that the children are expected to play within the family. A Dutch animation movie, using liquorice of all-sorts, displays this as the maker, a boy from Congo, represents himself looking after his three baby sisters and brothers who disturb his favourite activity at home: watching music videos. He simultaneously points to the global youth culture that he enjoys and to his African background using African iconography in his animation drawings. Here the crossroad of different cultures is linked to family life as it manifests itself within the private space of the house. We have observed how for the children and their families "family" indeed was primarily a private, even domestic space in the literally sense that was kept separate from the public domain. In the CHICAM club the family became a subject matter that involved the interaction between the domestic and the public space. In this interaction the children were the main mediators linking the outside world to the inside space of the family.

From how media actually were used in structuring communication among family members and from the symbolic meanings that were attached to media within the family we noticed the function of the family as mediator between private and public. There is much to say about this as it involves parental control of media consumption of the children and the shift between different cultures as is expressed e.g. in renting video movies from the home country and watching the national news in the host country. More important turned out to be the role of satellite TV as a link between the "there" and "here." Often it

played the role of the hearth: the focal point around which the family gathered. Tuned to programs in the country of origin, it stood as a constant reminder and a permanent link. It became a relentless carrier of the life there into the life here: the satellite brought the public space of the distant country of origin into the private space of the living room. All in all the wide range of media use within the private space of the family offered the children a platform through which they were able to experience a plurality of possible life styles parallel to a plurality of identities; this applies in a particular way to children growing up in the context of Diaspora.

Concluding remarks

The first thing that is affected in the lives of children in migration, is the family. Family relations are always disrupted, whether this affects an immediate or an extended network. The family being the main mediator between the past and present in the new situation becomes a site of negotiating identities. This is especially true for children as they are the first to bring the new world into the home. "Home" then accommodates the encounter of different worlds and images, both public and private, informed both by the pre-migration *habitus* and the Diaspora *habitus*. Notions of home and belonging shift, as they have to adapt to the new world that the children encounter. The outside world of the new country primarily interacts with the inside world of the home. In the context of migration family life replaces "home" as a pillar of identity, yet it is continuously negotiated in the migratory context where the family lives.

The family theme turned out to be the most difficult to deal with both with the children and the researchers. The research methodology uncovered aspects of children's lives that are hard to get at. The research project has made clear how media can be used as tools for different purposes, addressing key areas of children's lives, speaking to the different realities as they are being experienced by them. These experiences were articulated through media production processes without the researchers having to ask about these explicitly.

The CHICAM club first and foremost provided a productive space where the primary concern was to let the children's voice be heard and to let their own gaze be recorded. For children with limited or no access to such spaces, the club established a platform of communication with other children with similar experiences, as well as a platform upon which to step and articulate their own sense of who they are. By making media productions, the children created a particular media space for themselves in which they could explore the potential of media as means of communication and where they were able to represent themselves on their own terms and to speak about themselves in a free way.

The insights drawn from the research may inform practice and policy in several ways as the children's voices were central in the project. Media production helped children elaborate on their migratory experiences. Access to

media production and expression appears to be an important means for nego-
tiating memory and finding their place in the new society. Such activities
could be made available as part of school curriculum or community activities.
Media also provide migrant families with opportunities for expression of their
own experiences and perspectives. Platforms that allow for exchange among
different communities can be seen as vital instruments in intercultural com-
munication. They in turn provide useful data for researching Diaspora experi-
ences among families.

As may have become clear from the data that we presented "flexibility" is
a key issue in addressing family relations in a migratory context. This applies
to theoretical concepts of identity and children's experiences of discontinuity
and disruption alike. The process of identity building is a continuous process
that involves a permanent redefinition of oneself in relation to others. Finding
"oneself" in a migratory context is informed by both past memory and current
experience in the new world. We have observed how making media produc-
tions facilitates the process of identity building as it involves making "narra-
tives" and representations of family life in which identities are being created
and given meaning. Not only did the children articulate flexibility in their
conceptions of family and home, also they seemed to have incorporated the
changing power relationships that take place within families in transition.
Children becoming the mediators with the new world often form hybrid iden-
tities between the family culture and the new society; however in the new con-
text they also need safety and stability as pillars of a new house that could ac-
commodate feelings of "belonging."

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