

War and diaspora as lifelong learning contexts for immigrant women

Shahrzad Mojab

This chapter presents a critical feminist reading of lifelong learning. The two emerging notions of lifelong learning, one which is concerned with job training and recurrent education, and that aimed at social transformation, will be interrogated in the context of immigrant women's struggles for learning, working, and transforming their lives in diaspora. In particular, the chapter draws on the results of my research project entitled *War, Diaspora, and Learning: Kurdish Women in Canada, Britain, and Sweden*.¹ One of the objectives of this project was to study the impact of war and displacement on Kurdish women's learning. There are about 25 to 30 million Kurds who, since the latter part of twentieth century, have been subjected to 'transnationalization' as a result of war, displacement, and re-constitution of nation and ethnicity in the diaspora (Mojab and Hassanpour 2004). Kurdish women face enormous challenges in the process of resettlement and gaining full citizenship rights in their adopted countries. They have to learn about a whole universe that differs from their previous world – learning to live in different economic and social systems, acquiring different languages, and integrating into different legal and political regimes.

My approach is a critical feminism rooted in historical materialism and informed by dialectics. It has much in common with Chandra Talpade Mohanty's notion of transnational feminist theory:

[C]ross-cultural feminist work must be attentive to the micropolitics of context, subjectivity, and struggle, as well as to the macropolitics of global economic and political systems and processes [the challenge is] to do this kind of multilayered, contextual analysis to reveal how the particular is often universally significant – without using the universal to erase the particular or positing an unbridgeable gulf between the two terms. Implicit in this analysis [is] the use of historical materialism as a basic framework and a definition of material reality in both its local and micro, as well as, global, systemic dimensions.

(2002: 501)

I will begin with a brief review of the existing critical literature on lifelong

learning as a way of framing my methodological and theoretical framework. This will be followed by mapping out the experience of Kurdish women in Europe as 'citizen' learners, and by way of conclusion, I will argue that we can unravel ideological and social relations embedded in 'lifelong learning' when we engage in a multilevel analysis of this concept through the lived experiences of learners, in particular marginalized women.

Lifelong learning as contested terrain

The political and economic upheavals of the 1990s have left their mark on education. A major source of change is the globalization of the capitalist economy and its restructuring, which make extraordinary demands on education in general and adult education in particular. The changing economy calls for the reorganization of adult education into a training/learning/skilling enterprise fully responsive to the requirements of the market. Within this political and economic context, lifelong learning has been deployed in two ways: first, it is a central concept in the hegemonic claim that lack of skill causes unemployment; it supposes that constant retraining prepares workers to be ultimately adaptable, and always ready to acquire new skills as the needs of capital dictate. Second, lifelong learning has been deployed as an ideological concept in two ways: (1) the concept has become an ideological distraction that shifts the burden of increasing adaptability onto the worker; and (2) it is also a ray of hope for a more democratic and engaged citizenry.

My questions are: why is lifelong learning being enthusiastically endorsed by some adult educators, policy-makers, the business community, and others? Should we cautiously welcome it or resist it? It is noteworthy that in the past decade international adult education declarations were drafted in the context of lifelong learning ideology; these documents generally promote a democratic or ambitious vision by tying learning and learners to citizenship, participation, justice, gender equality, peace, economic development, civil society, indigenous peoples and minorities' rights. Let me quote at length from the Hamburg Declaration:²

[Adult education] becomes more than a right; it is a key to the twenty-first century. It is both a consequence of active citizenship and a condition for full participation in society. It is a powerful concept for fostering ecologically sustainable development, for promoting democracy, justice, gender equity, and scientific, social and economic development, and for building a world in which violent conflict is replaced by dialogue and a culture of peace based on justice. Adult learning can shape identity and give meaning to life. Learning throughout life implies a rethinking of content to reflect such factors as age, gender equality, disability, language, culture and economic disparities.

Adult education denotes the entire body of ongoing learning processes,

formal or otherwise, whereby people regarded as adults by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, and improve their technical or professional qualifications or turn them in a new direction to meet their own needs and those of their society. Adult learning encompasses both formal and continuing education, non-formal learning and the spectrum of informal and incidental learning available in a multicultural learning society, where theory- and practice-based approaches are recognized.

There are, however, serious constraints on making the link between social and cultural rights and the economic and political imperatives. It is in explaining these constraints that we face contesting, contradictory, and, most often partial, theoretical explanation. In other words, despite the knowledge explosion on lifelong learning, I still find the most comprehensive critic in Frank Coffield's important article 'Breaking the consensus: lifelong learning as social control' (Coffield 1999).

Coffield notes that, despite all the debates, there is a consensus which has developed over the past thirty years to the effect that lifelong learning, on its own, will solve a wide range of educational, social and political ills. He states that this consensus is naïve, limited, deficient, dangerous, and diversionary. Coffield asks: 'If the thesis is so poor why it is so popular?' (ibid.: 479). He provides an answer by arguing: 'It legitimates increased expenditure on education.' 'It provides politicians with the pretext for action.' 'It deflects attention from the need for economic and social reform.' And 'It offers the comforting illusion that for every complex problem there is one simple solution' (ibid.: 486). He calls this policy response to market demands 'compulsory emancipation' through lifelong learning (ibid.: 489). Nonetheless, Coffield's alternative proposal is framed in notions of liberal democracy that avoid a deeper analysis of capitalist relations of power. It is important to note that a similar critique was provided by Ivar Berg two decades earlier (Berg 1970).

A number of British educators use Marxist theoretical and epistemological frames of analysis to explain constraints on lifelong learning policy and its democratic aspirations (see, among others, Cole 1998; Rikowski 1999, 2001; Colley and Hodkinson 2001; Colley 2004; Hill 2002). Their main arguments are: (1) the current policy environment for education is 'anti-egalitarian' and this should be contextualized in the national ideological and policy context as well as the global context (Hill 2002: 1). Hill also argues that the capitalist class has a 'Business Plan for Education and a Business Plan in Education'; (2) contrary to its claims about the 'withering away of the state', neo-liberalism demands a strong state to promote its interests; a strong interventionist state is needed by advanced capitalism particularly in the field of education and training – in the field of producing an ideologically compliant and technically skilled workforce; and (3) 'labour-power' is the single most fundamental commodity on which the whole capitalist system rests. In an important study of mentoring,

Helen Colley argues that the learning/training mentoring model for youth is indeed further 'promoting the brutal commodification of the very humanity to which it appeals' (2004: 100).

What is lacking, however, is an attempt to integrate an analysis of race, gender, class, and learning in a Marxist dialectical sense. An inquiry into 'learning', not in terms of its forms, that is formal, non-formal, and informal, but learning as class consciousness will require a merging of Marxist methodology and anti-oppression frameworks. While class consciousness can be thought of in terms of the distance between subjective and objective interests, this does not mean that the goal is to move a group toward a static set of objective interests. Paula Allman argues that '[T]he human condition is not only riddled with injustice and oppressive division, it is illogical' (1999: 1). She advocates 'authentic social transformation' as a process 'through which people can change not only their circumstances but themselves' (ibid.: 1–2). This entails a lifelong learning process, as Allman would suggest, where human consciousness and questions such as 'how it is constituted' and 'how it can be rendered more critical' are at its core. To put it differently, the reading of lifelong learning as a nexus of citizen/worker/learner is a mechanism of individualization through which learners are turned into portable learning units and where no attention has been paid to the dynamics of change through consciousness. The context of immigrant women's lives can illuminate this theoretical claim.

Kurdish women as the 'learner' in lifelong learning

I begin with personal experiences. My intellectual and political growth is intertwined with the struggle of Kurdish women. Over more than two decades, I have learned about their aspiration for homeland, pleading for speaking their own language, and desire to exhibit their cultural practices and political values. As the fourth largest ethnic people in the Middle East, Kurdish women have been involved in one of the longest nationalist projects of the twentieth century. Their homeland, Kurdistan, was forcibly divided among four neighbouring nation-states of Iran, Iraq, Turkey and Syria, which have used violence against Kurdish demands for self-rule. This has turned the idea of a unified homeland, the greater Kurdistan, into a national dream.

Since the early twentieth century, Kurdish women have also experienced modes of life under the rule of colonial powers, imperialism, and local dictatorial regimes. They have also experienced a range of oppositional politics ranging from nationalism, to Marxism, socialism, communism, and recently, political Islam. Despite this range of political activism and struggle, certain hegemonic social relations, that is, patriarchal domination, in its feudal, religious, nationalist, and modernist forms, encompass Kurdish women's lives. Over decades, the function and intensity of this domination have been shifting as the internal and external forces in the region have changed. It is beyond the scope and the focus of this chapter to further elaborate on all these complexities;

however, I try to read Kurdish women's lives and experiences as an evolving site of historical tensions and contradictions. Through this dialectical and materialist historicization we can understand the sigh of a Kurdish woman *peshermerge* (guerrilla, freedom fighter) living in Sweden when she says, 'If only these people [Swedes] knew! If only they knew who I am or was, what I have done, what I can offer them today.' Shilan is lamenting her life today in Sweden where she is only being constructed, as she puts it,

as this pathetic refugee woman who only needs their empathy. While in fact what I need is a forum, a space, to tell them as an illiterate woman, under the condition of suppression of my government, how I mobilized, gathered women, recruited them for the national cause; how I self-taught myself reading and writing in order to be able to read the political literature; how I learn to manage a large community of youth, support them, give them hope in life, and inspire them for a better life in future. Here in Sweden, they think I know nothing, I have no skills, they only push me to learn the language, but for what?³

The Kurds of Iraq experienced a massive dispersal following the Gulf War in 1991. Europe, in particular, Sweden, received a large number of Kurdish refugees (for statistical information, see Mojab and Hassanpour 2004). Displacement on such a large scale can often drain the educational resources of a nation-state, in so far as learning is a crucial factor in the process of successful re-settling and re-rooting. However, theories of learning do not account for the contexts and contingencies of learning, their diverse forms, and the creativity of the learners in moving beyond the confines of formal and informal learning. This is in part the case because the past is present in the lives of Kurdish women, and shapes their learning and living in the diaspora. Their past constitutes histories of war, conflict, forced assimilation, ethnocide, and linguicide in the states of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria that rule over them. This constant presence of overt violence is in sharp contrast with life in the West, where new, unfamiliar, and often invisible forms of conflict and violence pose new challenges.

My research revealed five ways through which Kurdish women's learning in Sweden is experienced. It has been lived as a process of (1) detaching women's learning from their past and present experience; (2) separating learning from the daily struggle of Kurdish women in the context of Sweden; as well as a mechanism of (3) disjuncture between women's learning needs and desires and the Swedish political agenda in creating new citizens; (4) disjuncture between immigrant women's learning needs and the context of closer state and market relations; and (5) as a circular process of closure in possibilities for involvement in feminist activism. I call this complex process the 'Closure, Opening, Closure Syndrome'. It is not possible to treat each of these instances separately; it is the totality of all that pushes us to rethink some of our assumptions about learning

and lifelong learning. To elaborate, I will draw on moments in the research where these relations, processes, or mechanisms became visible.

During the data collection, I noted that when participants were asked about their learning and life in diaspora, they would invariably begin by explaining the history that led to their exile. Each woman would recount up to twenty years of history of political organizing and resisting state repression, leading to flight and/or imprisonment, and ultimately exile. The women revealed that they were still intimately tied to these political struggles, but in different ways. In September 2002, I attended the first anniversary celebration of the Kurdish women's radio programme in Stockholm, Sweden. More than 300 women, men, and children participated in a festive celebration of the first Kurdish women's radio programme in diaspora. A few weeks after this successful event I arranged a meeting with eight Kurdish women activists who were instrumental in managing and running this radio programme. We began our day-long discussion with the question of why a radio programme and why and how it has become so successful. The immediate response was related to the particular ways that patriarchy is reproduced within the nationalist organizations, and the impact of this patriarchal nationalism on the reproduction of unequal gender relations in the Kurdish diaspora community. One woman suggested that 'nationalism has grown stronger in exile. Thus we had to turn to ourselves.' The 'turning to ourselves' meant to distance themselves from multiple sources of patriarchy and/or colonialism: Kurdish political parties in Sweden, Kurdish community as a totality with strong ties to traditional forces of power in homeland and hostland; Swedish government sources of funding; Swedish feminist organizations; and other immigrant feminist groups. Most of the women active in the radio programme in Sweden are utilizing their experience with radio broadcasting during their struggles in the mountains and camps on the border of Iran and Iraq. The harsh condition of war forced these women into a certain creativity and ingenuity. For instance, women were engaged in instant training to become radio technicians, nurses, primary health-care providers, social workers, and community organizers. Much of the training was done in the context of daily analysis of the situation of war and the longer political strategy for winning the war. Thus, literacy and acquiring good reading skills were undertaken in the context of training as broadcasters. We can see that embedded in this model of learning are several critical elements of *learning for life*: (1) *groundedness*, that is, learning which is located in material condition of life; (2) *practice*, that is, learning which materially can be assessed and transformed into higher level of consciousness; and (3) *survival*, that is, learning with lasting impact on life⁴ (Mojab and McDonald forthcoming).

Kurdish women who were trained in health care or community organizing during their camp life on mountains, are the ones who are keen to become teachers, nurses, or social workers. In pursuit of this 'learning ambition', as Sahar called it, Kurdish women who attempted to stand outside the normative boxes of learning faced multiple barriers from a number of forces. Sahar was trying to

establish a feminist Kurdish women's group. Her insistence on the notion of 'feminism' stemmed from her frustration with Kurdish political parties, the Swedish government, and Swedish feminist activism. Sahar said,

Kurdish political parties still look at women as an auxiliary women's group with the responsibility for cooking for festive events and for putting on their colourful cloth to represent Kurdish culture in Sweden. The ones that are more progressive, have good rhetoric, but in practice they are the same. When I approached the Swedish government for funding, they referred me back to the Kurdish Federation,⁵ exactly the source that I wanted to avoid. It is difficult to build an alliance with Swedish feminist groups, they think ethnic minority women are politically incapable of developing a critical feminist platform. I decided the only funding chance that I might have is to create an organization for immigrant women where Kurdish women could be one of the groups. Through this process, I have been ostracized by the community, I have been threatened, and I feel abandoned by everyone: my community, my hostland, and feminists.

Listening to Kurdish women's narratives of contestation in learning and living in Sweden, urged me to take their grievances to the Swedish government officials.⁶ I met a group of Integration Board policy-makers and presented a succinct summary of the result of my research. At this point my goal was to instil in the consciousness of policy-makers that stories of Kurdish women's experience living in Sweden are not the cries of helpless women for government hand-outs. Rather, these narrations should be seen as advocacy tools to change, develop and improve public policy. Briefly, what I presented were the following points: (1) Kurdish women have experienced multiple forced displacements before arriving in Europe or Canada; (2) Kurdish women are not a homogeneous group; there is a great deal of diversity among them based on class, education, religion, rural/urban background, and language. These differences are exacerbated by other factors such as political affiliation and citizenship in the dominant nation-states of Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and Syria; (3) Kurdish women demonstrate a high level of political and social consciousness on issues of patriarchy, equality, and social justice; (4) the experience of war, multiple forced displacements, and diaspora, have equipped Kurdish women with a complex learning mechanism and strategy. This includes survival, resistance, struggle, and renewed social and political learning; and (5) Kurdish women have a critical approach to the notion of 'homeland' and 'hostland' due to years of oppression by the dominant nation-states, semi-colonial domination of their homeland, Kurdistan, and the hegemonic role of Western powers in more recent histories. There is one force that pervades all these forms of domination, and that is patriarchy. It was within this context that I presented the following two recommendations which were the result of months of listening to and talking to policy-makers about Kurdish women:

- 1 Kurdish women are actively resisting being identified in cultural terms. Many Kurdish women who have sought asylum in Europe and North America have been active in struggles against militarism, Islamism, patriarchy and oppression. Often male-dominated, conservative cultural organizations represent neither the experiences, nor the political interests of Kurdish women. Government agencies must guard against using male-dominated cultural organizations as conduits for assessing the concerns and interests of the Kurdish community.
- 2 As part of their process of integration into Swedish society, Kurdish women are eager to be understood as autonomous, civically-minded members of the community. Kurdish women have been overshadowed in the public perception by the concerns and attitudes of culturally and religiously conservative men. Many women are eager for opportunities to reconstruct their histories from a feminist perspective. Projects that enable Kurdish women to produce photo exhibitions, community theatre projects, and autobiographical writing, will help to counter the recent overemphasis on Islam, nationalism and traditionalism in Swedish media and policy.

I faced a heavy and long silence. Silences often say more than words. The political and cultural agency of Kurdish women in the above mentioned recommendations contrasted sharply with the ways in which Swedish officials apparently envisioned their agency as monolithic and passive. It is this construction of immigrant women which alienates and isolates them and leaves them little choice but to limit their struggle to the comfort zone of known antagonism, that is, national patriarchy. Thus, the notion which I introduced above of *Closure*, that is, ending the traditional and limiting realm of political involvement in the national struggle into a new *Opening*, that is, expanding their knowledge and practice of feminist activism through a vast array of social engagement in Sweden such as human rights, anti-globalization, anti-war, and environmental movements. However, the ruling relations have permeated into these movements which make them another space where the patriarchal, racist, and colonial relations are reproduced, thus, once more *Closure*, where the marks of alienation and isolation are visible on the prematurely aged bodies of Kurdish women and on the loss of vibrancy and resiliency in their soul. A remarkable Kurdish woman *peshmarge* said:

They sent me to work in a factory. The work was heavy and repetitious. I got tired soon and could not continue, but needed the government assistance. I told them about my neck and back pain, they gave me a limited sick leave and sent me to a doctor. The pills and staying at home made me very depressed. I was totally isolated, there was not even a neighbour to talk to. I saw the doctor again, this time they put me on anti-depressant drugs which made my situation even worse. Because of long absence from my job, they put me first on short-term disability and now I am on long-term disability.

These categories have many implications for me. I am limited in what I can do, I am limited in what I can learn and most importantly I don't feel good about myself.

It is heartening to read the introductory remarks of Bettina Bochynek, the Coordinator of the International Adult Learners at the UNESCO Institute for Education where she states (National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, 2005):

The insights gained through listening to learners are at the same time very pragmatic and functional, in that they can help design policies and good quality learning provision based on the needs and aspirations of learners. On the other hand, listening to adult learners and making them partners in negotiation for both policy development and improved learning provision is imperative if we really want to achieve active citizenship and democratic cultures.

However, I have tried to argue so far that even when immigrant women loudly and clearly state their demands through the narration of stories, those with the power to make national policies still fail them in achieving their rights as a citizen. In the imagination of policy-makers, immigrant women are not constructed as 'citizens' with a desire to participate and contribute to a democratic culture. In explaining this act of exclusion, it is important to remember that this alienating construction *cannot* simply be explained by immigrant women's class location, or race and ethnicity or even their gender. It is their total subjectivity, that is, they are gendered by capital, raced by capital, and they are embodied by this relation between labour and capital. Himani Bannerji writes:

Even forms of extraction of surplus value involve the location of certain people in the working class, and in sub-classes of the working class. And this involves the organization of patriarchy. And in Canada it involves the organization of how to read the body, the skin. In order to find your most exploitable worker you would rely on whoever is socially least valued. How else can concrete exploitation occur?

(1998: 13)

Immigrant women are marginalized by capital, and we can now see that their marginalization is not a product of contingent structures, but is constitutive and necessary to the capitalist relation. We study women and come to know what particular groups of marginalized women of colour experience *learning* or *training*. We can trace policy initiatives globally such as Adult Learners' Week and identify women who are targeted as the recipients of *training* schemes from language training to literacy or to the delivery of service-related, minimum-pay, unsecured oriented jobs and we can trace women whose *learning* will be

celebrated, be it new computer skills or enhancing personal communication skills. I think, it is plausible to claim that women of colour more often are considered *trainees* than *learners* (Mojab 1999, 2000). To elaborate further on this point, I will conclude this chapter by arguing that we need to interrogate the notion of lifelong learning deeper to uncover the ruling relations embedded in it.

Uncovering ruling relations in lifelong learning

The particularity of the learning/educational experience of Kurdish immigrants is rather obvious. The life histories of these new citizens of Sweden distinguish them from indigenous citizens. It is in this particularity, however, that we can detect universal trends in the educational crises we face in a rapidly changing world. It is in this micropolitics of context, subjectivity, and struggle that we can detect the macropolitics of global economic structure.

I argue that the ways in which Kurdish women experience lifelong learning in Sweden, discussed above, partially explain the disjuncture between an individual learning and training goals of lifelong learning policy in the Western world. It is partial because I need to show how these processes are linked to the underlying ideology and social relations embedded in lifelong learning. As I have tried to argue, Kurdish women, as part of their process of integration into European society, are eager to be understood as autonomous, civically-minded members of the community. Many women are eager for opportunities to reconstruct their histories and culture from a feminist-transnational perspective. However, in the practice of the lifelong learning policy, Kurdish women are isolated, racialized, and culturalized learners/workers. Their learning desire to initiate projects that enable them to produce, for example, photo exhibitions, community theatre projects and autobiographical writings, as social and collective learning projects to counter growing Islamophobia, racism, nationalism, xenophobia, and patriarchy in Europe, has not been well received by Swedish government and feminist organizations. Some urgent questions are: (1) Why does the concept of lifelong learning arise at this particular moment? (2) How does lifelong learning relate to the capitalist mode of production? (3) What are the contradictions within the concept of the lifelong learning? (4) How can these contradictions be made visible?

To answer these questions, we must consider how *learning* is deployed within capitalist relations of production where in the twenty-first century we are faced with a condition that Davis (2004) calls the era of 'surplus humanity'. The current theorization of lifelong learning, underpinned by critics of human capital theory, points out that if the life experiences and learning of marginalized workers were recognized, they could attain equality through a better paid job (Livingstone 1999b). This critique leaves the organization's ownership of workers' learning unchallenged. However, if we understand work relations in the context of capitalism, the worker cannot be confused with the idea of

capital. To understand the relationship between the worker and capital, we must recognize that labour power is a commodity in the capitalist mode of production. As a commodity, labour power is subject to the law of supply and demand, and workers are in direct competition with one another to sell their commodity. In this configuration, knowledge and skill acquisition can become part of the competition. The more the concept of 'lifelong learning' becomes synonymous with market requirements, the more it becomes commodified, and alienated from the learner (Rikowski 2002).

Debates on lifelong learning focus on the differentiation of the learning process into formal, non-formal, and informal processes (for an excellent survey, see Colley *et al.* 2003). While these distinctions are useful, they offer little insight into contemporary dynamics of learning. It is not difficult to see how these forms of learning coexist in most contexts, both individual and collective. In the Kurdish case examined here, learners want to remove these distinctions. They want their informal and non-formal learning to be treated as formal education, and even continued as such. What is informal learning from the point of view of their new nation-state is, for them, more significant than any formal education they may have access to.

These learners experienced on a daily basis, in their pre-Swedish lives, traumatic events, each of which dwarfs the experience of a decade of learning in a school environment. As members of a communist movement involved in struggles against a theocratic state, they were, to borrow from a distant but similar context, 'making their own history'.⁷ Having been born into the 'normal life' of a rather secular patriarchal society under Iran's monarchical regime, they experienced the rise of a modern theocracy, which targeted women as its first and most important realm of Islamization. In their struggle to turn the tide of this powerful theocracy, these women left their homes, their villages, towns and cities, joined a political party, took up arms, engaged in political and ideological training, publishing, broadcasting, organizing, and building an equal regime of gender relations in their political community. For a while, they lived in villages in 'liberated areas' of Iranian Kurdistan, where they promoted ideas of socialism and feminism. Their difficult lives, subjected to the unceasing military operations of the Islamic regime, and chemical bombing of the Ba'athist regime of Iraq, were full of successes and defeats. In these struggles, they also experienced the indifference or intervention of the capitalist West. While leading these struggles, they translated and sang the Internationale and the songs of Joe Hill, ironically a Swedish immigrant in the USA. It is difficult to imagine how the national educational system of Sweden, in spite of its social democratic history, can value or build on the experiences of these new citizens. Here the nation, and its dominant class, are in conflict with some of its citizens, their class and gender consciousness, and their internationalism, nurtured in part by the legacy of a Swedish singer.

If the nation-state is highly selective in its educational learning priorities, the market is even more restrictive in its lifelong learning vision. While the idea

of lifelong learning dates back to the beginning of the twentieth century (Yeaxlee 1929), today's conceptualizations try to vindicate it by tying it to the capitalism's restlessness, a condition in which, to quote Marx, 'everything solid melts into air'. The market no longer tolerates a once-and-for-all education, and, accordingly, does not offer any such lifetime single jobs. All have already melted into air. In this almost total subservience to the dictates of the market and its jobs, there is no room for building alternative lives, communities, cultures, or societies such as the ones the Wobblies were contemplating in American factories in the early twentieth century and these Kurdish women were recreating in their mountains later in the century. There is also little space, in this market-based and nation-centred learning, for the pursuit of the democratic visions of, for instance, the Hamburg Declaration on Adult Learning (1997). It would be apparently more appropriate to call 'lifelong learning' 'market-time learning'.

Notes

- 1 This project was funded by the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada.
- 2 The full text is available on <http://www.unesco.org/education/uie/confintea/pdf/con5eng.pdf>.
- 3 To protect the anonymity of Kurdish women, pseudonyms are used. The quotes are my translation.
- 4 There is a growing literature on the impact of war on women which alludes to some of the ways women's struggle under the condition of war potentially can turn to powerful and lasting learning for life. Among others, see Turshen (1998), Menon and Bhasin (1998), and Sideris (2001).
- 5 This is the Federation of Kurdish Associations in Sweden (Kurdiska Riksförbundet, Stockholm, <http://www.kurdiskarf.org>), which is the umbrella organization for various Kurdish community organizations.
- 6 On 2 October 2002, a seminar was organized at the Swedish Integration Board in Linköping where I made a presentation on the topic of 'Gender, Nation, and State Policy: Kurdish Women in Canada, Britain and Sweden'.
- 7 This is based on Stree Shakti Sanghatan *We Were Making History: Women and the Telangana Uprising* (1989).