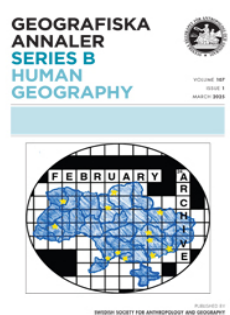

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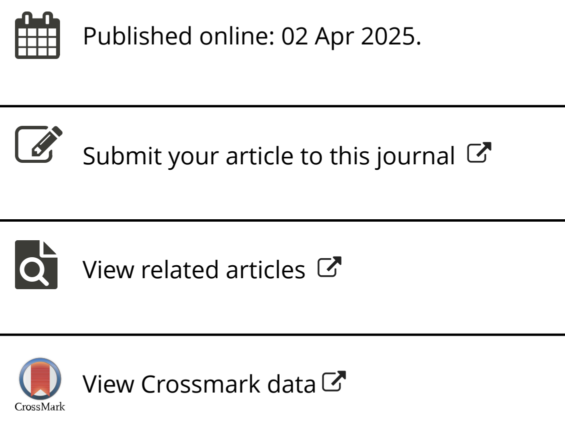

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Homeland's future in the Kurdish freedom movement: openness, prefiguration, legitimization

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ABSTRACT

The concept of homeland embodies the sense of attachment that links a political community to a specific territory. The political meaning embedded in the term 'attachment' underscores that the homeland can be understood as a political-territorial project infused with emotional topographies and geographies. Existing literature predominantly adopts a past-oriented perspective, emphasizing the role of history, origins, and ancestors, in shaping contemporary conceptualizations of the homeland. What is largely absent is an examination of the role of futurity in understanding the notion of homeland. Drawing on the case of the Kurdish Freedom Movement (KFM) and Berardi's (2017) framework on becoming, this article elucidates three key modes through which the future is present in the configuration of the homeland: openness (possibility), prefiguration (potency), and legitimization (power). Thus, this article demonstrates that futurity plays a crucial role in conceptualizing and forging the homeland, right in the present. This is particularly evident in the case of the KFM following its paradigm shift from Marxism-Leninism to an innovative form of communalism, known as democratic confederalism. This shift prompted the KFM to profoundly rethink its ideas of territoriality and identity, reassessing its distant past.

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Introduction

> There are no waiting rooms in history but, rather, rooms that have remained closed and can be reopened (Tomba 2019, 11).

This article explores the role of futurity in shaping the political concept of homeland, by analyzing the Kurdish Freedom Movement's (KFM) configurations of Kurdistan. The concept of homeland is often framed in exclusivist and past-oriented terms, frequently associated with nationalism, authoritarianism, and populism (Kim 2020; Arkilic 2021; Jakobson, Umpierrez de Reguero, and Yener-Roderburg 2023). Furthermore, its recent revival (Araújo 2019) has contributed to a resurgence of bounded spaces (Paasi 2022a; 2022b; Murphy 2022). Therefore, this article's focus on the KFM is significant because the Movement is a transnational revolutionary force aiming to establish a stateless democratic confederation in the Kurdish-inhabited regions, based on the principles of direct democracy, women's liberation, and social ecology (Jongerden 2017). Shifting the political perspective may shed new light on the concept of homeland. Although rooted in socialistic traditions, first in its Marxist and later libertarian forms[1], as well as in a strong internationalist practice, the KFM considers the homeland an important value. Its historical leader, Öcalan (2013; 2016;

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2017a), even describes patriotism and internationalism as two necessarily intertwined phenomena. However, in viewing homeland as an instrumental value for societal liberation, he also warns against sacralizing or essentializing it into a chauvinistic representation, emphasizing that it is a historical product in continuous evolution. Indeed, the territorial vision of the KFM rests on the key principle of a democratic nation – pluralistic and even multiethnic – articulated through autonomy for each social, religious, and ethnic group (Ventura and Custodi 2024). The revolutionary nature of the KFM thus emphasizes the construction of the connection between people and land oriented toward the future and its ongoing transformation. What role does futurity play in present understandings of homeland?

The case of the KFM demonstrates how fundamental political assumptions deeply influence the homeland's spatiotemporal narratives. In the American neoconservative context, the term homeland, whose rhetorical use surged after 9/11, 'draws on comforting images of a deeply rooted past to legitimate modern forms of imperial power' (Kaplan 2003, 90). Tulumello and Falanga (2022) recently showed that it creates multi-scalar geographies of 'good' and 'evil' at both sub – and supra-national levels. The KFM also uses selected pasts to legitimate current social models, but for cohabitation and multiplicity. This highlights how the desired future defines the selection of the past and narratives of the present.

By examining the KFM, this article bridges geographic scholarship on homeland and geographers' recent interest in the role of futurity in the here-and-now of political praxis (Rose-Redwood et al. 2024; Gergan et al. 2024). As a theory-driven article, it draws on the Italian philosopher Franco 'Bifo' Berardi's *Futurability* (2017), showcasing three temporalities produced by three different manifestations of the becoming through which to interpret the KFM's homeland narratives: possibility, potency, and power. Each of these elements enables different functions of the future in understanding the homeland. *Possibility* refers to the state of openness towards the becoming. *Potency* is the prefiguration of the desired future in the here and now. *Power* is the legitimization of the projected homeland based on specific selected pasts. Such a political conceptualization of homeland emphasizes the role of the political subject that builds the connection between people and land, in a perpetual state of becoming. Thus, this article contributes to understanding the socially constructed nature of homeland in political geography, moving beyond bounded and linear conceptualizations of its spatiotemporalities. More specifically, it addresses a gap in geographic literature on homeland by critically examining the relationship between homeland and time, demonstrating that futurity shapes the understanding of homeland even more than the past.

It also makes a significant contribution to Kurdish Studies and the specific interest in the KFM, as it is the first article to use the Kurdish democratic confederal project as a lens to examine the concept of homeland. Many publications focus on various social and political aspects of Kurdish democratic confederalism, such as its contribution to the conceptual development of radical democracy (Akkaya and Jongerden 2012; Gerber and Brincat 2018), sovereignty and local and transnational governance (Jongerden 2019), statelessness (Dinc 2020), autonomy (Burç 2020), environmentalist political organization (Ayboğa 2021), feminism (Düzgün 2016), nationalism and post-colonialism (Sunca 2023), geopolitics (Hoffmann and Matin 2021), and ethnic conflicts (Schmidinger 2018), among others. However, none have specifically investigated the Kurdish democratic confederal model in relation to the notion of homeland. Nonetheless, some key theoretical publications make a few references to the concept of homeland, mostly emphasizing that, within democratic confederalism, the homeland is conceived as open, inclusive, and protective of diversity (Dirik 2022).

In the upcoming sections, I will first introduce the KFM and the methodology employed in researching the Movement's circulation of ideas. Then, I will discuss the conceptualizations of homeland within the geographic debate and explore the role of futurity's presence. Three sections will investigate the three functions of the future mentioned above: possibility (openness), potency (prefiguration), and power (legitimization).

Researching the Kurdish freedom movement

The Kurds are highly fragmented politically, territorially, and even linguistically, inhabiting the region known as Kurdistan, which literally means 'the land of the Kurds', divided among four major states: Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran. The KFM has developed considerable ideological influence and organizational structures in all parts of Kurdistan where it aims to establish a stateless transboundary democratic confederation (Casier and Jongerden 2012; Akkaya and Jongerden 2012; Gerber and Brincat 2018; Matin 2019; Miley 2020). Drawing inspiration from Abdullah Öcalan, the historical and imprisoned leader of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), the KFM is particularly strong in Turkey and Syria, where it has established a de facto autonomous administration (Jongerden 2019). The PKK was founded in 1978 and began a war against the Turkish army in 1984 (Marcus 2007; O'Connor 2021; Jongerden 2023). Between the late 1990s and the early 2000s, the party underwent a profound process of revising its strategies and ideology. This political evolution led to a paradigm shift, moving away from the goal of an independent Kurdish nation-state and embracing a system known as democratic confederalism (Öcalan 2011), based on principles of communalism. This change in basic assumptions was accompanied by the proliferation of sister parties and groups somehow linked to the PKK, forming what is commonly referred to as the KFM: not a singular centralized movement, but an umbrella term that 'encompasses an array of Kurdish organizations inspired by the ideas of […] Abdullah Öcalan' (Miley 2020, 2).

Key to this paradigm shift is the influence of the American theorist Murray Bookchin, the father of social ecology, on Öcalan and the wider KFM. In their brief correspondence, in 2004, the Kurdish leader stated that 'the Kurdish freedom movement was determined to successfully implement [Bookchin's] ideas' and for this reason, he elaborated 'on the concept of an eco-democratic society and the practical implementation of libertarian municipalism in Kurdistan' (Heider and Kontny 2004, online). The place where such principles found fertile ground for implementation was the Syrian section of Kurdistan, also known as Rojava (Öcalan et al. 2015; Knapp, Flach, and Ayboğa 2016; Schmidinger 2019; Cartier 2019; Internationalist Commune 2020b; Hammy and Miley 2022). The new socio-ecological paradigm and the prospect of its territorial actualization attracted many international leftist activists who constitute the transnational solidarity network (Savran 2016; Hunt 2021), working closely with the diaspora (Ventura 2023).

Indeed, the KFM is also popular in Europe among the Kurdish diaspora (Başer 2013), which is estimated to be around 2,5 million people. Here, many political representations have been established, such as the Brussels-based Kurdistan National Congress (KNK), due to the strategic decision taken by Öcalan himself in the 1990s to invest politically in Europe (Gunter 2011). The KNK is a multi-national platform of Kurdish groups and parties of all tendencies, acting as a kind of government in exile. Additionally, Europe is home to many Kurdish student organizations, cultural centres, political groups, media networks, publishing houses, and academic members. They form a network for the circulation of texts, ideas, and representations of Kurdistan based on the principles of the KFM, which this article draws on. The emerging portrayals of the Kurdish homeland are the outcome of a collective endeavour, ranging from theoretical debates to artistic projects, political activism, cultural events, and committed journalistic reports, produced by members of the KFM and the broader solidarity network. The type of material is therefore manifold, including conference speeches, theoretical texts, academic articles, political declarations, book launch event flyers, interviews, and reports, among others.

In this article, I use Berardi's theoretical framework to analyze previously collected data – between July 2020 and April 2021 – regarding the KFM's understanding of the Kurdish homeland. The empirical data includes foundational texts of the KFM, key academic and journalistic representations of Kurdistan, and ten interviews with key informants, such as Kurdish political entrepreneurs. The interviews aim to strengthen the results of the text analysis. All the interviewees are members or supporters of the KFM, including spokespersons for the KNK, Kurdish activists and cultural centres' representatives in Europe, publishers involved in circulating KFM-related texts,

former European fighters in Rojava, artists, and activist-scholars from Europe. Each interview, based on open-ended questions, lasted around one hour and took place in various forms: in-person, via telecommunication, telephone and e-mail. My objective is, therefore, to examine how the KFM articulates the sense of attachment, which is key to the concept of homeland, in future terms. Therefore, in the next section, I will illustrate the geographic debate on the concept of homeland, arguing that it lacks an examination of the role of future temporality. To fill this gap in the literature, I will introduce the significance of the future's presence in shaping the homeland politically, before applying it to the KFM case through Berardi's theoretical framework.

Geographies of homeland and its futures

In the aftermath of 9/11 and the subsequent creation of the US Department of Homeland Security, the concept of homeland materialized at the centre of the political and geopolitical discourse. It sits at the foundation of national security and cohesion, territorial projects, and state-building endeavours, linking territories and collective identities (Herb 2018), as it encapsulates and nationalizes the two main functions of the term 'home': to nurture and defend (Dobel 2010).

Geographers have defined homeland as 'an area to which a people or a political community is closely attached' (Gregory 2009, 342), with 'attachment' carrying significant cultural and political implications in various contexts. Early primordialist perspectives regard the ancestral homeland as a fundamental element of group identity, cementing an unbreakable bond between a place and its inhabitants, imagining a place for every people and a people for every place (Kaiser 2009). Cultural geographer Wylie (2016) describes the related homeland thinking with the Derridean term 'ontopology' (being + place) to emphasize this essentialized identification with place. This understanding often places substantial emphasis on the mythical origins of a people enshrined in a specific land, highlighting a sense of inevitability and spatiotemporal linearity. Following this reasoning, the homeland serves as 'both the geographic cradle of the nation and also the "natural" place where the nation is to fulfil its destiny' (Kaiser 1994, 10). It stems from the dual process of nationalization of space and territorialization of nation (Kaiser 2002), intertwined with the emergence of the European nation-state (Conzen 2001).

Nostrand and Estaville (1993; 2001) sought to move beyond historical notions of homeland and systematized its constitutive analytical components, drawing from the examples of subnational American homelands. They proposed five key useful operationalizable ingredients to define the concept: a people, a place, a sense of place, control of place, and the time spent by that people in that place. While this five-ingredient framework accommodates constructivist explanations of homeland formation, it tends to perceive homelands and nations as relatively static, essentialized entities that can be studied, understood, and predicted as such (Kaiser 2009). This is mainly due to an uncritical understanding of the fifth element: time. While it is important to emphasize that some aspects of the identification of people with place can entail a long and slow process, nothing is said about the discursive identity construction and its instrumental mobilization of the past (Coakley 2004). Merely asserting the necessity of sharing a past with a specific place places the homeland in a state of dependence on the past temporality. By doing so, the past is unquestioned and armed with the power of traditional social values over the present. However, if we take the ingredient 'time' seriously, we should better understand homelands as subject to the becoming and transformation, rather than as static and immutable.

Partially welcoming this aspect, Shelef (2020, 11) defines homelands as 'a product of the nationalist project' and explores how homelands evolve. The fact that homeland territoriality changes over time is nothing new (Lustick 1993; Paasi 1996; Herb 1997). Nonetheless, in this view, homeland is an ongoing project, continuously constructed, performed, and enacted, reflecting the future-oriented nature of the political project itself. However, Shelef thinks of homeland only in cartographic terms, as a bounded space, where changes are reduced to the territorial claims and the definition of borders. Consequently, homeland temporality is still thought of as linear, even if it

is possible to renegotiate its territorial borders, ideally moving forward or backward along such an imagined timeline. In contrast, by drawing on Massey (2004; 2005), homeland can be conceptualized in relational terms (Ventura 2022), opening it to spatiotemporal relations that cannot be merely bounded but are still place-based. Space itself is conceived as being traversed by different trajectories, each of them with its rhythm, pace, and temporality. This change of perspective would lead to non-linear spatiotemporalities, emerging from a multiplicity of relations.

Nonetheless, Shelef's point is fruitful. By considering that homelands incorporate, at least partially, the traits of a political project, the ensuing question arises: What role does future temporality play in understanding homeland? To address this question, we need to define what the future is. Specifically, it is necessary to understand how the future can be active in the present. Massumi (2007) defines it as 'what has not and may never happen'. Futurity can be seen as the subsequence of a traditional past-present trajectory or a form of 'absent presence' (Baldwin 2012, 172). These two approaches are not mutually exclusive but highlight different aspects. While the past-present-future trajectory underscores the sequential progression of necessary transformation, the absent presence of the future emphasizes how the future exerts an influence on the present time by altering interpretations, decisions, and actions. A variation of the first approach is the Latourian apocalyptic reverse, where it is the future that flows to the present, 'in the sense of the revelation of things that are coming *toward* us' (Latour 2015, 153). In both variants, time moves independently along a linear direction.

On the contrary, the absent presence of the future underlines the subject's importance in mobilizing futurity in the present. According to Ben Anderson (2010, 793), imagining possible futures requires a coalescence of different '*styles*, consisting of statements that disclose and relate to the form of the future; *practices*, consisting of acts that make specific futures present; and *logics*, consisting of interventions in the here and now on the basis of futures'. Therefore, the future is present through anticipatory actions. In this sense, the future can be understood as a cause that has an effect on the present. However, this 'future cause' is not actual but virtual, stimulating a response based solely on the potentiality carried by the future event. There is no mechanical or necessary causality, only the evaluation of hypotheses. Nevertheless, the response makes the cause real. For example, a threat can evoke the emotion of fear, signalling a potential risk. This alertness enables anticipatory actions to safeguard what is under threat, making the virtual future cause actual. As Massumi (2005, 36) puts it, '[t]hreat is a futurity with a virtual power to affect the present quasi-causally'.

When framed in this way, the future becomes a distinct category of analysis, with specific effects on shaping the present. However, we must clarify the connections between the future, present, and past that allow the future to influence the present. First, we must recognize that the future, like the present and past, only exists in relation to other temporalities. The key characteristic of this relationship is that the future is the domain of change and becoming, but also of uncertainty and the unknown (Rose 2010). The existence of the future continually reminds us that tomorrow will differ from today, even when our actions repeat in the same way. In Aristotelian terms, the past can be seen as the realm of eternal frozen actuality, while the future as the realm of eternal potentiality. Consequently, the present emerges as the terrain in which the transformation of potentiality into actuality can occur. Describing the future as what has not and may never happen or 'an imagined time that is yet-to-come' (Baldwin 2012, 172) is equivalent to saying that in the future, what is actual today returns to potentiality. In the future, something can either remain the same as today or become different. This means that everything is in a perpetual state of becoming: either becoming-the-same or becoming-not-the-same. Therefore, the past is characterized by an absence of change, the future by the coexistence of all possible changes, and the present by the actualization of some of these possible changes.

The term 'possible change' slightly differs from the earlier 'eternal potentiality' in that it appears to introduce some limitation to the potentiality inherent in the future. Berardi (2017) distinguishes between possibility (content), potency (energy), and power (form). This tripartition suggests that the future is not entirely disconnected from the present, and its potentiality is comprehensive

but not absolute. Berardi (2017, 1) describes possibility (the realm of the future) as a 'content inscribed in the present constitution of the world (the immanence of possibilities)'. Therefore, the realm of possibility is not infinite, as the inherent limitations of the current state constrain the potential. However, it remains diverse, akin to a field of branching paths. In other words, possibility, in abstract terms, is limited potentiality because it results from a countable range of 'becoming-not-the-same' options. It is what Muñoz (2009, 1) defined as the 'concrete possibility for another world'. Potency, on the other hand, 'is the energy that transforms possibilities into actualities', while power 'is the selection and enforcement of one possibility among many, and simultaneously it is the exclusion (and invisibilization) of many other possibilities' (Berardi 2017, 1). We could understand the difference between potency and power as the French distinction of *puissance* and *pouvoir*, especially as implied by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), where the former pertains to the virtual, which is the necessary capacity for existence, and the latter to the actual, which is 'a selective concretization of potential' (Massumi 1987, xvii).

Such an immanent conceptualization of the future, intertwined with the ability to act upon things and events to influence specific modes of becoming and desirable outcomes, opens the path to a subjective instrumental utilization of the future temporality. It originates from a relational understanding of space, for which the becoming is a necessary and constitutive element because space itself 'is always in the process of being made' (Massey 2005, 9). It follows that time, too, is always in the process of being made; places and events are sewn together, producing different temporal trajectories and making coexistent multiple stories, rather than singular narratives.

Thus, the future is a crucial terrain of political confrontation: 'Only if the future is open is there any ground for a politics which can make a difference' (Massey 2005, 11). In other words, it is a doing. This assumption necessarily applies to the political understanding of homeland, which should be considered a process stemming from the key ingredient of the sense of place. Consequently, if we frame homeland as a process, always in the making, it must be open. In the next section, I will delve into the condition of openness, which includes the future in the present as the essential manifestation of possibility.

Openness (Possibility) …

This section analyzes the KFM's paradigm shift to understand openness as a constitutive element of the notion of homeland, as understood by Öcalan and the rest of the KFM. Through Berardi's philosophical lens, I examine texts, interviews, and statements to highlight the first way in which the future manifests itself in the KFM's homeland-building project, which is the possibility.

Possibility entails the coexistence of multiplicity. Possibility is a condition of openness, where nothing has already been determined or actualized. Whether in the guise of hope (Joronen and Griffiths 2019; Jongerden 2020) or uncertainty (Griffiths and Joronen 2021), possibility is an open question, which ceases to exist when answered. The perpetual state of becoming, change, and difference is marked by the presence of numerous potential futures. Difference is the essential logical prerequisite for the existence of these possibilities. The case of a single possible outcome implies the absence of any possibility altogether. Since possibility represents a limited potentiality, and potentiality entails the coexistence of what is currently actual and what is not yet actual (virtual), the existence of only one possible result equates to the rejection of other potential outcomes (Berardi 2017). Difference also highlights the prevalence of multiplicity. Before one specific option is chosen from among many, all these possibilities exist simultaneously. The subsequent question arises: How many potential options can be concurrently explored? Addressing this question is synonymous with determining the extent of openness in the present. Openness is the primary aspect to embrace when considering the inclusion of the future in the analysis of the homeland.

As already mentioned, between the late 1990s and the early 2000s, the KFM underwent a profound paradigm shift, transitioning from a state-centred Marxism-Leninism to stateless democratic confederalism, heavily but not exclusively influenced by Murray Bookchin's social ecology (Biehl

2012; Gerber and Brincat 2018; Hammy and Miley 2022). This transformation significantly altered how the KFM conceives its territorial projection and, consequently, its strategic objectives. Instead of pursuing the establishment of an independent, homogenous, and centralized nation-state, the new strategy revolves around connecting municipalities through autonomous grassroots democratic assemblies within a confederation. This radical shift of paradigm (Dinc 2020; Jongerden 2022) prompted extensive self-reflection, with the hierarchical social organization identified as the primary obstacle to a free life. Abdullah Öcalan acknowledged the previous inability of the PKK – the central organization within the KFM – to break free from hierarchical structures. This profound self-critique paved the way for a new direction, as Öcalan (2017b, 32) aptly stated, 'The ideological and political change the PKK underwent turned an apparent defeat into a gateway to new horizons'.

These new horizons transcend ethnic boundaries and state borders, placing 'people at the centre, not borders' (Koç 2020), as emblematically expressed by the former co-chair of the Brussels-based KNK. Multiplicity, including openness and diversity, emerges as the new keyword to comprehend this revitalized paradigm. Öcalan (2017a) emphasizes that this perspective views diversity as a source of richness, recognizing that life itself thrives only on diversity. The concept of homeland itself is transformed through this openness to diversity. It is no longer a static cartographic space but rather an ever-evolving, all-encompassing network of places that serves as a homeland for many, including local nomadic tribes. As the KNK politician said, nomads have the same right to consider the land as their homeland as those residing in villages and cities (Koç 2020), demonstrating how the focus is on people and their multiple and different types of relationships with land.

By shifting from a hierarchical top-down approach to a bottom-up one, the space remains in a perpetual state of becoming. A bottom-up approach, while guided by certain principles, remains open to multiplicity and the unexpected. What does this mean in terms of homeland? The following excerpt from Öcalan (2017b, 34) provides meaningful insight:

> This project is based on the self-government of local communities and is organized in the form of open councils, town councils, local parliaments, and larger congresses. The citizens themselves are the agents of this kind of self-government, not state-based authorities. The principle of federal self-government has no restrictions. It can even be continued across borders to create multinational democratic structures. Democratic confederalism prefers flat hierarchies to facilitate discussions and decision-making at the community level.

In this manifesto, the theme of multiplicity, with its corollary of openness and diversity, is clearly articulated. Multiple actors and local communities are open to different ways of life, new associations, new connections, and new spatiotemporal configurations. Therefore, the 'principle of federal self-government […] can even be continued across borders', signifying a realm of possibilities that can only exist as a presence of the future. The concept of continuation (' … can even be continued across borders … ') brings forth the potential for a future spacetime. Something may continue, evolve, or transform into something new, but it might also not happen. This aspect remains uncertain. What we do know is that such an option exists within a spectrum of possibilities. At this stage, it is unclear whether this possibility is desirable, sought after, probable, or anything else. It represents just one potential evolution of the present.

Nonetheless, certainly, the present approach incorporates the possibility of possibilities. In other words, members of the KFM showcase a will to freedom, which inherently keeps the path of transformation open. Therefore, the novel future-oriented approach, stemming from self-criticism and founded on the principle of multiplicity, has eliminated the old mindset of predestined outcomes, a perspective deemed futile by Öcalan (2013) himself. However, as argued by Berardi (2017, 1), possibilities are 'limited by the inscribed impossibilities of the present'. Consequently, KFM's new horizons can only arise from the constraints of the present, stemming from the entire set of conditions currently in place.

To better understand the nature of the KFM's homeland project within this paradigm shift, we may metaphorically consider this ideational prescription provided by Öcalan (2016, 204): 'Great

patriotism means reforestation and planting new trees'.[2] The Kurdish leader does not mean it as a metaphor, but as an actual political direction, which puts at the centre of the link between human existence (home) and the natural world (land) a deeper ecological awareness. Nonetheless, we can also deem the metaphor of seeds, which aptly illustrates the significance of the KFM's philosophical renewal. The eventual outcome, the grown tree, will not be a preconceived, perfectly designed entity but rather the culmination of the original seeds and their subsequent development. Thus, we can interpret the paradigm shift within the KFM as sowing the seeds of these growing trees. The paradigm shift brings in new horizons, liberating possible futures. However, it is crucial to underline that such openness is not only a time window, that is a rupture of a previous trajectory (Jongerden 2022). The new paradigm introduces multiplicity as a constitutive element of the homeland. Thus, the openness of liberated futures (plural, not singular) becomes a consistency in the form of possibility. How do these possible futures eventually transform into actualities?

… Prefiguration (Potency) …

The second element to be considered from Berardi's framework is potency, which brings a possibility into actuality. Therefore, I will explore the second manifestation of the future in the KFM homeland: the anticipation of the desired futures. Besides general considerations emerging from interviews with Kurdish politicians and activists about the imagined Kurdish homeland, I will rely on activist and scholar-activist accounts of the symbolic village of Jinwar. Emblematically, the village is an example of the role of potency in the here and now of the homeland-building, as it represents the materialization of some key ideological features of the KFM, such as ecology and women's liberation.

Prefiguration is the embodiment of a desired future; thus, it is the potency which expresses a (desired) future possibility in the present time. Above, I introduced Massumi's case of threat, in the context of anticipatory actions, in which an undesirable future event is actualized in the form of a codified threat causing a response, which turns the virtual into actual. According to Jeffrey and Dyson (2021, 645), anticipatory actions typically aim to preserve the present state 'against the deprecations of hypothesised dangerous futures'. This suggests that such actions often exhibit conservative characteristics. Anticipatory actions attempt to pre-empt the potency contained in future possibilities, even through a process of governmentalization, which reproduces a state of uncertainty (Griffiths and Joronen 2021). In contrast, oppositional prefigurative politics can be viewed as a particular form of anticipation where potency is harnessed in a more positive manner, not aimed to block a possible future but to make it flourish. Boggs (1977, 2) defined prefigurative politics as: 'The embodiment, within the ongoing political practice of a movement, of those forms of social relations, decision-making, culture, and human experience that represent the ultimate goal'. Instead of simply preventing an undesirable future, prefigurative actions aim to actualize a desired future by embodying its principles in the present through practices.

Prefigurative politics has its roots in the radical left milieu, particularly influenced by anarchism and feminism. However, in its broader sense, it does not exclude the possibility that right-wing groups could also engage in prefigurative politics (Raekstad and Saio Gradin 2020). Its central feature is the embodiment of desired futures. The anticipation of these desired futures is put into action through everyday tasks in the present time: 'Prefigurative politics aims to imagine, produce, and reproduce […] new ways of life' (Monticelli 2022, 24). Thus, prefiguration represents an ongoing transformation or, in other words, it frames the actualization of various possibilities.

Regarding the desired (future) Kurdistan, interviewees emphasize a set of keywords such as autonomy, democracy, nature, diversity, women, and plurality. At the core of the new paradigm, we can underscore the triad of women's liberation, ecology, and direct democracy. In all these domains, there is a fervent and revolutionary commitment to construct today what they envision for tomorrow. The KFM members acknowledge that they are in the midst of an ongoing, never-ending process, 'an unfinished novel, a poem, a song', as Öcalan described the PKK (Aydin and

Burç 2023, 5). Their concept of homeland extends beyond a sacred ancient land. While this element is indeed present, it is not the most decisive one. Instead, their idea of homeland can be encapsulated by the formula of land *and* political system. In other words, the homeland is the contingent result of the combination of physical traits and natural forces, on the one hand, and the socio-spatial relations and socio-material practices characterizing a specific political mode of collective organization, on the other hand. How people gather, make collective decisions, harvest, manage natural resources, produce, and consume is an integral part of the homeland, but it does not solely harken back to ancient origins; it is a reflection of today's potency.

In regions where the KFM is influential, particularly in Rojava (Western Kurdistan/Northeastern Syria) and Bakûr (Northern Kurdistan/Southeastern Turkey), we witness the implementation of grassroots democracy, the proliferation of women's organizations and workers' cooperatives throughout Kurdish society, and the promotion of an ecological mindset through effective environmental projects (Örmek 2012; TATORT Kurdistan 2013; Hunt 2019; Internationalist Commune 2020b; 2020a; Hammy and Miley 2022). Here, the politicality embedded in the future's openness manifests itself as the flow of energy which moulds a concrete contingent configuration of homeland. Future in the form of potency – the actualizing force – is already political, because it stems from the desire to develop through a specific direction, ceasing to be just a potentiality. The notion of desired future is crucial to politically link present and future temporalities. It generates hope to see today's problems solved tomorrow, taking two distinguished forms: the messianic hope and the critical hope (Jongerden 2020). In the first case, the solution is expected to come from above and is disentangled from social struggles, while in the second it is generated by social practices. The messianic hope 'pacifies, subjugates and procrastinates', while the critical hope is 'based on doing, questioning and learning, a hope grounded in social practice'(Jongerden 2020, 66).

Today, the face of the desired future homeland is perfectly epitomized by Jinwar, literally the 'place of women'. Jinwar is a village built exclusively by women for women and children. Men are allowed to enter only until sunset but ordinarily cannot permanently reside there. It is paradigmatic because it was founded entirely anew, adhering to the socio-political principles of social ecology and communalism, as articulated by Öcalan and the KFM. As expressed by an activist, it symbolizes the convergence of land and the political system: 'The construction of Jinwar signifies not only a process of physical realization but also an identity process' (Perra 2023, online). Here, we can appreciate the essential element of an identity-in-the-making, which is not pre-given, but is forged through the material process of building the village itself. Therefore, it stems from an inclination, but is without a pre-ordered end.

Perhaps the most significant event that embodies the essence of potency is the initial act of planting trees before constructing houses in Jinwar, thereby defining the foundational vision and ethos of the village and its inhabitants. Social ecology and women's liberation are indeed two of the three primary pillars of democratic confederalism, alongside the principle of direct democracy, which are all applied in everyday life within Jinwar from its inception. Interestingly, the act of tree planting directly aligns with the duty of great patriotism as indicated by the above-mentioned reference from Öcalan.

As explained by two activists back from Rojava, Jinwar was established and continues to evolve based on the principle of 'free life together', which instils in its residents a sense of being part of a unified whole rather than merely a collection of individuals separated from one another (Cioni and Patassini 2021). Nonetheless, while their lives are communal, they have private and welcoming homes in which to reside with their children. Decision-making is firmly rooted in empathic listening and dialogue. Significant importance is placed on the practice of *tekmîl*, which revolves around the capacity for self-reflection. According to Cioni and Patassini (2021, 142), it 'can be seen as a tool for stabilizing the social ecosystem' and 'is founded on the ethical principle of *Hevaltî*', which 'is a moral cornerstone of the "free life together", built on trust, a fundamental concept of the ecological society shared by the Kurdish freedom movement'.

Jinwar is of course only a place, and may not represent the entirety of Kurdistan, but it serves as a symbol of the embodiment of the desired future and the potency that brings such a desired future into actuality. It signifies both a new beginning and a continuous process of self-(re)construction. This future-oriented potency also reveals another important element: the (re)discovery of the past. Women in Jinwar, as Cioni and Patassini (2021, 140) write, 'seek in the distant past the roots of an ecological relationship with the natural world'. In the next section, I will delve into this rediscovery of a distant past, enabled by politically desired futures.

… Legitimization (Power)

The (re)discovery of the past leads us to the third element of Berardi's framework – power – which involves the selection and empowerment of a section of possibilities. I will illustrate how the KFM selects specific pasts to legitimate modern future-oriented organizational models. The selection of the past, based on desired futures, strengthens the political understanding of the sense of place, which is central to defining the homeland. Once again, after debating theoretically the role of desired futures in enabling and legitimating pasts, I will rely on key texts, especially from Öcalan, and activist and scholar-activist material, as well as interviews with members and supporters of the KFM.

Legitimization is the form that power assumes in using the past to support narratives of a future yet to come. The act of envisioning, creating, and perpetuating new ways of life also implies the construction of interpretative historical narratives. In essence, the desired future enables the development of narratives, including meta-narratives about history. Nationalist historiography has highlighted the existence of two dimensions in which the future plays a role in a national project (Coakley 2004). The first is the concept of the 'national mission', and the second pertains to identifying the ancestral national territory that needs to be targeted and (re)united. The relationship between the past and the future is not always linear and often depends on other various factors. In most cases, the past serves as a justification for present and future actions. However, in certain instances, regimes and specific political forces deliberately attempt to break away from the past, as seen during and after revolutions. This was evident in the cases of France, the United States of America, and the birth of the Soviet Union. In these situations, traditional regimes were considered inadequate to secure a promising future, leading revolutionary forces to attempt a radical break from the past. This future-oriented approach is exemplified by Thomas Jefferson's words: 'The dead have no rights … Our Creator made the world for the use of the living and not of the dead' (Coakley 2004, 542).

While in the case of revolutions, the predominance of the future is readily apparent due to the clear break between present and past, in other spatiotemporal narratives of homeland the future orientation remains silently present in the myth of origin. For instance, it surfaces in the rhetorical strategies employed by nationalist forces dedicated to reclaiming the ancient national territory. This mechanism is evident during the nation-state-building or territorial border revisitation phases when national elites mobilize a 'religion of the homeland' (Conti 2014) to pursue and stabilize national and territorial victories.

However, contrary to the objectives of nationalist rhetoric, this use of the past, partially employed to suit future-oriented political aspirations, eventually provincializes the past itself. Examining these rhetorical artefacts from a historical perspective highlights the disparity between the modern national project and the notion of a primordial homeland. Nevertheless, it is intriguing to underscore the process by which the past is transformed into a toolbox containing elements to be used in constructing the narrative of the present based on desired futures (Ventura 2022). This operation seeks to employ the past as a legitimization for the future, but the selection of past elements is filtered through the lens of the desired futures themselves. Rather than negating the existence of those selected past elements, this operation demonstrates their logical yet somewhat arbitrary subordination to the desires for the future. Perhaps, more than 'arbitrary', it is a *political*

subordination. As a consequence, we can appreciate two forms of the same legitimating process. On the one hand, we find the rewriting of the homeland narrative according to a nationalist and statist ordering. On the other hand, we find the resurfacing of democratic and non-hierarchical forms of life to adopt as an inspirational model. With this differentiation and the awareness that the KFM case falls into the second type, we can define the legitimating selection of the past as a manifestation of the influence of power.

In Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (1999, 92), Agathon states that 'nothing that is past is an object of choice'. The past represents crystallized actualities devoid of potential. Nevertheless, even though past events cannot be altered, a particular form of manipulation exists, involving the selection of elements to be emphasized and narrated while simultaneously rendering other facts invisible. For instance, the Kurds' rediscovery of their ancient past, its customs, beliefs, and symbols, such as the triangle associated with the Goddess in the personification of 'Life-giving Nature', is not false. However, it is not necessarily truer than its opposite or newer traditions that have evolved over time.

When women in Jinwar collectively decide to draw from certain traditions of the Neolithic Revolution as the foundation for developing an ecological society, they illuminate a specific line of continuity. It is a political choice, which turns the archaic into 'a trail marker of possible futures' (Tomba 2019, 26). Nevertheless, this trail is not necessarily historically linear or consistent. Instead, it often exists subterraneanly, surviving within some traditional customs, often hybridized or absorbed within more recent cultural paradigms. As recently underlined by some geographers, 'time is stratified, folded, navigated, and curated by those enacting liberatory possibilities for the future in the here and now' (Gergan et al. 2024, 4). The act of visualizing such temporal connections forms the basis for constructing a legitimating narrative. This narrative does not deny the existence of different pasts but, following Öcalan (2017a), posits the official civilization history alongside its democratic counterpart, understood as the unofficial people's solidarity history. Öcalan's civilizational historical dialectics between capitalist modernity (official) and democratic modernity (unofficial) draws on Bookchin's (1982) dialectics between the legacy of domination and the legacy of freedom. Writes Öcalan (2017a, 17–18) with the purpose of recalibrating the changing political identity of the Kurdish society and its strategic compass:

> Democratic modernity […] signifies the system of universal history that is outside of the forces of tyranny and exploitation. […] It develops its alternative through its properties of being open to different political formations, multicultural, closed to monopolism, ecological and feminist, creating an economic structure that is grounded in satisfying society's fundamental needs and is at the disposal of the community.

By projecting the past from the vantage point of the present, the latter becomes the destiny of the former, naturally and inevitably. Furthermore, the future becomes already dependent on such unilinear temporality. Bookchin (1982, 67) suggests that if our consciousness of the past is 'recast in a more open and intellectually unconstrained manner, it may well provide us with a vision that significantly alters our image of a liberated future'. However, the opposite also holds true: the desire for a liberated future may lead to the discovery of hidden pasts and the construction of new narrative temporal sequences. It is what Till (2012) underlined about the critical work on memory: reframing the future can unblock plural past temporalities.

This is particularly evident in the experiences of some German internationalist activists who travelled to Kurdistan to support the KFM's struggle. One of them explains that their 'Kurdish comrades always say: "Those who do not know their past cannot understand the present and therefore cannot shape the future"' (Internationalist Commune 2020c, online). As a result, they delved deeper into their history to comprehend their origins and how they became what they are today. They critically approached collective identities as a result of historical sedimentation, which, according to Gramsci (1999, 628), deposits in anyone 'an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory' and therefore '[t]he first thing to do is to make such an inventory'. They eventually rebuilt their identity as open and non-exclusive, connected to their native land and history. They revive as 'the latest link

in the struggle for land, equality, solidarity, and freedom that has run through the whole of history, including Europe' (Internationalist Commune 2020c, online). This story discloses the mechanism making the past resurface politically: the desire for a better future led them to seek a legitimating past.

In this context, we can observe the two major functions of power defined by Berardi: selection and invisibilization. Although Berardi is much more concerned about the power applied to the future possibilities, labelling it a sort of 'engendered determinism' (Berardi 2017, 8), the mechanism is also similarly applied to the past. The narrative is established, and the German activists as well as the Kurds of the KFM become something: not a possibility or potency; they become actualities. By defining what they are, they position themselves in history. Through the selection of the past, they connect the dots across time and provide a new non-linear narrative that explains and legitimates the present and the future. It is an 'activation-reconfiguration of past institutions and traditions in a conflict of the present' (Tomba 2022, 11). The words of the KFM-associated Dutch artist Jonas Staal (Interview, 2020) aptly encapsulate this idea:

> The Kurdish revolutionary movement combines traditional and futurological components in the present. On one hand, the Kurdish Women's Movement and Öcalan emphasize the historical and mythological existence of matriarchal confederate societies predating the rise of the Mesopotamian city-states, while simultaneously, they project a project of stateless world confederalism as an intersecting and overlapping series of autonomous zones and regions, over time replacing the statist capitalist order. Past, present, and future in this context are not separate in a linear sense but continue to work into one another.

Conclusion

In this article, I have incorporated the role of future temporality in the analysis of homeland, focusing on the case of the KFM's reconfiguration of Kurdistan. In doing so, I have filled a gap in the geographic literature on homeland, which has often favoured a historical and linear reading of the concept while paying little attention to the importance of its future dimension. In particular, the future politically charges the homeland project, even making the past instrumental to the future itself. Beginning with framing the future as an 'absent present', I then applied the theoretical tripartition provided by the Italian philosopher Franco Berardi on possibility, potency, and power. I demonstrated that the future is present in the KFM's configuration of Kurdistan in three specific ways. The first, associated with possibility, refers to the openness of the homeland. The homeland is therefore open to multiplicity, but also to not predetermined futures, and always welcomes the unexpected. The homeland cannot be closed, because it is in a state of perpetual becoming. There is no end to reach, not even utopian, but a continuous becoming following a political compass. This argument resonates with Massey's relational understanding of space as 'a bundle of trajectories' (Massey 2005, 119). Openness is the spatiotemporal content of the homeland, which guarantees the existence of the becoming and the formation of the homeland itself. The centrality of openness in shaping the KFM's configurations of the homeland anchors the sense of belonging to the state of becoming, working against a re-essentialization of the homeland.

The second way is connected to potency and is framed as the prefiguration of the homeland. The KFM directly applies the desired futures to the present activities which build up the homeland. The KFM's democratic confederal political system must be understood as the device that transforms the homeland according to the triad of women's liberation, social ecology, and direct democracy. Prefigurative politics consists of the embodiment of this desired future, corresponding to the energy released to turn possibilities into actualities. This argument is intimately political because it deals with collective aims, desires, and hopes. How the connection with the future is articulated modifies present actions, and vice versa. Prefiguration is the energy flowing through the homeland, which is a space with a meaning endlessly crafted by political will, aims, desires, and hopes.

The third, linked to the notion of power, refers to the selection of a legitimating past to build a coherent historical narrative, which can offer an interpretative lens and support for today's actions.

The past is an inventory of legitimating bases, waiting to be activated by desired futures. Legitimization is the form of homeland, which (re-)sews temporal trajectories to fabricate a historically coherent people's sense of place. Openness, prefiguration, and legitimization scan the rhythmic use of content, energy, and form in shaping the Kurdish homeland temporalities.

The inclusion of the category of future in the analysis of homeland has at least two important effects. On the one hand, it undermines the legitimization of exclusivist, primordial or, anyway, essentialized views of what a homeland is or is deemed it should be. The weight of the past is provincialized and reduced to the outcome of a deliberative act of selection and invisibilization. There is no necessary outcome from a mythical past, but only plural pasts to be activated according to desired futures. On the other hand, the inclusion of the future brings the importance of the becoming to the fore of the study of homeland, emphasizing a strong connection between belonging and becoming. While attachment mostly characterizes the concept of homeland, it is subjected to the political rearrangements of temporal trajectories and the inevitable state of becoming. It is a doing, a political process.

The KFM's democratic confederal homeland seeks to materialize spatiotemporal openness through the territorial recombination of forgotten legacies and liberated futures with place-based ever-changing multiplicities. Political legacies from different pasts and places resurge in the KFM's effort to rethink belonging and becoming, innovatively and openly. The grassroots democratic confederate system envisages an ever-evolving unbounded territorialization, in which peoples' histories find their materialization in the appropriation of autonomous spaces and practices.

As suggested by radical geographers Ferretti and Barrera de la Torre (2024), exploring non-Western revolutionary knowledge and practices is a way to question ontological assumptions and foster more inclusive futures. In this case, the focus on the future disclosed the very nature of the homeland's political construction, which can never be taken as an essentialized and static product of history. Even though the notion of homeland is often associated with past-oriented traditions, social hierarchies, and exclusivist forms of belonging, the KFM reminds us that it depends more on politically desired futures than on past legacies. Moreover, the pasts that are uncovered and mobilized serve to legitimate future-oriented political projects. Therefore, the KFM's key lesson on how we conceive of the homeland is that liberating futures can lead to the reactivation of pasts. Thus, by rejecting essentialized and static forms of homeland and including an open understanding of the future, 'we are freed to reenvision what kinds of homes and homelands we desire, and then to set about narrating and enacting them' (Kaiser 2009, 28). In conclusion, the sense of place constituting the concept of homeland is politically framed through plural temporalities and open to the becoming. This undermines essentialized notions of homeland while liberating the future to think about how to conceive of the homeland as a process of ongoing socio-spatial relations and socio-material practices, producing a sense of belonging.

Notes

1. The use of the term 'libertarian' refers to the anarchist and non-hierarchical socialist traditions, as understood in Neo-Latin languages, and not to the American meaning, which is associated with radical forms of capitalism
2. Author's translation from the Italian version of the book.

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