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## ***Globalizing Ghettos and Immigrant Entrepreneurship: How to Survive in a Spatial Ecosystem?<sup>1</sup>***

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This article aims to discuss the effects of neoliberalism and its socio-economic complications on ethnic entrepreneurship within a traditional ghetto environment. One aspect of this examination is the specific spatial issues and urban uneasiness derived from the loosening of spatial fabric. The other aspect is the strategies to exist, which are produced by the endeavour to protect spatiality. In this study, we took the German-Turkish entrepreneurs in Berlin/Kreuzberg, and their economic activities as ethnographic subjects. Our study shows that immigrant businesses have a tendency to develop four different strategies for holding on to space: *Ethnicization*, *Neutralization*, *Ethnic Mixing*, and *De-Ethnicization*. We have analysed these strategies in the context of the potential of the reproduction of the space and the struggle to regain the right to the city, and concluded that the demand for the right to the city cannot be limited to forming ethnic cultural anchors and simply taking pragmatic economic precautions.

**Keywords:** German-Turkish entrepreneurs, Berlin/Kreuzberg, ethnicization, ethnic mixing, de-ethnicization.

### **Introduction: New Urbanism vs. Traditional Ghetto**

It is possible to come across migrants or ethnic minorities able to participate in the labour market and ethnic regions that oversee low-wage, unskilled and undesirable jobs. We can say that the spatial concentration and co-habitation of the segments that oversee this kind of economic activities are a typical ecosystem of ethnic businesses. We can trace a certain academic interest towards ethnic businesses in Germany. Studies on ethnic businesses generally read ethnic economies as the strategy of migrants/ethnic minorities transforming their ethnic identities and cultural capital into economic capital within a closed-circuit activity network. However, the development that truly kept ethnic economies on the agenda was the notable increase in migrant entrepreneurial activities in the 1990s. This situation resulted in both the socio-economic perspectives of immigrant entrepreneurship and the post-industrial economic reconfiguration being added to the literature. For example, the structural analysis that reflected ‘social innovation’ (Hillmann 2009) or ‘political-institutional’ (Panayiotopoulos 2008), specific sectorial studies — especially gastronomy (Hillmann and Rudolph 1997, Göktürk 1999) — and cultural studies (Pecoud 2002, 2004) reflect this abundance as studies that are the focus point in the examination of ethnic and migrant economies. Nearly all studies on German-Turkish entrepreneurship conducted in different contexts underline the difficulty in taking ethnic businesses into account independently of spatial agglomeration (Harvey 2017: 170), which is a result of residential differentiation, and this causes immigrant economies to become inevitably a spatial matter (Ülker 2019).

At this stage, reactivating traditional anthropology in order to examine the postmodern environment and the socio-cultural and economic conditions that determine the formation of

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the post-industrial urban reality may open up an effective horizon. As Spyridakis et al. (2018: 20) pointed out, this is quite important, because ‘anthropological instruments seem now to be revisiting their “roots” equipped with the experience of their relation with non-Western cultures’, and this experience can now be useful for discussing the conditions of immigrants and ethnic minorities as non-Western cultures of the today’s post-industrial Western countries. Urban anthropology offers a suitable methodological perspective to carry out a holistic spatiotemporal analysis of the post-industrialization process in terms of the social reproduction of the space. Some important anthropological studies (Pardo 1996, 2009; Prato 2020; Spyridakis et al. 2018; Christian 2015; Rial and Grossi 2016; MacGaffey 1987) examine the urban experience around the interaction between the social and the spatial through inequalities caused by new urbanism and issues such as unemployment, informal economies, exclusion, uncertainty, eviction and morality, providing a deep insight to understand the struggles taking place in urban environments, the dynamic structure of power relations, and the vibrancy of the demand for the right to the city.

The effects of globalization on geographies, cities and spaces can be read through three main processes: De-industrialization, gentrification and class eviction (Harvey 2012). These processes, which began with a decrease in demand for big industrial pools and with a relocation of industry to the outskirts of cities, put new economies based on flexible production into a significant position in city centres. Considering that the meanings of concepts like ethnic niche or enclave economy, which were used to define the socio-economic and cultural entities in the traditional ghetto, are now disputed, we claim that while on one hand migrants are taking on new socio-economic roles under the conditions of the changing labour market, on the other they are also struggling to hold on to the city spaces, which have been their long-term traditional ecosystems. In this perspective, one aspect of our ethnographic examination is the urban uneasiness that is displayed in conjunction with the ambiguity that occurs due to the loosening of the spatial fabric. The other aspect are the strategies to exist, produced by the motivation to protect spatiality in the traditional ghetto. In this study, we took German–Turkish entrepreneurs located on the two main arteries (*Oranienstrasse and Adelberstrasse*) that form the urban heart of Kreuzberg, and their economic activities as ethnographic subjects. We conducted a field study over a year with 29 business owners or managers from various sectors, and formed a qualitative data set shaped by in-depth interviews, participant observation, and field notes including visual materials such as old photographs of the places in question and their current appearance. Based on a theoretical perspective which is rooted in urban anthropology, the question that we are endeavouring to answer is the role and significance of migrant entrepreneurship in urban struggles.

In accordance with the new developments in anthropological urban research, which takes into account cities in a global perspective (Prato and Pardo 2013: 97), we especially focus on certain spatial aspects of urban conflicts in a multi-ethnic city, which has been experiencing multi-cultural processes for a long time in the context of a post-industrial setting. In this sense, our methodological perspective can be described as a multi-sited ethnography, which makes an in-depth examination possible by focusing on interactions between micro- and macro-processes. As Prato and Pardo (2013: 96) pointed out, even when it focuses on a specific sample, urban site or a neighbourhood, anthropological research in urban settings has the ability

to adapt the traditional methodology to offer a broader empirical understanding. In this sense, although this research can be seen as limited to a target group, it has the potential of being holistic in analysis.

### **Urban Anxieties: How the circle tightens?**

The Kreuzberg district in Berlin can be shown to be one of the breeding grounds for the urban anxiety that had started to grow throughout the process of de-industrialization. The ever-increasing cracks in the living apparatus of ghetto or ghetto-like places, which were known as the havens of the working-class, the migrants and subcultures, caused serious social uneasiness and tension. The most noticeable development that took place at the start of the 1990s was the structural crisis that occurred in the productive industry. When the industry facilities abandoned the West in favour of East Germany, the unemployment rates in Kreuzberg soared above 20% (twice as high as in West Germany in general) for the first time (Statistik der Bundesagentur für Arbeit, *Arbeitslosigkeit im Zeitverlauf* 2009). The first instances of migrants looking in to small business opportunities coincide precisely with this period. According to the records of the Berlin Senate in 1995, non-German business ownership between the years of 1991 and 1993 showed an increase of over 40%. Of the businesses opened, restaurant-cafes, corner groceries, newspaper shops, and kiosks are the most prominent. Along with this, German–Turkish entrepreneurship, similar to other ethnic/migrant businesses, followed an inconsistent course from the very beginning. Between the years of 1992–2000, for every 10 Turkish-origin businesses that registered, 8 businesses deregistered (Hillmann 2009: 106). Additionally, the cut in funding for cultural initiatives aimed at young people and migrants, due to the strategy of the newly United Germany of transferring resources to the East, also bred prejudice and the neighbourhood gained a one-dimensional reputation as ‘dangerous’, a ‘drug slum’ and a ‘district of losers’ (Perl and Steffen 2015: 70).

The banking scandal of 2001 can be seen as the beginning of and the trigger for the neo-liberal urban policy that occurred in Berlin in the 2000s. After that, the Berlin Senate signed two critical decisions that limited the flow of public resources to the disadvantaged social segments. The first of which was the cancellation of all subsidies to buildings constructed after 1987. The second was the approval for sale of all public housing companies belonging to the state (Uffer 2014). These decisions had a huge impact on districts that bore the signs of traditional ghetto community. Places like Kreuzberg were transformed into not only an international and a global playground but also a playground full of new economic opportunities for middle-sized local investors. These new actors forced out previous commercial tenants such as printing presses, carpenters, metal workers, etc., as well as the emerging immigrant businesses; and start-up businesses and creative industries quickly replaced them (Senatsverwaltung für Wirtschaft, Technologie und Forschung – Hrsg. 2014).

On the first axis of our analysis, in order to draw an outline of the urban upheaval, which emerges in this historical background, we aim to classify the urban anxieties that are reflected in the shop windows of ethnic businesses. Therefore, at first, we will try to understand how migrant entrepreneurs experience and interpret the urban anxieties that emerge in their traditional living areas.

### **Attack on all Fronts: A Global Effect**

Despite the multi-national capital flow responsible for a sudden gentrification in Kreuzberg, small business owners tend to define this process as ‘Germanification’ rather than globalization. At the top of the list of things that small business owners see as direct threats is the sale or privatization of the buildings that house their businesses to corporations or larger local firms. A tangible result of this situation is rent increase and the cancellation of lease agreements. Furthermore, there is a feeling that the new owners of the buildings ‘avoid renting out shops to Turkish migrants’. The changing of owners also leads to a change in the management of the buildings and this causes Turkish tenants ‘to have less influence in management’. According to shop owners, ‘the new management “especially” don’t bother with building maintenance, and they attempt to ‘banish’ them by making them “give up”’. This feeling of being threatened is not only seen as a result of new ownership, it is also considered that local governments ‘support these policies, which are viewed as a “Germanification” strategy’. According to Turkish shop owners, ‘the council slows down rubbish collection on streets where there are a lot of Turkish shopkeepers, they do not serve these areas enough’. Moreover, ‘a lot of regulation is applied to Turkish establishments, more and heftier fines are given’.

Augmenting the ambiguity of urban boundaries in the district causes shocks to traditional lifestyles and a feeling of alienation then begins to spread. While Kreuzberg was once a migrant neighbourhood, a place with its own inner dynamics and lifestyle that was quiet, self-sufficient, and closed to outside forces, it unexpectedly and suddenly became the centre of attention. The fact that all eyes turned to the neighbourhood created difficulties for the Turkish migrants such as: ‘distrust, the loss of the feeling of belonging, urban confusion and uncertainty’. Shop owners tend to define this situation in terms of their own businesses as ‘instead of an opportunity, it’s more of a confusion that cannot be managed and constantly causes new social problems’. In this respect, a nostalgic point of view emerges, especially among business owners of the older generation who explain developments thus: ‘historical events like the fall of the wall and the union of the two Germanys were negative turning points’. Furthermore, they think that just like a magnet this cosmopolitan, complicated socio-cultural cosmos ‘constantly draws problematic things to itself’. The two fundamental factors that are the source of this anxiety are the ‘new residents’ and the ‘new refugees’. The new refugee inflow that occurred in the following years then complicated this issue further and accelerated the transition to new phases, which ‘negatively’ affected businesses in the neighbourhood. Shop owners believe that ‘with the new refugees, theft, mugging, sexual assault and drug related crimes have reached an all-time high’. The damage to shop windows during fights between different ethnic groups attempting to control the streets are possibly the most concrete source of anxiety. The situation creates an eerie image of social life in which the police are constantly on alert. The next stage of this is the decrease in human circulation around the shops and a noticeable decline in customer numbers. The point that shop owners especially emphasize is, ‘the decline of customers looks like “a decline in reputation” from the outside’. Most business owners, complain that ‘because women and children try to keep off the streets, Turkish families, who form the traditional social fabric of Kreuzberg, have stopped coming to shops. Shops operating in the food sector especially complain that ‘take away is ever increasing and this increases expenses’. Apart from this, ‘the anxiety created by students and tourists lead to developments in the neighbourhood in

the 2000s whereby many started to avoid Turkish businesses'. The environment that the new refugees have created appears even worse than the environment initially created by students and tourists. Most shop owners remember the new residents of the previous years and the tourists who were merely temporary residents as, "harmless" people who had parties and had fun and returned home without causing a scene'.

### **Migrancy Conditions: Local Effect**

Some of the conditions that we think historically reflect the migration experiences of the Turks living in Kreuzberg form the source of certain daily anxieties of Turkish businesses. The fact that the level of education among the migrants did not increase as much as might have been expected can be seen as the main factor in the lack of qualified personnel in the shops, which traditionally have been run as family businesses. While the few young migrants who succeeded in education moved into various careers, those who were not able to find employment joined family companies and small businesses. While Kreuzberg was transformed into a cosmopolitan cultural hub, in order to keep their social fabric intact (especially, to protect the family structure), Turkish migrants made an effort to keep their ties with their motherland strong. This resulted in traditional migrant families encouraging their children to marry people from Turkey. The new members that join the Turkish migrant society through marriage are unable to find employment due to the language barrier and a lack of education and either work in pre-existing family companies or the idea of opening new businesses for these people is raised. The situation in terms of ethnic businesses creates disadvantages in issues such as, 'adapting to developments and innovations in the sector, increasing/diversifying products or services', 'creativity and developing original ideas', 'applying new technologies to lines of business', 'relations with tourists', and 'the aesthetic and efficient use of the space'.

Because of living in a protected spatial environment, Turkish migrants have historically avoided researching the political and structural opportunities about the conditions of permanency. In the void formed by the elimination of the conditions that made Turkish migrants in Kreuzberg feel safe spatially, the insufficiencies in important issues such as 'claiming one's right, bureaucratic consciousness/communication with institutions, and political collaboration' have become visible. Shop keepers operating in the neighbourhood believe that they 'do not possess the "culture of struggle" or are not equipped to deal with rent increase, agreement cancellations, the drawing up of new agreements, adapting to the bureaucratic process and making complaints and submitting applications'. Shop owners state that, 'the time of "solving things with fists" and "working it out among ourselves" is ending, but an understanding of how to deal with things in the new era has not formed'.

The Turkish shops in Kreuzberg are traditionally part of the service industry in particular they form a large part of the restaurant sector, and the ethnic marketing approach that created spaces for local cultures and experiences added value to original Turkish 'authentic' products. For Berliners, who had never previously set foot in Kreuzberg because of its ghetto identity, and for tourists, students / artists / white-collar workers who moved to the neighbourhood later on, these 'ethnic / authentic' products offered a new consumption range that provided them with the opportunity to experience a culture they had not seen before. However, in this period, this caused the migrants to create a destructive competitive environment among themselves as



they limited themselves to ethnic marketing within their businesses, which they saw as the most practical way of participating in the labour market. Other migrants who saw successful business in Kreuzberg tried to copy this without questioning how the business was successful and caused the sector ‘to bloat’. It can be observed that one of the biggest issues Turkish shops in Kreuzberg encountered was this ‘mindless’ competition. This competition, which especially intensified in the restaurant sector, caused ‘price cuts and negative outcomes such as a drop in product quality’. This also increased the power of certain monopolies within the restaurant sector and made it harder for small businesses to survive and made the conditions of entering the market more difficult. It could be said for businesses that are in ethnic competition today that they are in a vicious cycle of ‘bankruptcy—new sector investment’. However, ‘transitions between sectors or closing down and then opening up a new shop is not as easy as people think’. Thus, the frequent bankruptcy or closing down of shops has created a bad reputation for Turkish shop keeping. This situation causes banks to view Turkish investments with ‘prejudice’, and as Pardo (2009: 106) points out, throughout a serious number of defects such as ‘overpriced banking, bureaucratic complication, inefficiency, and arbitrary procedural demands’, credit is made unavailable to entrepreneurs. This is one of the most important formal instruments of accessing capital. Turkish shop owners state that ‘they experience difficulties in finding the needed financial support to make new investments or expand their investment and that banks “generally refrained” from giving them a loan’. Furthermore, people think of money-making sectors with high-profit margins as, ‘Turkish businesses “devalue”, “trivialize” or “destroy” the “local/authentic” products or services it traditionally puts on the market’. One of the most obvious examples of this is the fact that most of the traditional Turkish coffeehouses have been turned into ‘betting agencies’. The quick transformation of Turkish shops that sold local products into Spatkaufs or Kiosks is another example of this.

### **Re—Production of the Space: Hold on to the Ghetto**

Considering these anxieties, the assumption that the social production of the space has disappeared, that in the face of the aggressive interventions of global capital the traditional urban fabric has been colonized and that the heart of the ghetto is breaking-up is a well-known explanation and in many aspects is not out of place. However, as Lefebvre (2000: 75) underlines, we might also consider ‘the existence of *irreducibles*, contradictions and objections that intervene and hinder the closing of the circuit, that split the structure’. With its rather controversial and complex nature, the conceptualization of Lefebvre’s (2015) ‘right to the city’ is not actually about the ‘existing city (Purcell 2014: 150) It is based on an alternative and revolutionary approach that implies to a future city. Therefore, it is rather difficult to fit the ‘right to the city’ into a political or legal framework. As Huchzermeyer (2017: 5) points out; ‘The urban in Lefebvre’s work is at the core of society, and not a sectoral concern; it is also at the core of a possible future that he envisions’. The critical points that determine his envisagement are concepts like ‘collective creative work’, ‘use value of urban space’, ‘appropriation’, ‘heterogeneity’, and ‘complexity’. Thus, the realization of this envisagement is dependent more on the effectiveness and spread of self-management than the presence of the state or market (Huchzermeyer 2017).

In his seminal anthropological research, Pardo (1996), carried the *popolino*'s self-management in a specific urban environment to a broader understanding; in his work, the right to the city was undergirded by the social conditions of managing existence in the complex dynamics of daily life. The originality of Pardo's approach was the in-depth investigation of the 'way in which people negotiate, over time, the terms — formally absolute, but in fact ambiguous and flexible — of morality and of the bureaucratic role of the market and civil society' (Pardo 1996: 4). Thus, he added to urban anthropology an effective research focus for the examination of culture, organization, and power: 'the relationship between individual agency and "the system"' (Pardo 1996: 4). This means that no matter how destructive the intervention is, there is always room for a human subjectivity, style or strategy within the cycle of daily life, which capital cannot absolutely dominate. From this perspective, Holloway (2010) emphasizes the imperfection of the order and the possibility to create cracks in the system. As he further states, instead of acting in accordance to the rules of capital or the state, we should make our own activities more just and more visible. He writes, 'perhaps the most obvious way of thinking of cracks is in spatial terms' (2010: 27). Here, the fundamental question is how durable these cracks are against being plastered up and filled in by the system. At this point, the method and style of the efforts to prevent the destruction of the spatial ecosystem by immigrant entrepreneurship becomes a topic of discussion. Our study shows that shops have a tendency to develop four different strategies for holding on to the space. We will interpret these strategies in the context of the potential of the reproduction of the space and the struggle to regain the right to the city, either independently from the system, or by negotiating with it.

### **Ethnicization**

The shops that we studied under the ethnicization category could be read as representations in the economic sphere of the traditional ethnic cultural structures that the Turkish migrant population in Kreuzberg reproduced during the history of migration. These shops that operate in the ethnic niche shaped by closed societal relations continue to operate as barbers, florists, jewellers, bookshops, fishmongers and traditional *doner kebab* shops. The most noticeable characteristic of these shops is that, as the oldest businesses in Kreuzberg, they were established just before or right after the small business boom of the 1990s. Taking a look at the interior design of these shops, which reflect the components of ethnic identity and traditional migrant life-styles, one notices the elements of the shop-keeping aesthetics of small cities or towns in Anatolia or neighbourhoods on the fringes of big cities. In these shops, instead of the 'fancy', 'cool' or 'stylish' elements, components that reflect traditional tastes are more visible. The walls are generally decorated with images of Istanbul, the Bosphorus, hometowns, the countryside, popular icons or political figures (Atatürk, Party Leaders, and so on) or ethnic decorations. Traditional music is played in these shops or satellite Turkish TV is watched.

The economic activities of these shops are shaped according to the nature of the ethnic lifestyle of the neighbourhood and of consumption habits. For example, most of the products for sale have been brought directly from Turkey. In traditional Turkish grocery stores, white cheese, olives, butter, tomato paste, yoghurt and other traditional products dominate. The products of the numerous fishmongers in the neighbourhood also reflect ethnic tastes: haddock, Mediterranean mackerel, anchovies, sardines. The only Turkish book seller, despite low sales,

is the most concrete tie between the migrants and Turkish literature. This shop owner also has a kiosk and it is easy to see that the shop ‘survived thanks to the earnings of the kiosk in the opposite corner of the bookshop’.

Apart from this, the photo-video shops that offer wedding filming services record representations of the most distinctive characteristics of traditional Turkish weddings. The shop owners emphasize that they ‘are offering a service to a pool of cultural experience inspired by trends in Turkey, as a result (they) always try something new when filming’. For example, ‘after drone footage started to be used in wedding films in Turkey’, it can be seen that ‘there was an increase in demand for this in Kreuzberg too’. These businesses that operate in ethnic niches express the difficulties they have in ‘keeping up with the daily cultural shifts that have accelerated due to the increase in communications’. The sectors this is reflected in are the barber shops, dress shops and tailors. The clothing and physical styles that are reflected by popular representations in Turkish TV series ‘directly affect these shops product and service range’. For example, a barber shop owner states that ‘the haircuts of customers of the first-generation never change but the hairstyles that the young people demand always change’. Especially with social media effect, shop owners complain that ‘the youth is losing its connection to ethnic culture’ and emphasize that ‘traditional products and services do not appeal to the new generation in the neighbourhood’.

The customers of the small businesses that operate in the ethnic niche are generally first- and second-generation Turkish migrants. These shops are directly dependent on loyal customers who faithfully maintain a traditional lifestyle. For example, in the ever-decreasing traditional Turkish coffeehouses only a few elderly (most are retired) male customers can be seen. For members of the third and fourth generation, ties to ethnic businesses only exist indirectly through their parents. For the Germans, tourists and the few other migrants that form the cosmopolitan structure of the neighbourhood, these shops only possess an authentic appeal.

Traditional shops are the most fragile in the face of the neighbourhood’s rapidly changing demographic structure and cultural atmosphere. Mostly these shops shut down or are assigned to more profitable sectors for reasons such as the decrease, due to death or temporarily moving away, of first-generation of migrants who are their true customers, estrangement from the neighbourhood’s new social and cultural fabric, and rent increases. Besides simply having favourable rental agreements and/or the capacity to continue economic activities, the few remaining shops are able to survive through the efforts of owners who believe that ‘it is possible to hold on to the space only by continuing traditional relationships’. Because traditional shop owners have sufficient information regarding the past and have a long-established migration experience, they function as a kind of opinion leader. This makes it easier for the few small businesses in the ethnic niche to participate in the urban struggle. It was observed that there was strong interaction between these shops and NGO’s like *Kotti&Co*, which aims to counter the negative conditions created by gentrification, rent increases, drug use and the tourist boom. Interaction between the small businesses in the neighbourhood is strong and the owners of these businesses appear to be more willing to participate in organized reactions than other businesses. The network of collaboration among ethnic businesses leaves distinct marks in the neighbourhood. Large posters and banners hanging in front of shops shut down because of evictions in the last few years are noticeable. Traditional shops make an effort to protect the



cultural status quo by highlighting their migrant identity. Operating as an ethnic anchor and claiming a stake in the traditional space by leaning on this status quo could be read as the fundamental strategy of these shops.

### **Neutralization**

The fundamental characteristic of the shops we categorized under the title neutralization is that they do not have any characteristic peculiar to the neighbourhood. Their ethnic quality cannot be discerned at first and they have no noticeable difference to similar places that have spread all over the city. These shops operate as kiosks, *spätekaufs*, various fast-food shops, betting agencies and internet cafes that are randomly scattered throughout the neighbourhood's streets and which usually change hands, names and functions. Nearly all of the internet cafes were telecommunications shops 15–20 years ago, offering international phone calling services. These shops have large inner spaces, entrances designed as a *spätekaufs* as was the case in the past, and separate cabins in the back houses. The inner spaces of these shops are of a standard structure that reflect each one's fundamental function as if they reproduce an image of the 'neutral city' (Sennett 2013: 60-93). For example, a kiosk does not have the ability to differentiate itself from other kiosks in terms of placement of shelves, product range, positioning of the counter, and so on.

Because the characteristics of these shops are not based on any area of expertise. Most of their owners are working class who, prior to the small business boom, generally worked in the industry sector and in time either retired or lost their job. The cycle during this period is generally: the person who loses their job first tries their luck in different jobs, after a few job changes decides to open up their own business. Either through family savings or a bank loan, a small business is formed. This business is established by looking at the examples on the market and then investing in whatever sector that looks like bringing in the most profit. In time, due to the lack of expertise and experience, the business may possibly enter a crisis. In this case, either it goes bankrupt or again a transition to another sector is made. This cycle makes shopkeepers who used to have stable blue-collar jobs anxious. These shopkeepers often emphasize that, 'they miss the state of things before the wall came down'. The idea that 'the union of the two Germanys turned the lives of migrant workers and the general direction of society upside-down' is prevalent. They also display more of a pragmatic approach to work. These shops are generally designed as family businesses. In these shops, which are either open 24 hours or until late, family members run the business in shifts. When one takes a look at the motivation to run these shops, attitudes like 'providing the minimum conditions to survive in the neighbourhood', 'providing employment to the young members of the family', 'continuing economic independence' and 'leaving the existing business for the sake of a more profitable one' come to the fore.

Apart from the residents of the neighbourhood, the potential customers of the neutral businesses are those who pass by the neighbourhood and those that join the general circulation through the neighbourhood. The tourist flow as the neighbourhood's popularity increased in the 2000s provided economic advantages for the *spätekaufs* especially. In the summer months these shops became the stomping grounds for those who wanted to organize outdoor parties along the *Spree*. These places that sold cheap drinks drew the attention of students, the

bohemian residents of the neighbourhood and tourists and allowed migrant shop owners to make money easily. Fast-food shops that served *doner kebab*, Turkish meatballs, and *lahmacun* (Turkish pizza) also benefitted from this circulation. Kiosks spread as small businesses that offered a ‘fast food, on foot’ service to residents from all segments. Betting agencies can be seen as the evolved form of the old traditional Turkish coffeehouses and their function has changed greatly. While traditional coffeehouses were the socializing spots for retired migrants or workers, betting agencies became the meeting point for unemployed migrants from different ethnicities.

These neutral shops do not reflect the styles formed by migrant culture or the distinctive characteristics of the neighbourhood. As a characterless business branch, it represents the attempts of migrants to find answers to ever-increasing economic issues. Quick transitions among sectors can happen due to lack of commercial awareness. Because they have a pragmatic economic motivation, competition among shopkeepers is intense. This weakens the ties between the owners of neutral shops and dampens the desire to join the spatial struggle. Business owners view one another as a danger without ever considering their ethnic roots or common migrant backgrounds. And this creates an atmosphere that makes collaboration difficult and weakens both spatial awareness and a sense of community.

### **Ethnic Mixing**

The shops that come under ethnic mix category or re-ethnicization are the ‘glocal’ shops that reflect a certain migrant symbolism and are based on a traditional cultural atmosphere but have installed components that are compatible with the ‘World City Berlin’ image. These shops closely follow the demographic and cultural changes that peaked in Kreuzberg in the 2000s and, by adjusting their ethnic identity according to the prevalent diverse lifestyles and consumption habits, they produce services and engage in hybrid economic activities. In principle, these businesses are situated within the product and service network of traditional businesses which operate in the ethnic niche; however, they differ from them in terms of their spatial features, sales, service and marketing strategies and customers. The most well-known of these businesses is a restaurant chain that has spread to other neighbourhoods but initially drew attention with its shops lining *Adelbertstrasse*. This chain creates a fusion that merges traditional Turkish dishes like *doner* and *kebab* with dishes from world cuisine. Again, in Berlin, a restaurant offering appetizers that has branches in different neighbourhoods is one of the businesses that can look at in this category. *Simit* (Turkish circular bread with sesame seeds) breakfast venues, which have become fashionable over the last 10 years, are also a good example of ethnic mix shops. The main product of these shops is the Turkish staple food *simit*; however, these places have created an appealing mix by adding the ethnic cultural symbolic context of *simit* to brunch and a more Western breakfast tradition. Another shop that operates as a ‘nuts’ café is among the most popular places in the neighbourhood. This business, which was established with EU funding, has added another dimension to traditional nut consumption. When looked at in terms of traditional Turkish eating and drinking habits, nuts are generally bought from the shop in packets and eaten at home or on picnics, but this business has transformed it into a product that is eaten at the café with tea, coffee or cold drinks. During the summer it is possible to see people sitting at tables in front of the establishment, located on

*Oranienstrasse*, eating nuts in baskets (especially sunflower seeds) and chatting. Thus, this traditional socialization formed around nuts has spread into the neighbourhoods expanding cultural atmosphere. Even though their numbers are low, there are music halls that transform into party venues by hosting traditional ghetto rappers or local Turkish, Arab, African, and Latin bands. To these shops we can add fast-food shops that serve waffles with Turkish jams, marmalades or local honey or serve *doner kebab* but, by combining it with vegan culture, appeal to the ‘healthy’ food and drink environment that is hip in Berlin.

Design is an important component of these businesses’ spatial set up. The general structure is based on a focus on ethnic aesthetic elements. The main purpose of this ‘over the top’ in your face design is to weave ethnic culture into the atmosphere of the shop as an authentic component of presentation. The decorative elements, which have been shaped by cultural habits and perspectives, cannot be produced naturally; they are designed artificially. In other words, the design elements are not innate to the shops, on the contrary, they have been especially selected to emphasize which ethnic cultural area the shop belongs to. The shop owners say that the choices made about the design and presentation were made ‘deliberately’. The reasons provided are: ‘ethnic products or symbols are especially alluring to tourists’; ‘these symbols are important to not let the Turkish ethnic identity in Berlin be forgotten’; ‘because the other ethnic businesses in Berlin, especially in the service sector, have similar tendencies, in terms of competition, ethnic emphasis is inevitable’.

The main feature of these businesses is that they follow an ambitious and competitive path within Berlin’s multi-cultural structure. The main aim here is to enter fully the service sector, which is constantly growing in the city. Among shop owners there are those that think, ‘the businesses who operate in the ethnic niche are doomed to fail if they fail to comprehend the importance of getting in touch with elements that constitute Berlin’s brand value’. These businesses are seen as ‘cultural projects’ from certain angles. Different motivations like ‘strengthening Turkish cuisine’, ‘branding the eating and drinking habits and the products peculiar to Turkey’, and ‘introducing this culture to as many customers as possible’ hold an important place among business strategies. Some of these businesses view those public organizations and structures that promote multiculturalism and support local cultures as their own shareholders. Political structures that invest in the ‘zeitgeist’, NGOs, and private sector investors play a certain role in the economic and industry-based development of these businesses. Furthermore, among the shop owners who operate in the ‘ethnic mix’ the idea that ‘among the other world cuisines or ethnic cultural service sectors, Turkish businesses are at a disadvantage’ is prevalent. One of the most important reasons for this is said to be, ‘because the Turks in Germany come from a working-class background, they have not been able to acquire enough experience and qualifications in the running of a business’. ‘The fact that Turkey does not support Turkish businesses in Germany enough’ is also mentioned. It needs to be pointed out that the opinions put forward to explain this disadvantage are ‘the prejudices against Muslims, especially Turks’.

### **De-Ethnicization**

The Turkish businesses we took a look at under the category of de-ethnicization could be evaluated as shops that repeat the symbols that shape the ‘World City Berlin’ brand, that try to

follow global cultural trends and that do their best to make their ethnic identity invisible. It can be said that the Turkish-origin businesses in Berlin that adopt the de-ethnicization strategy, have spread out into a wide variety within the service sector network. Because these shops do not need any ethnic emphasis, they can appear at times as an Italian restaurant and at other times as an Asian one. In Kreuzberg, the de-ethnicized Turkish businesses cafes, clubs, and bars are most prominent. In terms of their interior design they have a typical Berliner/Western ambiance, and a 'retro' style is immediately noticeable inside. In terms of design, another symptom that de-ethnicization brings to the fore is that of assuming another ethnicity. We encounter this situation in businesses that have invested in different world cuisines. For example, in an Italian restaurant one will come across an interior design that has assumed the identity of a traditional Italian restaurant: gingham tablecloths, decorative elements that reflect Italian culture on the wall and wine barrels are prominent. It is not well-received when Turkish waiters or chefs working in these shops speak Turkish. As a customer, if you understand that the waiter is Turkish and want to order in Turkish, the waiter communicates in whispers so that the other customers do not understand that he is speaking in Turkish.

It would be nearly impossible for someone looking from the outside to understand which popular clubs and bars in Kreuzberg were Turkish. Some Turkish shop owners are not happy with 'Turkish-origins visiting their bars'. Some of them believe that 'places that are visited by people who are obviously migrants lose their popularity after a while'. While others emphasize that 'it is not a problem if it is common knowledge that the place is run by a Turk, however, it is important that there is a cosmopolitan crowd that shows diversity'.

The owners of these businesses are mostly new-generation German-Turks. As a segment of the migrant population that is adept at adaptation, it has been able to establish transcultural ties, and has a high level of education and cultural capital, though this group remains a minority in economic terms, it runs a more successful ethnic business. Among these shop owners are also members of the new migrant segment, which has entered the literature as 'alternative diaspora' in the last few years. Some of the educated and wealthy migrants, made up of students, academicians, and artists who have come to Germany by using the increasing political and social tensions in Turkey as an excuse become a part of ethnic business circle through the 'de-ethnicization' strategy by investing in the service industry.

The element that ties these businesses to the cosmopolitan cultural atmosphere and identity fabrication in Berlin is the experience economy that forms the basis of today's consumption habits. However, these shops do not attribute the experience to ethnic culture as in the previous category but to the fluid and dynamic variables of global culture. These spaces, just like most similar places in Berlin, tend to form a 'story' that sets them apart from others. A Turkish business owner, who for years had tried various business ventures, stated that 'after many failed attempts, (he) understood that being successful in Berlin was down to creating a concept'. Finally, by transforming his cafe 'into the hub of a traditional theatre festival he had created a permanent Berliner place'. The specialty of one other Turkish business in Kreuzberg is that it became popular when various accessories bought from the flea market entered into circulation among customers. Customers visiting the place can take these objects with them when they leave and as a result the objects in the place constantly change. Spaces with no ethnicity have a customer profile that reflects Kreuzberg's changing demographic structure,

which is comprised of tourists and Berliners from outside of Kreuzberg who regularly take part in the Berlin nightlife.

### **Concluding Notes and a Brief Discussion on Groggy Ghetto Economies**

Kreuzberg, once a traditional suburban ghetto for the migrants and subculture groups in West Berlin, later an inner-city district with the fall of the wall, has been the target of ‘Urban Renaissance’ movements organized by local administrations since the 1990s in many European countries. Prato’s (2020) ethnographic examination of the Albanian capital, Tirana, puts an illuminative perspective on the kind of strategies urban planners have followed in order to change the spatial characteristics of the European cities including Berlin. As Prato points out in her comparative analysis of migrations in today’s Europe, just like the Berlin Senate, Albanian governments, too, have implemented urban plans for the city centre that ‘satisfy what local administrators perceive to be the needs of the foreign residents and [...] that would hopefully attract new investors and rich immigrants’ (2020: 41). A natural result of this process was the increase in the value of properties in city centres like Kreuzberg and the acceleration of gentrification. For example, in the second half of the 2000s, apart from ‘foreign residents and rich visitors’, when party crowds also became one of the important actors of Kreuzberg’s rapidly changing urban reality, the neighbourhood’s traditional social fabric and cultural structure experienced intense turbulence. Thus, especially for immigrants in Kreuzberg, the risk of eviction and displacement became the biggest fear (Holm 2014). This can be seen as a direct spatial intervention into this traditional immigrant worker neighbourhood — the production spaces such as old fashion artisan ateliers and traditional ethnic shops, and as the elaborator of economic, social, and cultural conditions of class evacuation. This makes it inevitable to take into account the survival and development opportunities of ethnic economies in terms of the transformation of the space and spatial struggle.

We can argue that the new economical complications of the post-industrialization process added new dimensions to the traditional exclusion of long-term immigrants in Kreuzberg. In our case, we can read the endeavour to create economic anchors in order to hold on to the ghetto as one of the key instruments of ongoing but mostly failed integration processes of the ‘almost half native residents’ in the district. Insisting on operating inside the formal sectors of the economy, German-Turkish entrepreneurs are actually looking for something more valuable than material interest. They are desperately seeking the equal conditions of completion, and their roles in the social reproduction of the space. As Pardo (2009: 118) underlines, this search is strongly related with the outcomes of the ongoing debates ‘both at official level and at grassroots level’ in the host society on ‘citizenship’, on ‘redefinition of the democratic process’, and on dualisms such as ‘integration and exclusion’, ‘tolerance and toleration’. So, their struggle has an existential dimension which perpetually push the conditions of equal citizenship, to the extent that it is economic. That is why we are linking this search to ‘the right to the city’ concept, and describing spatial struggle as a right.

David Harvey (2012) examines the concept of the ‘right to the city’, and opens it up to a discussion around the revolutionary possibilities in the urban process directed by the ‘neoliberal ethic of intense possessive individualism’. He states, ‘how we view the world and define (these) possibilities depends on which side of the tracks we are on and on what kinds of consumerism



we have access to' (2012: 15). In traditional ghettos like Kreuzberg, it is easy to observe such a fragmentation derived from the 'new urbanism' processes. In fact, these places are untouched and defenceless hubs that offer various possibilities to cultural industries, the service sector, the tourism industry, and mostly to landlords and contractors. On the other hand, they are specific production ecosystems where one can observe how the demand for the right to city became topical. In this study, we have tried to clarify 'on which side of the tracks' migrant entrepreneurs are on, and what kinds of consumerism they propose in order to insist on spatial demands.

The strategies that we specified in this study show that economic activities are an anchor to perpetuate spatial existence. Since urban space is unavoidably a production centre, it is important to be able to determine the conditions of the space's social production and to have a say in the economic activities of any given place. Thus, production strategies utilized to gain a position of favour within the community in terms of production relationships and also to perpetuate economic activities in the traditional ghetto, which is now under threat, are meaningful. The effort to perpetuate, in various ways, the existence of ethnic businesses that are scattered around Kreuzberg's streets could be read as an urban struggle, especially in terms of the insistence in holding on to the space. However, as long as the strategies of spatial positioning remain pragmatic, unorganized/scattered and only occasional, it will continue to lose ground to the interference of outside actors trying to regulate or colonize the space and transform it. As the conditions of competition change, the chance of survival and the ability to have a say in the space may decrease. This shows us that the demand for the right to the city will not be limited to forming ethnic cultural anchors and taking pragmatic economic precautions. In order to protect the memory of the space by determining the conditions of production, it is necessary to insist on integration while rejecting every kind of exclusion and assimilation attempt, and to learn to use more inclusive political struggle practices that will strengthen the participant adaptation and collaboration networks, the weaknesses of which we clearly identified during our study.

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