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INTRO

Urbanization and multicultural neighborhoods are increasingly under the spotlight. As highly diverse areas, multicultural neighborhoods have to accommodate different cultures, sometimes coming together randomly and consisting almost exclusively of lower-income families and those with a need for cheaper accommodation. This paper investigates the intersection between the urban development of multicultural neighborhoods and the social interactions of migrants residing in them

Community support in multicultural neighborhoods: the case of Tarlabaşı

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A multicultural neighborhood is defined as an area(s) in an urban space or city where the majority of residents are from countries other than the one in which they reside.¹ Multicultural neighborhoods are partly the results of international migration, but are also of internal migration and refugee flows. Oftentimes, they are cheaper areas of cities with lower accommodation prices and in some cases suffer from media misrepresentation and undervaluation, compared to the rest of the city.

It is a common belief that multicultural neighborhoods are the results of recent migration flows, but their history dates back at least to Roman times. When Rome was a small city, Ancus Marcius, the legendary fourth king of Rome, encouraged the settlement of residents from conquered areas to boost the population. These people were placed on one of the seven hills of the city, the Aventine, immediately outside the walls of the inner city. These populations were not necessarily from areas outside Europe but were often residents of the wider region that now hosts the city of Rome, Lazio. Despite the proximity, the cultures, religions and beliefs of the new Roman residents were different from those of the previous citizens of the capital and this led to the construction of many edifices that did not represent local religions, making the Aventine one of the world's first multicultural neighborhoods.²

People living in the Aventine area were largely ignored by the inner city of Rome and often lived in poverty, with very few services dedicated to them. The only reason they had been invited to the city was to increase the number of residents of the city of Rome, and so they were ignored in urban planning and suffered from prejudicial attitudes.

PULLOUT

Many present-day multicultural neighborhoods are afflicted by and associated with poverty, inequality and high crime rates

Disappointingly, many present-day multicultural neighborhoods are afflicted by and associated with poverty, inequality and high crime rates. However, field research conducted between 2010 and 2014 in Europe and the US revealed that in some instances, multicultural neighborhoods have further common characteristics. In Europe, the areas investigated were Butetown in Cardiff (UK), Grønland in Oslo (Norway), San Salvario in Turin (Italy) and Tarlabaşı in İstanbul. All of these multicultural neighborhoods are inhabited by ethnic minorities and foreigners with lower incomes; all of them are positioned very close to the central and tourist friendly spots of the city; and all cases have a constantly negative representation in the media and suffer from urban isolation. These neighborhoods cannot be considered ghettos because no government or social institution has forced the residents to live in a specific place; rather, the urban planning of each city has unintentionally

forced people from different countries to live in the same area. Accordingly, these neighborhoods are sometimes referred to as “ethnic enclaves,” considered an upgraded and positive version of the “ghetto.” Such areas are often thought to be as dangerous and home to criminal activity, and the active communities inside them are regularly left out of the administrative conversation.

PULLOUT

Signs of the impact of urban development imposed without consulting the affected community can be found in the neighborhoods of Tarlabaşı in İstanbul

Examples of how this has negatively affected communities can be found both in Europe and the US (where a distinction is made between “ghettos,” “ethnic enclaves” and “segregated communities”). Signs of the impact of urban development imposed without consulting the affected community can be found in the neighborhoods of Tarlabaşı in İstanbul, Butetown in Cardiff and Harlem in New York. These three neighborhoods, situated in very different areas of the world, have different characteristics and are affected by different economies and policies, yet at the same time experience remarkably similar circumstances.

Butetown has historically been the multicultural area of Cardiff, the capital of Wales. Since 1800, sailors arriving at Cardiff harbor would stop in Butetown, often for a brief period, but sometimes for life. The area was one of the poorest of the city not only in terms of income and rent but also for services. It was the Marquess of Bute who first redeveloped the neighborhood and transformed it into a more functional space, leading to a reduced crime rate. Currently, the neighborhood is inhabited by first- and second-generation migrants from all over the world, such as Palestine, China, Somalia, Sudan and the West Indies. Although centuries have passed since it developed a reputation for crime, Butetown is still considered a dangerous place by residents of other areas of Cardiff.³ However, Butetown has a vibrant community that organizes festivals, carnivals and theatrical, which favor inclusion.

Harlem in New York is historically an African-American area that has suffered in terms of rising rent prices, seemingly since former US President Bill Clinton decided open the official office of his Clinton Foundation in Harlem in 2001 -- in only two years, the price of rents near the office doubled and many wealthier people moved into the area, attracted by government incentives and the central location of the neighborhood. Many previous residents were subsequently forced to move to the Bronx.⁴

Tarlabaşı, a multicultural neighborhood of İstanbul, is just 300 meters from İstiklal Street, the main touristic street in İstanbul. It is now often described as a *varoş* or “slum,” and has a reputation as an area with a high crime rate. The history of Tarlabaşı dates back to 1535, when non-Muslim diplomats settled in the area. Since then, the neighborhood was traditionally the home of non-Muslim residents, especially Greeks and Armenians. They were often craftsmen who served the wealthy diplomats in İstiklal Street, which was called Cadde-i Kebir during the Ottoman period. Following the imposition of a heavy wealth tax on non-Muslims in 1942, many craftsman who lived in Tarlabaşı were forced to go to jail or lost their income. It was not until the 1950s and 1960s that the area became populated with poorer Turks and Kurdish and Roma migrant workers, and eventually with migrants from foreign countries. In Tarlabaşı, new migrants have often been minor shopkeepers.

PULLOUT

Tarlabaşı is currently the run-down home of West African migrants, Kurds, Syrians and Turks. In

Tarlabaşı is currently the run-down home of West African migrants, Kurds, Syrians and Turks. In the last 30 years it has been redeveloped more than once. The latest redevelopment plan was announced in 2006 and advertised again during the 2014 local elections. Some of the residents of Tarlabaşı have protested recently against the government's plan to redevelop the neighborhood. One of the associations opposed to the redevelopment plan is the Property Owners and Social Development and Tenant Aid Association of Tarlabaşı, which received a letter from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2010 sharing their concern about the renewal project for Tarlabaşı:

For your information, the Tarlabasi district is not located within the World heritage property of 'Historical Area of Istanbul'. However, we are well aware of Law 5366 for the Preservation by Renovation and Utilization by Revitalization of Deteriorated Immovable Historical and Cultural Properties", which has been of concern for the World Heritage Committee and therefore discussed at its 32nd, 33rd, and 34th sessions, as well as by the recent reactive monitoring missions to Istanbul, requested by this Committee. We therefore share your concern on the possible adverse impacts of this law on the conversation of historic heritage. Therefore, we are transferring your letter to the relevant national authorities, in particular to the Permanent Delegation of Turkey of UNESCO, for their consideration as well as to the Advisory Body of the World Heritage Committee, ICOMOS International, for information.⁵

The current redevelopment plan includes the relocation of the residents of Tarlabaşı to other areas of this city. Residents have complained that this would result in the disintegration of the community and enable a process of gentrification, similar to that which affected Harlem.

Urban redevelopment is often the "solution" implemented to upgrade multicultural, low-income neighborhoods. However, it is often conducted without negotiations with local communities or their representatives. Turkish architect Boğaçhan Dündaralp has said that people working on the redevelopment plans for Tarlabaşı are "respectful and sensible" and that the argument that the plans are destroying a community have no grounds, since the community is not originally from Tarlabaşı to begin with and so no historical bonds are being destroyed.

Despite not being originally from the area, the current residents of the neighborhood have created a community, contacts, friends and associations, in addition to businesses. Under the redevelopment plan, this way of life will be taken to another site of the city likely to be as dilapidated as the previous one, so for the residents, it does not represent an improvement.

Urban redevelopment has a high impact on neighborhoods, their histories and their residents, whether acknowledged or not. In terms of the financial effect, it becomes more lucrative for such central neighborhoods to become home to expensive businesses and homes that charge much higher rents. When done without the collaboration of the residents, such plans are damaging for the community and its relationship with the government.

Different approaches to multicultural neighborhoods are possible. The pivotal points for a successful improvement of a neighborhood can be summed up as involving communication with the community, the preservation of the history of the area, social inclusion and a better media discourse. Below are some examples and recommendations that could apply to Tarlabaşı as well as other similarly affected neighborhoods.

A Finnish NGO started a project called Qutomo in 2012. Qutomo is an organization made up of cooperation forums that have participated with local administrations, forming a community of diverse neighborhoods. It seeks to prevent decisions affecting a neighborhood that do not include the community. A member of each community participates in each meeting and brings up the issues and ideas of his or her group.

In Barcelona, Spain, since the 1990s, there has been a council that listens to the needs and problems of migrants. In addition to this, a working group on refugees and foreign nationals is also active. Given the high number of academics studying foreign nationals and migration issues in Turkey, this could well be a sensible route to take to improve the regulations affecting multicultural neighborhoods.

PULLOUT

It would be extremely helpful to work with local associations to redefine the image of a neighborhood such as Tarlabası

In terms of media coverage, it would be extremely helpful to work with local associations to redefine the image of a neighborhood such as Tarlabası. Such NGOs could even act as intermediaries with the media to convey a different image of the area. In Italy, the association Carta di Roma was created in the 2000s to act as a watchdog for the media when referring to migrants and foreign nationals. This is mostly used to prevent the use of degrading or biased language based on unverified information.

The process of improving multicultural neighborhoods requires multiple actors, such as the community, the government and the media. These groups cannot successfully work independently to better the neighborhood; rather, collaboration and common decision-making on issues related to urban development is the key to success.

¹ Bhikhu Parekh, "What is multiculturalism?" in Montserrat Guibernau and John Rex (eds), *The Ethnicity Reader: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Migration* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2010)

² Titus Livius, *Ab Urbe Condita Libri* (Milan: Carlo Signorelli Editore, 1997)

³ Neil M. C. Sinclair, *The Tiger Bay Story* (Cardiff: Dragon & Tiger Enterprise, 1997)

⁴ Nicholas Wapshott, "Harlem to Clinton: you're ruining us," *The Independent*, July 23, 2006, accessed June 20, 2015, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/harlem-to-clinton-youre-ruining-us-408913.html>

⁵ "UNESCO's response about Tarlabasi Urban Renewal Project," Tarlabasi Margdulari, accessed June 20, 2015, <http://www.tarlabasimagdulari.com/en/indexen.php?s=unesco-tarlabasi-response>