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# Upwards, outwards, backwards?

## Residential choice and neighborhood use of middle-class Turkish-Germans

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**Abstract:**

Only a few studies deal with residential choice and its consequences for practical and symbolic neighborhood use of middle-class ethnic minorities. Most studies focus on either native (white) middle classes or on lower class ethnic minorities. With the example of middle-class Turkish-Germans in Berlin, I will move beyond this homogenizing view of ethnic minorities. In this paper, I will first of all show that finding a 'good' school – with a low share of ethnic minority students - is the most important reason to move from a socioeconomically weak to a more advantaged neighborhood. A move often occurs despite a general satisfaction with and attachment to the original neighborhood. This has important consequences for practical and symbolic neighborhood use, which in turn depends on whether or not the person's new place of residence offers an urban lifestyle, featuring ethnic diversity and high degrees of sociability and familiarity. If such urbanity is given in a neighborhood, people use the neighborhood in daily life and identify with it. If, however, the new neighborhood is characterized by anonymity and absent ties, symbolic and practical neighborhood use is still focused on the old, socioeconomically weak neighborhood.

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## 1. Background

In recent years, there has been a surge of studies dealing with residential choice of middle-class households, focusing particularly on the influence of educational considerations. A good education for the children presents the main means of ensuring social reproduction, hence the question of finding a good school is one very important dimension in the process of neighborhood choice.

In contemporary cities with their 'super-diversity' (Vertovec, 2007), and increased economic competition (Ball, 2003: 19; Sassen, 2001; Vogel, 2009), middle-class households are under pressure since retaining one's middle-class status and transmitting it to the next generation is no longer a self-evident process. Rather, households have to be strategic in their choices of pre-schooling and schooling. The main goal thereby is to avoid contact to certain groups such as ethnic minorities or people from lower social strata, two dimensions that often overlap.

Research in Great Britain, but also in Germany and other European cities, shows that the white middle-classes apply diverse strategies to secure a good education for their children – even in mixed neighborhoods which may not be socioeconomically advantaged, and which are also home to poorer and/or ethnic minority households (Atkinson, 2006; Butler, 2003; Butler and Robson, 2001; Flitner, 2004; Noreisch, 2007a; Raveaud and van Zanten, 2006).

Atkinson describes how through strategies of insulation, incubation or incarceration, the urban middle-classes avoid "contact with socially different or 'risky' groups" (2006, p. 819). In their daily lives these middle-classes connect the different spheres of life - home, work, leisure, education - in ways that keep them away from supposedly dissimilar groups in the city.

Even when people from different classes live in a mixed area, contact between them, let alone longer-lasting ties, may remain limited. If there is a "tectonic" (Robson and Butler, 2001, p. 77) model of social cohesion<sup>1</sup>, different social worlds exist next to each other in close spatial proximity but without much interaction (see also Kleit, 2005; May, 1996; Watt, 2009). Despite a general rhetoric of people's appreciation of and search for diversity, contact remains sparse: "That is to say, broadly, that relations between different social and ethnic groups in the area are of a parallel rather than integrative nature; people keep, by and large, to themselves. The vibrancy of the urban landscape (...) appears thus to serve, for most of its middle-class residents, as an ideologically charged and desirable backdrop for lives conducted at a remove from its multicultural institutions" (Robson and Butler, 2001, p. 77f.; see also Blokland and van Eijk, 2010). The avoidance of contact does not only apply to the person herself, but especially to the children. In terms of

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<sup>1</sup> In their study of gentrifying London neighborhoods, Robson and Butler introduce the notion of a 'tectonic' model of social cohesion, pointing out that interaction and networks of the ethnically and socially diverse residents are not integrated, but of a parallel nature. In contrast are models of integration that cross categories, although they may still be excluding, for example when professionals from different ethnic backgrounds form networks, but exclude people with a lower social background.

social reproduction, investment in children's education is crucial in order to lay the foundation for them to retain or build up middle-class status.

As Atkinson (2006) claimed, the middle-classes were initially conspicuously absent from discussions on how to achieve social mix in neighborhoods. This has clearly changed in recent years, and the above cited studies impressively show how living in mixed neighborhoods does not lead to mixed networks. Missing in these studies, however, is a focus on middle-class ethnic minorities. Often, the authors do not even mention the fact that their study is about white middle-classes (Byrne, 2009). Although the middle-classes are a prominent 'subject of study', studies that specifically deal with ethnic minority middle-classes are still largely absent.

However, focusing on ethnic minority middle-classes seems to be promising and might reveal differences to their white counterparts. As Butler and Hamnett claim for London, the new middle-class "comprises many new entrants, often from minority ethnic groups and often the first in their families to experience higher education, with ambitions for themselves and especially for their children" (2011, p. 121). They are not yet established, their newly acquired middle-class status is still fragile, they might lose the status again quickly, and have to be very strategic in securing social reproduction. Hence, choosing a neighborhood that offers educational institutions of high quality is very important.

Equally important is to look at the consequences of residential choice. From the cited studies we know that the white middle-classes perceive ethnic minorities as a group that has potentially negative influences on their children, or on the quality of schooling (for exceptions see Reay et al., 2007). If they do, as Atkinson has described, organize their lives in a way to avoid dissimilar groups, ethnic minorities might be avoided even in socioeconomically advantaged neighborhoods. The question is how middle-class ethnic minorities perceive and use a neighborhood, something we so far know little about.

With the example of middle-class Turkish-Germans in Berlin, I will tackle two main questions: (1) what is the influence of educational considerations in the process of residential choice, and (2) what consequences arise for symbolic and practical neighborhood use? We will see that people move out of a socioeconomically disadvantaged neighborhood in order to find a good school for the children – mainly defined as those with a low share of ethnic minority students. Subsequent practical and symbolic neighborhood use differs largely, depending on whether or not the person succeeds in finding a neighborhood that offers an urban lifestyle with a diverse population, or whether the Turkish-Germans stand out as newcomers and are treated as 'the unwanted other'.

## **2. Method & Data**

The larger project that this paper results from deals with residential mobility, networks, and identifications of middle-class Turkish-Germans in Berlin. Forty-five (self-)employed Turkish-Germans were interviewed, who lived either in a socioeconomically weak neighborhood, or a more advantaged one *after* having moved out of poorer area. For this paper, only the 23 *movers*, who have experience in living in a

socioeconomically weaker as well as advantaged neighborhood, will be considered. Socioeconomically weak neighborhoods are those with a high share of unemployed, welfare-receiving population. Often, these areas are also characterized by a high share of ethnic minorities. Moreover, many of the neighborhoods are part of the German Social City program, which aims at improving the living conditions in the target areas.

The participants belong to the 1<sup>st</sup>, 1.5, and 2<sup>nd</sup> generation. The first generation immigrants I interviewed are not the 'typical' guest workers, but highly-skilled migrants, who came after doing their A-levels or studies in Turkey, to continue studying in Berlin. Among those born in Berlin, many spent some of their childhood years in Turkey with their grand-parents. That is due to the fact that many of the guest-workers set out to only spend a few years in Germany, save money and return to their homeland. Only when they realized that this was not going to happen did they use the means of family reunification to bring their children to Germany. These are the so-called 'Kofferkinder' (suitcase-children). For many of them, being separated from their family in Turkey presented an important episode in their lives (Wilhelm, 2011).

Many of the participants are self-employed in very diverse sectors. This is, on the one hand, a result of the method of selection of participants, since I used the Turkish yellow pages. Cold-calling was the most effective way, in contrast to for example finding potential interviewees via institutions such as schools, kindergartens, or organizations. Nevertheless, people with a Turkish background are more likely than native Germans to be self-employed in Berlin (BBB, 2013).

The sectors the participants work in are diverse, including gastronomy, the media, driving schools, lawyers, or tax consultancy. Among those who are not self-employed, some work in community management, or social services. When compared to their parents who were - typical for guest workers - mostly employed as manual laborers, the participants are upwardly mobile. They do possess more economic and cultural capital than their parents, as well as many kin or friends.

The Turkish-Germans are between 29 and 63 years old, whereas most are between 35 and 50 years. Most are married and have children, the ones without children were all in a relationship. All of the movers have been living in the present neighborhood for at least 3 years.

### **3. School situation in Germany and Berlin in particular**

One very important neighborhood resource is that of schools. There are no school rankings in Germany, but it is well known that the school situation in the socioeconomically weak areas in Berlin and other larger cities is problematic, which is why parents with high educational aspirations send their children to schools outside these areas (Flitner, 2004; Noreisch, 2007a).

There have been major school reforms in recent years in Germany. The system in which children have four years of primary school and are subsequently – according to their grades – channeled into one of the three school types *Hauptschule* (5 more years), *Realschule* (6 more years), or the *Gymnasium* (9 more years, only school that grants the permission to continue with studies), is slowly being reformed, not least

after the first Pisa shock in the year 2000, and the attested inscription of inequalities in the three-tiered system (OECD 2011, ch.9).

Education is an affair of the *Bundesländer*, of which Berlin presents one. After the reforms, primary schooling in Berlin lasts four to six years. Afterwards, students either go to the Gymnasium, or to the integrated secondary school. What subsequent school the child is sent to mainly depends on the grades in primary school. Based on the grades, the teacher makes a recommendation for the secondary school. Thus, the *selecting effect* of the primary school continues to exist. Securing a good primary education for the child is consequently the most important step for ensuring all educational possibilities and success later in life. This is different to the situation in Great Britain or in France, where competition to send the children to the best schools is mostly focused on the secondary schools.

In Germany, the education landscape is not very 'marketized' (Clausen, 2006). In contrast, as written in the school law, the child is allocated to a primary school by the catchment area system. According to the rules, the nearest school is the one the child should attend. It is clear, however, that parents invent strategies to avoid a local school. Particularly in ethnically mixed neighborhoods, the share of ethnic minority children in a school is often much higher than in the neighborhood – indicating that parents with higher economic and cultural capital do send their children to schools outside the catchment area. Thus, school choice is increasingly becoming a contested field as it has already been for years in the U.K. or France.

Moving out of a neighborhood is the most costly strategy. Preliminary research and calculations by Förste (2013) have shown that more German than ethnic minority parents follow this strategy. In the Northern part of Kreuzberg, a typical immigrant neighborhood, net out-migration of children younger than six is much higher compared to the overall out-migration. In addition, the share of native-German children decreased from 29 percent in 2007 to 22.6 percent in 2013 – an indication of an ethnically imbalanced out-migration (ibid., 13).

On the other hand, data on intra-urban movement show that people with a Turkish family background do move from socioeconomically disadvantaged areas to more advantaged ones. These data have limited information value, since they only exist for Turkish citizens, without German citizenship and it is not possible to combine these with information on the class background of the movers. However, upward social mobility that is coupled with a move outwards is at least one possible explanation for the movement.

## 4. Schools as the most important neighborhood resource

In line with research on white middle-classes, educational considerations figure highly in the residential choice of middle-class Turkish-Germans<sup>2</sup> with children. These considerations are focused not only on the primary school, but also the kindergarten and a general good and secure environment for raising children – where parents do not have to worry that their children face violence or come into contact with other young people who might make them do dangerous things.

Thoughts about where to raise children may come into play at a very early stage in the life course, as Varol's example shows:

*Well, a very important aspect [for moving] was our family planning. We knew that we wanted to have kids, so we wanted to move to a neighborhood where the kids can go to a school with not so many immigrant children, because of the language. (...) And uhm, it is only... only because of the school... if we hadn't planned to have children, I think we would have stayed in Nordstadt<sup>3</sup>.*

Although Varol, a 44-year-old lawyer, and his wife were very happy in Nordstadt where he himself has lived since childhood, they moved out with the sole reason to live in a neighborhood that offers good schools, defined as one with a low share of students with an ethnic minority background. The focus on a low share of children from ethnic minorities in the school corresponds to the idea of a good school cited by German parents (Noreisch, 2007b: 1317).

Enginalp, likewise a lawyer, married and father to one son, wants to invest everything in his only child, also moved because of the school situation but additionally considers the wider living environment. On the one hand, he believes that in Nordstadt his son would not have the possibility to develop an own personality due to peer group pressure from 'the boys' – young Turkish children –who would take him under their wings:

*He would be under pressure to behave like the others. I don't want that. [imitates Turkish accent] 'You gotta be a real Turk, your Turkish has to be better, you gotta do this, you gotta do that'. No. I don't want that.*

The presence of other ethnic minorities, in this case Turkish ones, in the school as well as in the neighborhood at large is a push factor to move to another neighborhood. There is a fear that peer pressure of other Turkish-German children, who may come from lower-class families, has a detrimental effect on the development and education of his son. In addition to the fear of negative company for the child, Enginalp considers the general level of security in the neighborhood:

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<sup>2</sup>I use the term 'Turkish-Germans' to refer only to those I have interviewed, it is not a generalization

<sup>3</sup>In the following, the socioeconomically weak neighborhoods are called *Nordstadt*, the advantaged ones *Westhafen*

*If you have family and you want quiet, recreational value and you want to see how your boy grows up, he can cross the street, go to his friends, without me being afraid because of the traffic. Here [Nordstadt] I would get a nervous breakdown if he went to school every day.*

In contrast to Enginalp and other 'pro-active' parents who moved out in order to avoid any potential problems, there are others who first tried to raise their children in the socioeconomically weak neighborhood. They were happy with their living situation and wanted their kids to grow up there – although they were very aware of the potential problems:

*Interviewer (I): But the kids were in the kindergarten in Nordstadt?*

*Sercan: Yes, we wanted to try that. And we have seen ourselves what happens there. And that's why we said 'no'. We moved to Westhafen. There were kids in Nordstadt, they didn't even speak German, in the kindergarten.*

But it was not only the high share of ethnic minorities and the bad language skills of many children that his children hung out with that bothered 45-year-old Sercan, who himself has a university degree and is now self-employed in the food business. When his two children were in the kindergarten, he was also concerned about lacking supervision by the teachers:

*When they were in the kindergarten, and you can say we were crazy, but we went there often, drove by, just to see whether anything was happening there.*

His caution and suspicion came because his son actually had an accident in the kindergarten, where he – unnoticed - fell down 3 meters from a scaffold. It was only at home when he complained about headaches that the accident was revealed.

Other parents had concerns about high numbers of crime, and talked about how some older kids came to the son's school and played around with knives. According to the crime statistics, the districts that the Turkish-Germans have moved out of are indeed particularly dangerous compared to the other Berlin districts. In general, the number of criminal incidents in schools has risen in the year 2012. According to the criminal statistics, the socioeconomically disadvantaged areas that were home to the movers before are among the districts with the highest incidents of crimes involving brutality. Children between 8-13 years of age are mostly affected, both in terms of being the aggressor as well as the victim. The fear that the child might be affected by crime is hence not only some imagined fear, but can indeed present a real danger. Thus, a combination of criminal incidents, a high share of ethnic minorities / non-native speakers, and a lack of supervision were the push-factors that made the parents move out of the disadvantaged neighborhood into a better, safer area.

Tax-consultant Basari who not only had his son in a kindergarten in Nordstadt, but also in first and second grades, mentions another factor which explicitly focuses on the neighborhood's and the families' socioeconomic status:

*Well, in areas with a high unemployment rate, educational attainment is not very high because... for good education, you need money, and the neighborhood doesn't have any. And the parents cannot support their kids to the extent they would like to.*

Basari, whose children are now 11 and 15 years, points to the underlying reasons for low quality schooling in disadvantaged neighborhoods. He does not simply draw boundaries towards people from lower social classes. Instead of attributing them with a lack of will, as typical for the culture of poverty-thesis, he acknowledges that they do consider education very important. Due to socioeconomic constraints, however, these parents may not be able to support their children the way they would want to. Moreover, since the district at large is also poor, it cannot absorb the socioeconomic disadvantage of the families. In Westhafen, in contrast, Basari feels that the teachers take their job more seriously and attend more to the children's educational success, as do the parents. The parents actually go to the parent-teacher meetings, they observe what the teachers are doing and if they have anything to criticize, they do so. There is hence a connection made between socioeconomic status and different abilities, in terms of resources, to raise children.

We have seen so far that the occupation with school choice that has widely been described and discussed for the white middle-classes also applies to ethnic minority middle-classes. They "have joined the white professional classes in recognizing the key role education plays in successful social reproduction. (...) a group that has for so long been regarded as the 'social other' is now itself becoming concerned with the danger of 'social contagion' which has long been at the heart of the white middle-class obsession with education and social reproduction" (Butler & Hamnett, 2011, p. 231).

But what are the schools that are seen as not contagious? As hinted at before, a good school is first and foremost one with a low share students from an ethnic minority. The ethnic composition of the school is more often cited than for example its social composition. Sercan is a good example for those explicitly linking the quality of schooling to the share of ethnic minorities:

*We looked for example also... Westhafen, in this area. It was also about the share... share of foreigners, that there are less foreigners.*

Varol likewise explicitly refers to the low share of ethnic minorities in the school which is for him the most important indicator of success:

*I: And in the school, how is the share of...*

*V: ... very low, I would say, maybe, less than ten percent. Clearly less than ten percent, I guess. In his [son] grade, for example, 25 students, and there are only four kids [with migration background], and many of them are from different countries, not from Turkey, but South America, or from France.*

It is interesting to note the difference made between minorities with Turkish (or Arab) background, and those from European countries, the U.S., or South America. This is linked to (assumed) social status.

An ethnic mix is sought in a school as long as this mix consists of children from countries that send highly-skilled migrants, often diplomats, managers, or people working at other international organizations.

We have to be careful, however, to overemphasize the apparently clear boundaries to other ethnic minorities, particularly from the same ethnic group. These boundaries result not necessarily from an aversion against (lower-class) fellow ethnics and fear of social contagion, but from a worry about language skills, which again results from the Turkish-Germans' own experiences in (German) schools. Although many are now successful in their jobs, getting there was not a straight-line trajectory, and they often had a hard time 'surviving' in school. Mostly, their parents came to Germany as guest workers with absent or limited German language skills, and they were hardly able to support their children in school or with homework. Due to that experience particular to ethnic minority children, the Turkish-Germans know how it is to be excluded because of the language, and how it is to teach themselves the German language. The place here is too limited to go into detail in this respect, but one quote should exemplify the experience of many, that also helps us understand this strict focus on share of ethnic minorities in schools:

*When I... when we came to Germany, my school enrolment was 1977, without kindergarten, I didn't know any German, not one word. And they put us in the so-called foreigners-class. (...) We had one German class at the school, and during the six years of primary school, only three fellows from my class made it to the German class. (...) It was also grueling, when other kids were happy about a good grade in a test, and I was always at the bottom of the stack. And at one point, I knew, if the tests were returned, that yours is not on top, not in the middle, but on the bottom.*

A low share of ethnic minority students in the school is hence not a sign of boundary-drawing or of an aversion against lower-class ethnic fellows. It results from own experiences, and what the Turkish-German parents want to ensure is that their children have good language skills – the key to economic success in life.

Due to their own experiences, the Turkish-Germans do not exhibit any feelings of guilt or uneasiness about their choice to move. This is different for white middle-classes. If they avoid a local school, they often express some level of uneasiness and stress how they feel that their children are missing out on the experience of ethnic diversity (Raveaud and Zanten 2007; Reay et al. 2012).

For Turkish-German families, finding a good kindergarten, a good school and a generally secure environment for the growing up of their children is the main reason for moving out a socioeconomically weak neighborhood. The original neighborhoods are indeed socioeconomically weak and social problems are visible in daily life, but Varol, Enginalp and others nevertheless felt comfortable and at home there. In that way the decision to move is mainly influenced by external circumstances. Hence, the 'room for maneuver' (Chambers, 1991) is relatively limited. The parents feel that they *have* to move out and there is no alternative route to that. This strategy of moving stands in contrast to studies on white middle-classes, who rather try to pool their social capital and influence local schools, or who avoid catchment areas (Butler, 2003; Butler and Hamnett, 2011; Noreisch, 2007a). The parents described in these studies use *voice*, in contrast to the parents analyzed here who rather opt for the *exit*-strategy (Hirschman, 1970). This might be due to their status as 'first generation middle-class' and a lack of confidence to successfully raise the

children in a socioeconomically disadvantaged area, by for example, influencing the quality of teaching in local schools (cf. Butler and Hamnett, 2011).

The reason to move, as well as the process of choice of a new neighborhood, is particularistic, not based on a 'universal' dissatisfaction with the neighborhood. It is crucial to understand that in the process of residential choice, educational facilities are chosen, *not* necessarily a particular neighborhood. As we will see in the next part, this has important implications for practical and symbolic neighborhood use. Regarding the motive of finding a good educational environment for the children, the Turkish-Germans have certainly made a good catch with their residential choice. However, living in a neighborhood is not only about the children's facilities and good schools, and this is where we get to the consequences of a move that occurs due to securing a good education for children. The combination of good schooling as the most important reason to move, a focus on the school in residential choice, and an otherwise high satisfaction with life in the old neighborhood puts people in a dilemma. They leave their old neighborhood that they value because of its diversity, a grown network with family, friends and neighbors, high levels of public familiarity, and institutions such as cafes and bars.

Savage et al. (2005) sum up the compromises that people in comparable situations have to come up with. In their study of different Manchester neighborhoods and residents' feelings of belonging to place, some respondents face a similar situation: „These parents with high stocks of cultural capital are faced with a dilemma, whether to live in a diverse area, or to move somewhere with 'better' educational provision. Their political and moral values are challenged by a need to make the 'best' educational choice for their child (Savage et al., 2005, p. 68). Moreover, the problem with a particularistic, narrow-minded neighborhood choice based on schooling is that there may be good information about the school situation, but at the same time a general ignorance of the new neighborhood and what living there is like. Moving is jumping in at the deep end. The residential choice process was influenced by a rather superficial knowledge about where the 'good' schools are. The Turkish-Germans basically focused their housing search to three different districts in the Western part of Berlin where the supposedly better good schools are located. In what exact neighborhood they ended up in, was a matter of chance – depending on where they found a suitable apartment or house. This mentioning of 'chance' is not simply a rhetorical device to downplay a strategic choice (cf. Boterman 2012), neither is it an exaggeration of the openness of the housing search. It does capture the way these movers looked for a new house, and the moment of coincidence has to be taken seriously (cf. Becker 1994). Knowledge about the destination neighborhood was very limited. Hence the subsequent differentiation of the movers into two groups – those who are lucky and feel attachment to their neighborhood and those who feel dissatisfied, mainly because of the anonymous character of relations between neighbors.

## **5. Practical and Symbolic Neighborhood Use**

### **5.1. From being the pioneer to becoming the outsider**

Some of the movers end up in neighborhoods characterized by a high share of native German residents, some of them elderly. The Turkish-Germans' experience in such neighborhoods is that of a pioneer: they are one of the first Turkish families in an otherwise native-German dominated neighborhood. Sercan describes problems arising out of that position:

*S: At the beginning it was hard. It was... Conversely, for the people who live in Westhafen it was hard to accept foreigners. (...) In the area where we live, there are only two foreign families. Us and another Turkish family, they also have three kids, all grown-ups now. For those who live there, many elderly and German people, it was hard to accept us. They thought 'Oh, foreigners, what are they doing here?', 'If one is here they will all come'.*

*I: But did you expect that when you moved there?*

*S: No.*

Sercan who moved to Westhafen because he wanted to send his children to a good school, did not feel entirely comfortable or welcomed in his new neighborhood. He is still glad about his decision to have moved – the children do very well in school – but he is not happy with the neighborhood where relations between neighbors are anonymous and where his family stands out as 'the other'. Varol and his family have similar experiences:

*Well, Westhafen... I guess that if I didn't have children I wouldn't want to live here. It's just too conservative. (...) The area where we live, it's very conservative, so people also look when I walk along the street, in side-streets, people look at me.*

In this quote as in others as well, conservative is used as a synonym for disliking ethnic minorities. DuBois has already described the African American experience of standing out, of being the other in mainly white environments: "*The Negro who away from the mass of his people and their organized life, finds himself alone, shunned and taunted, stared at and made uncomfortable; he can make few new friends, for his neighbours however well-disposed would shrink to add a negro to their list of acquaintances. Thus he (...) feels in all its bitterness what it means to be a social outcast*" (Du Bois, 2013: 176).

The consequence is that there are no relations between residents, at least not with the Turkish-German residents. If Varol walks around in his neighborhood, even after having lived there for 13 years, there is no friendly recognition (cf. Kusenbach 2006), no small talk, but only suspicion on what the 'stranger' is doing in the neighborhood.

Enginalp knows that his neighbors talk about him – not only because of his Turkish background, but because he is Turkish and (or better: *but*) successful. During the five years he has been living in Westhafen, he has not been able to establish contact to his neighbors. In contrast, he is often confronted with racism, which is why he does not even want to have any contact with the people in the area. The four families he knows he met at his son's school. They have well-established relations, and they also tell him what other residents think about him:

*The people think about how he [referring to himself] came up with his wealth. Whether he has casinos, or shit like that. That's how people talk. And I know that from the people who always tell me that: ,They think you have casinos in Nordstadt'.*

The issue is not only that Enginalp is one of the few ethnic minority families living in the area. Moreover, we see here racism in the sense that the residents do not believe that a person with Turkish background can be economically successful, at least not in legal ways (cf. Sutterlüty and Neckel, 2012). This assumed incompatibility between having a Turkish background and being economically successful is something that many participants experienced, and which is particularly bitter for them since they try and want to succeed in German society. The middle-class Turkish-Germans are what Hüttermann (2009) called the 'advancing stranger' – social climbers with migration background who are received with suspicion by majority society. Since Enginalp experiences this kind of racism in his own neighborhood, his main coping mechanism is to spend very little time there, to have clear boundaries to the residents, and to spend time in his old neighborhood – which provides a space where he gets *recognition* (Honneth, 2003) and is not excluded. This experience is similar to what Pattillo has described for African Americans in Chicago. She points out how "(b)eing middle class did not annul the fact of being black" (Pattillo 2000, 19). This is true for the Turkish-Germans as well. They are members of the middle class, but in the current neighborhood, their status as *Turkish-German* is what defines their experience. What results, following the confrontation with hostility and racism is a "socio-psychological fatigue experienced especially by blacks who work in integrated environments or have been pioneers in white neighborhoods" (Pattillo 2007, 10). This notion of the socio-psychological fatigue is transferable to the feeling of the Turkish-Germans, who basically give up their ideal of the neighborhood as a community, and socialize in places and with people who accept them and grant them recognition.

In addition to standing out as being different in the new neighborhood, which sometimes stretches to experience of open racism, another issue that leads to low neighborhood use is a lack of public familiarity. Public familiarity, "knowing about others in one's neighborhood or town by sharing the same space for daily routines" (Blokland and Savage 2008, p. 11) is of great importance in order to explain neighborhood satisfaction and ties to other places. The missing contact to fellow residents and neighbors is partly a result of lacking meeting opportunities. As Jacobs claims: "In areas that lack a natural and casual public life, it is common for residents to isolate themselves from each other to a fantastic degree" (1992, p. 65; see also Lofland, 1998; Oldenburg, 1997). Varol and others know their neighbors categorically, in terms of age, ethnic and social background. Contact, however, remains distanced. If the relation to a neighbor is very well, this is stressed as an exception to the rule.

Alkalin's story shows the influence of distanced relations on neighborhood attachment. He, a married lawyer with two children who moved to Westhafen in order to find a school with a low share of ethnic minorities, is not happy in the neighborhood at all:

*Well, you know a few people. But it's not like in my own Kiez<sup>4</sup>. Let me put it like this, for us it is also common to just go to the neighbor in the evening and have a cup of tea. Or the neighbor stops by. That doesn't exist there. Everyone is doing his own thing.*

Note Alkalin's reference points. He is talking about his 'own Kiez' which is not the one he is currently living in, but the neighborhood he moved out of – six years ago. His second reference point is fellow Turks. When he talks about how 'we' have a cup of tea, he is referring to other people with a Turkish background. The high attachment to his old neighborhood as well as the Turkish community makes him want to move back to Nordstadt. The present neighborhood is too German, and he feels that his children – the reason why he moved to Westhafen – miss out on Turkish culture:

*My wife and I, we wanted to give [the daughter] a certain basic education without paying too much. (...) We wanted her to speak the language fluently. (...) Now, we have a different problem again, our children hardly speak any Turkish. So that's something we don't want either. (...) That is a step backwards for me, for us. And that's why it wouldn't be a problem for us to say, okay, we will move back to Nordstadt. (...) We simply don't have the possibilities here in Westhafen, to use certain offers, like Turkish language classes or to send the kids to a mosque, where they also speak Turkish, or where they can get a religious education.*

Alkalin is not an exception with his wish to move back to Nordstadt. Ferda, mother of three children who works in an organization for the support of Turkish-German parents, feels the same way. Having grown up in Nordstadt herself, Ferda thought – mainly from hearsay – that the schools there are not good enough. After moving to Westhafen, it did not take long until Ferda realized how much she missed her old neighborhood, where her family and friends still live. She says she still belongs to the old neighborhood and wants to move back – not least *because of the children*.

*F: In 2004 I thought differently. But now I wouldn't have a problem sending them to a school in Nordstadt. Quite the contrary.*

*I: Because of the multi-cultural?*

*F: Because of the multi-culti. Exactly. So that they also experience something different.*

The reason not to send the children to a school in Nordstadt – as for Alkalin as well – now becomes the main reason to wanting to send them to school there. In the German-dominated neighborhoods and schools, the children do not experience ethnic and cultural diversity, something the parents did not think about before. A focus on social reproduction, ensured by sending the children to a school with a low share of ethnic minorities, can change after some years and experiences. These parents did not initially think about how they and their children might feel in an ethnically homogenous neighborhood. This is partly a

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<sup>4</sup> 'Kiez' is the typical Berlin label for a neighborhood; it is smaller than the official 'Bezirk', and a typical scale of spatial identification

consequence of the lack of prior knowledge about the neighborhood. With the years, although the educational quality is very good, the focus shifts from one on social reproduction (education) on the provision of more ethnic and cultural diversity (Raey et al., 2007).

The lack of such diversity can even lead to a differential treatment of the child. This happened to Enginalp's 11 year-old son Kerem, even though Enginalp told the teachers he does not want his son to be treated in any different way, due to some presumed 'special' requests based on his ethnic or religious background. However, he had to realize that people still act according to what *they* think must be true:

*So Kerem couldn't join the Julclub [doing the secret santa]. The parents decided to buy a present for Kerem, so that he also has one when the other kids get their presents. So I said 'What? What's going on here? How do you even get the idea that he can't join the Julclub? Why do you even start treating him differently?'. And he comes home, saying ,I am not allowed to join the Julclub. Because I'm Muslim'. I mean, what can you do? What can you say? I mean... this is so terribly primitive, stupid, you know?! And stuff like that happens all the time.*

This story shows that it is not only the Turkish-Germans themselves who stand out in a neighborhood where they are the Turkish pioneers. Being perceived and treated as 'the other' can extend to the children. This is particular bitter, since providing a good environment and school for the children was the main reason to move to a new neighborhood.

### **Coping Mechanism: Bridging back**

'Nordstadt is home' – this quote by Alkalin is exemplary for the emotional attachment of the dissatisfied movers to their previous neighborhood. Café-owner Selim says he always was, still is and remains a 'Nordstadt-person', Varol feels 'comfortable' in his old neighborhood. Emotionally, thus, the place of belonging is still the neighborhood of origin. That socioeconomically disadvantaged place did not provide the institutional resources the movers were seeking, but it provides a symbolic resource for identification.

It is not surprising then, that the neighborhood still plays an important role in daily life and there are bridges back. The main means of bridging back consists of visiting family and friends in the old neighborhood. Varol explains that he always feels better in the neighborhood he has grown up and spent many of his adult years in:

*That's the reason why I always feel better in Nordstadt when I'm there, the neighborhood is simply so different, you still know the people there, they know you... they know you from childhood, it's just different. The affection for each other.*

It is important to note that he frequents the old neighborhood, and less so invites friends over to his place. He likes to be in his familiar environment where the atmosphere is better and people are fond of each other. The same is true for Ferda. A variety of people she considers to be close to her still live in Nordstadt. These are members of the nuclear as well as extended family, but also friends. Moreover, she likes to go there just for shopping because she knows that she will always meet some acquaintances there, who are ready for some small talk and sociability.

Another way to bridge back to the old neighborhood is via political or other voluntary involvement. Enginalp – who claims to only sleep in Westhafen – spends his days in his lawyer's office, but most of all in his old neighborhood where he has been politically active for many years. He meanwhile is member of the Berlin Senate for Nordstadt. Although he likes to complain about the residents of that district, it becomes clear that he feels at home in this neighborhood, and the involvement is very important to him. What he particularly likes is that people are down to earth, and not as narrow-minded or conniving – the way he (and other respondents) describes his Westhafen-neighbors:

*If you talk to the old people, who grew up here [Nordstadt], if you talk to them, if you do a bar tour and you meet some of them, then you know again where you come from and how good that feels. It's a particular atmosphere, they just talk off the top of their heads, ordinary people, ordinary Nordstadt-people. (...) And that's got something, it has soul.*

Enginalp and other Turkish-Germans stress the 'being down to earth' of the people they like to interact and socialize with. This stands in stark contrast to the present neighborhood's residents named by Enginalp a '*dishonest shithole*'. This group of movers, who feel they live in neighborhoods with bourgeois and conservative residents, need to use their old neighborhood in order to get the joy of socializing on an easy level, to meet people and have some kind of neighborly life.

It is highly important to stress that this negative image of the neighborhood and its residents did not exist from the beginning, but developed over time. It is not the case that the Turkish-Germans did not attempt to fit in and to establish contact. They did but feel that they have been turned down. That is why they are the returning prodigals to the old neighborhood and its institutions: "Most enthusiastically greeted is the returning prodigal, the individual who had earlier been a loyal and accepted regular but whom circumstances had, in more recent months, kept away" (Oldenburg, 1997, p. 34). In the old neighborhood and its institutions, the movers are known, they have lived there for long periods of their lives and they are always welcome when they 'visit' their old home.

In the U.S. context, Lacy has shown how middle-class blacks in white, suburban communities engage in "strategic assimilation, privileging the black world as a site for socializing even if they choose to live in a white suburban community" (2004, p. 910). For the Turkish-Germans described in this part, the frequenting of their old neighborhood, the socializing with fellow ethnics, is not a strategic decision, it arises out of necessity. They tried to establish neighborly relations in the new neighborhood, but were turned down. Being the 'returning prodigal' is not strategic, it is the consequence of not having a community life in Westhafen.

## **5.2. The neighborhood as a place of practical and symbolic resources**

In contrast to the more dissatisfied Turkish-Germans, others have actually succeeded in finding a new home in a neighborhood that does not only provide a good educational environment, but also a diverse population and an urban feeling – mainly through contact with other residents, public familiarity and life in the streets. Selami, married, successful real estate developer with two children, describes the other section of Westhafen in just these terms:

*Now I live in Westhafen, close to the park, there is life, always. (...) Well, there are many shops and bars, there is always life, urban life, let me put it like this. In the summer, life takes place outside, in the streets, and that is great.*

First of all, Selami stresses the places in the neighborhood where people meet, such as parks or the streets. And since 'life takes place outside' people actually frequent these places, so there is always the possibility for contact. Selami, who has been living in the neighborhood since five years, further says that he values the many shops offering something for every standard, hinting at a social mix. He himself likes the organic food stores which he did not find in Nordstadt. Lastly, he points to the different lifestyles of residents, which he likewise sees as a plus of the area.

Equally important are good relations with his immediate neighbors. People in the apartment building not only say hello, but meet from time to time, such as to barbecue in the summer. All these features of neighborhood life are highly valued by other Turkish-Germans as well.

Basari highlights another feature of a well-functioning community life. During his seven years of residence in Westhafen, he was able to establish a support network with his neighbors. They exchange small services and help each other:

*We know each other and we support each other a lot, I have to say. Because we all have the same interests, the people who live there. And that's why it is a very well-functioning neighborhood. (...) So if the neighbor needs help in the garden, or if he needs a lawn-mower. Or help with cutting roses, how do you cut them? For me as a city person, that was a challenge.*

Public familiarity is high in this part of Westhafen and often, loose contacts turn into more routinized relations, sometimes even friendships develop. One of Dalim's best friends, for example, is his neighbor. Dalim who works as an agent for bi-cultural media hosts, is very happy in Westhafen and has made many good friends in the eight years he has been living there already. He lives right next to a square with a fountain in the middle and many cafes around. If he or his wife has to work long hours, he can always call people to take care of his two daughters for a few hours. He is also fond of the level of social control, to the advantage of the children. One time, he recalls, his mother-in-law who lives in another town took care of the kids. The children were playing in the area whereas the grandmother rested a few meters away. Since she was not known in the neighborhood, residents thought that the children were out there alone and immediately called Dalim to tell him that. This taking-care of each other and the children in particular is why he calls his neighborhood his '*extended living-room*', similar to Oldenburg's notion of the street as "an extension of the home" (Oldenburg, 1997, p. 210).

In that sense, the neighborhood presents a parochial realm as Lofland conceptualizes it, characterized by relations that are not as superficial as in the public, but also not as intimate as in the private sphere. In contrast, they are marked "by a sense of commonality among acquaintances and neighbors who are involved in interpersonal networks that are located within "communities"" (Lofland, 1998, 11). In such neighborhoods, there is friendly recognition among residents, they help each other out from time to time, and they embrace certain degrees of diversity (cf. Kusenbach 2006).

Particularly the level of ethnic diversity is a characteristic of the neighborhood that is stressed as very positive, as Behcet's quote exemplifies:

*Yes, there are Russians, Vietnamese, Koreans, Germans of course, the share of Turks has increased a lot, which is good. There are many Asians, and the rest you can't see it on their faces (...). It's a very intellectual Kiez, you have French people, Spaniards, a European cross-section. You just don't see it, it is not the classic foreigner, you just can't tell, but the diversity of languages at Kirchplatz is really great.*

Behcet, a lawyer who has lived with his wife and three children in the area for more than five years, points to the value of ethnic diversity, but at the same time stresses that the ethnic groups found in this part of Westhafen are not the 'classic' (children of) immigrants who came as guest workers, such as Turks or Arabs, but highly-skilled migrants from many parts of the world. Ethnic diversity can be valued *because* they all have a similar socioeconomic status.

Dalim appreciates the ethnic diversity in his neighborhood, particularly because he feels that people are open enough to also learn from each other. As other participants, he thinks of himself not as the typical Turk – his wife has the steady, well-paying job, whereas he is self-employed and more flexible so that he mainly takes care of the children, just to name one example. However, he still believes that there is some 'typical' Turkish mentality, which he tries to share with his German friends in the neighborhood, and this is actually appreciated:

*Well, there is this typical German garden-fence mentality. You really have it that people say 'this is mine'; and I only experience it with German families that if you knock at somebody's door because you want to borrow something, that the door remains the barrier. That is unthinkable for me. I would say 'come in for a bit', and then you see what the person needs and you get it. (...) But I think that I made it pretty well in my inner circle of friends, they don't do that anymore when I am at the door. And they don't do it anymore with other people.*

This stands in stark contrast to the previously described Turkish-Germans, for whom even a low level of interaction is lacking, not even to speak of some mutual learning processes. Dalim, however, feels that he can express his bi-culturality in the neighborhood. To him, it is possible to stress the German and Turkish part, so the neighborhood presents a resource for identification. In contrast to many of the studies on urban white middle-classes, who may seek diverse neighborhoods and rhetorically appreciate diversity, but which does not get mirrored in their daily practices and networks (Blokland and van Eijk, 2010; Butler, 2003), the Turkish-Germans put a lot of effort into actually establishing contact to diverse residents, at least in terms of ethnic background. Whether or not they are successful in doing that affects to what extent people feel belonging to a neighborhood and not only use it in practical terms, but also symbolically as a means for identification. Not only the Turkish-Germans in this part of Westhafen are open to establish ethnically mixed ties, but the native-Germans are so as well. This is why neighbors can turn into friends.

The appreciation of a diverse, urban life is voiced by all Turkish-Germans. For the rather dissatisfied movers, however, the place where they can find this is their old neighborhood. The satisfied movers, on the other hand, feel attached to their neighborhood, feel at home. They may still have family members or friends in the old neighborhood but otherwise, the neighborhood does not emerge as something that is missed, as a place for identification, as the place they might even want to move back to.

For this second group of movers, although the motive for the move was the same as for the previously described group, the neighborhood is more than a place that provides the resource 'school'. A good school is important, but other than that, the valuation of the neighborhood is more focused on the own person, what s/he likes and not (exclusively) on why it is good for the children. The neighborhood becomes a symbolic resource for identification.

The comparison between the two groups of middle-class Turkish-Germans who have moved from a socioeconomically weak to a more advantaged neighborhood confirms what Lacy has shown for middle-class African Americans, namely that "the neighborhood context can (.) have a profound influence on the formation of a sense of who one is as a middle-class black person. Context matters greatly because it affects the situations that middle-class blacks are likely to confront and the strategies they use to deal with such situations. In neighborhoods, the social organization of the community helps to determine what boundaries are drawn and under what circumstances" (Lacy, 2007, p. 16). What she describes for African-Americans in the U.S. is true for Turkish-German middle-class members in Berlin, and the neighborhood the person lives in does have an effect on identification processes.

## **6. Summary & Discussion**

For middle-class Turkish-Germans, choosing the right educational environment in order to ensure social reproduction is as important as it is for the white middle-classes described in the many studies that appeared during the last years. Moving from a socioeconomically disadvantaged to a more advantaged area is the main strategy to find a good kindergarten and especially primary school. The *room to maneuver* in this situation is fairly limited, since a move seems to be the only way to secure good schooling, there are no perceived alternatives such as influencing the local schools in order to get better quality teaching there. A move is hence more or less dictated by outer circumstances, not by dissatisfaction with the old neighborhood. In the process of moving, then, people do not primarily choose a neighborhood, but a 'good' school – indicated by a low share of ethnic minority students. Other characteristics of the neighborhood are rather neglected in the choice process. This has important consequences: whether or not a person feels comfortable and at home in the new neighborhood, and uses it practically and symbolically, is more or less a matter of chance. It depends on whether the new neighborhood provides a diverse population and an urban lifestyle, characterized by high degrees of public familiarity, and sociability between residents.

If the new neighborhood is more residential, does not offer much possibilities for encounters and the formation of ties, and relations are more distanced, the focus – both in terms of the use of institutions such as cafes, bars, as well as networks – is directed to the old neighborhood. If, however, the person finds an

urban neighborhood with a diverse population and high degrees of familiarity, the old neighborhood does not play a major part in daily practices.

For future research, it is worth looking more closely at residential choice and its consequences for social and ethnic mix. The results of my study already show that dissatisfaction with the current neighborhood may still have a positive side: through processes of bridging back to the old neighborhood via visiting friends and family, or being organizationally involved, middle-class ethnic minorities can actually benefit their former fellow-residents, who are often fellow ethnics, but from a lower social class background. In that way, ethnic minority middle-class members who move out of a socioeconomically weak neighborhood are not 'automatically' lost to that neighborhood and its residents, but may actually provide their own social capital to the disadvantaged neighborhood and population.

A possible limitation of the research might be the sample bias, consisting in the high share of self-employed among the participants. It seems, however, that whether a person is self-employed or not does not have any obvious effects on symbolic or practical neighborhood use. What influences neighborhood use are the presence of young children in the household, and the attitudes of fellow residents towards ethnic minority neighbors. In terms of experiences in daily life, particularly in the neighborhood, ethnic background is more influential than social class background. Moreover, it is the upward mobility and the difficult educational trajectories, more than the current professional status, that shapes these Turkish-Germans' views on class. This is why the self-employed as well as employees highly value the presence of and socializing with down to earth people, which again is mirrored in their similar practical and symbolic neighborhood use.

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