

Changing Cultural Practices, Self-Identifications and Gender Roles of Kurdish and Turkish Catering and Retail Business Owners in London

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This paper focuses on the changing cultural practices, self-identifications, and gender roles of Kurdish and Turkish (KT) communities in London. It explores the research question of how the occupational shift from industrial waged labour to self-employment affects the cultural practices, gender roles and identity construction processes of Kurdish and Turkish business owners in catering and retail sectors in London. Depending on a field study consisting of 40 in-depth interviews, this paper draws the conclusions that identification of shared interests and interest alignment in Britain promote bonds of solidarity, new forms of ethnic attachment, which are not salient in the home country and may be helpful to overcome various problems of the KT communities in London.

Keywords: constructivism, entrepreneurship, gender roles, interest alignment, Kurdish and Turkish communities in London.

Zmiana praktyk kulturowych, samoidentyfikacji i ról płciowych kurdyjskich i tureckich właścicieli przedsiębiorstw gastronomicznych i przedsiębiorstw sprzedaży detalicznej w Londynie

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Artykuł koncentruje się na zmianie praktyk kulturowych, samoidentyfikacji i ról płciowych społeczności kurdyjskich i tureckich w Londynie. Przeanalizowano w nim pytanie badawcze dotyczące wpływu, jaki zmiana pracy najemnej w przemyśle na samozatrudnienie wywiera na praktyki kulturowe, role płciowe i procesy budowy tożsamości kurdyjskich i tureckich właścicieli firm w sektorze gastronomicznym i detalicznym w Londynie. Opierając się na badaniach terenowych, składających się z 40 wywiadów pogłębionych, zaprezentowano wnioski mówiące o tym, że identyfikacja wspólnych interesów i ich zbieżność w Wielkiej Brytanii wspiera więzi solidarnościowe i nowe formy przywiązania etnicznego, które nie są istotne w kraju ojczystym i mogą być pomocne w przezwyciężaniu różnych problemów społeczności kurdyjskich i tureckich w Londynie.

Słowa kluczowe: konstruktywizm, przedsiębiorczość, role płciowe, zbieżność interesów, społeczności kurdyjskie i tureckie w Londynie.

JEL: A13, A14, C81, D85, J15, L81, L83, M13, Z13

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1. Political Economy of Migrant Entrepreneurship: From Industrial Waged Labour to Self-Employment

In the mid-1950s the UK had been perhaps more industrialised than any other country in history, with more workers in industry than in all services; yet by 1983 there were almost two service workers for every industrial worker (Turner, 1995, p. 3).

It used to be a common view of the UK that it was the ‘workshop of the world’. This phrase was used to indicate that the UK was the centre for manufacturing and exporting of industrial products throughout the world.

The whole array of manufacturing areas has witnessed de-industrialisation, and manufacturing is no longer a defining characteristic there. For instance, “the percentage of the world export of the manufacturing captured by British companies has halved in thirty years, from 16.3 per cent in 1960 to 8.4 in 1990” (Turner, 1995, p. 1). Employment in the manufacturing industry has also decreased by more than 50% from 8.5 million in 1966 to 4 million in 1994 (Turner, 1995).

The profit maximising strategies of capital affect the opportunity structures for immigrants. It is important in understanding the changes in the labour market and new paths of immigrant labour market incorporation. It can be the driving force behind immigrant entrepreneurialism. People strive to make a living by running their own businesses as self-employed entrepreneurs as a response. The case of the Thatcherite era, characterised by de-regulation and de-industrialisation in the UK, was a starting point for the support for the self-help enterprise culture. It was a period when wage labourers turned into self-employed business owners in large numbers.

The processes in political economy resulted in de-industrialisation, moving manufacturing jobs out of the UK while an increase in both high- and low-end service sector employment became dominant in the old industrial cities of the UK. According to Nigel Griffiths (2002), Small Firms Minister, “ethnic minority businesses are amongst the most entrepreneurial in the society. There are 250,000 ethnic minority enterprises in the UK contributing £13 billion a year to the British economy”. More specifically, according to the London Development Agency, “there are 100,000 ethnic businesses in the London area employing around 800,000 people, which corresponds to almost half of the all ethnic minority businesses in the UK” (London Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 2003). Moreover, according to the London Employer Survey (1999), ethnic minorities own 17% of private sector enterprises in London.

Accordingly, the progressive policy think tank (IPPR, 2007) data from the 2005–2006 Annual Population Survey asserts that 35 per cent of the economically active working age Turkey-born, excluding Turkish, Cypriots

are self-employed as compared to 13 per cent of the total UK working age population.

However, scholarly studies have paid little attention to the growth of Kurdish and Turkish (KT) ethnic economy, comprising one of the highest proportions of self-employment (Dedeoglu, 2014, pp. 52–53).

There is only handful literature on Turkish Cypriots in Britain (e.g. Berk, 1972; Bhatti, 1981; Canefe, 2002; Ladbury, 1979, 1984; King & Bridal, 1982; Oakley, 1970). In addition, there are few studies of the mainland Turkish and Kurdish populations in the UK. However, there are some notable reports (e.g. Dedeoglu, 2014; Düvell, 2010; Enneli, Modood, & Bradley, 2005; Erdemir & Vasta, 2007; Kesici, 2015; Strüder, 2003). To a certain extent, this is because mainland Turks and Kurds are recent migrants to the UK. However, these two communities are considered to be relatively invisible in studies of ethnic diversity (Great London Authority [GLA], 2009).

The study is structured in four sections. The following section sets out the contextual background of KT presence in the UK and shared interest and experiences in business formation in London. It links these processes to changes in the British economic policy. The second section sets out gaps in the migrant entrepreneurship literature and explains the rationale for adopting a dynamic and non-essentialist view on migrant entrepreneurship. The third section discusses the methodological approach. The fourth section presents the case study. The paper concludes with key research findings with implications for researchers and practitioners.

1.1. Turkish and Kurdish Migrations to Britain

Turkish migration from mainland Turkey to the UK started in the late 1960s. This was largely a consequence of the policies of the ruling party which came to power in 1950. The increased mechanisation of farming production and the introduction of more rational techniques reduced the need for labour intensive farming. In 1948 there were about 2,000 tractors, which increased to 40,000 by 1954 (Gitmez, 1979). Planting patterns had changed radically. These developments made it difficult to earn a livelihood from small scale farming and thus facilitated internal migration from rural areas to big cities such as Istanbul, Ankara and İzmir with limited employment opportunities in the cities. The economic immigrants from mainland Turkey to the UK were first internal migrants in Turkey.

There was a military coup in Turkey in 1980, which led some to flee the country with many of them seeking political asylum in the UK. The military coup in Turkey in 1980 caused the second wave of Turkish migrant arrivals to the UK, this time mostly refugees made up of intellectuals, students, trade union activists and professionals from various backgrounds, with mainly urban origins (Erdemir & Vasta, 2007).

In contrast to labour migration to other European countries during the post-war period, migration from both Cyprus and Turkey to Britain was

neither organised nor regulated by the government. Instead, migration was facilitated by social networks, which had a primary role in organisational and regulatory aspects of migration (Change Institute, 2009, p. 25).

Kurdish migration from Turkey accelerated at the end of the 1980s because of the armed conflict between the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the Turkish government. The intensification of the conflict displaced thousands of Kurdish people from eastern and south-eastern Turkey (King, Thomson, Mai, & Keles, 2008).

The Kurdish migrants to the UK joined already existing networks of solidarity to help them settle and integrate into the new environment. They implemented the same strategy as the Turkish Cypriots and mainland Turks before them. This is largely a consequence of the refugee resettlement and ethnic minority policies of the British state. In other words, to be able to ease the various problems faced by the immigrants in the host country, the British state utilised co-ethnic associations and social networks (Wahlbeck, 1998). Housing was provided in the co-ethnic neighbourhoods. The pre-existing economy and community organisations in the Turkish Cypriot and Turkish community facilitated the insertion of Kurds into already existing economic networks and eased the hardship faced in adapting to their new country of settlement. Accordingly, the community organisations often provided a very wide range of services for their members and clients. Their activities ranged from advice on welfare, housing and asylum issues, translation, language and training courses to social and cultural activities (Griffiths, 2000; Wahlbeck, 1998).

1.2. Turkish and Kurdish Employment in Britain

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, many skilled workers came from Turkey to the UK to work in the textile industry and were later joined by their families. In comparison to other unionised manufacturing industries that had been moved to low wage zones after the 1973–74 oil crises, the textile and clothing industries managed to survive until the 1990s because of outsourcing and employing undocumented immigrant labour force (Atay, 2010; Phizacklea, 1988). The employment of undocumented labour force provided the owners with an opportunity to exploit the workforce (Phizacklea, 1988). The workers' demand for improved working conditions and payment were responded to by the owners with the threat of deportation or being sacked. The "collapse of the former Soviet Union opened up labour markets with cheap skilled labourers in the textile industry in Eastern Europe in the 1990s" (Strüder, 2003, p. 23). Textile companies moved their production to Romania, Bulgaria and Turkey. The textile and clothing sector collapsed towards the end of the 1990s, and various other trades have taken their place in providing sources of work for Kurdish and Turkish communities. These include the restaurant and catering businesses.

As mentioned earlier, the Thatcher era was characterised by de-regulation and de-industrialisation in the UK, which was a starting point for support for the self-help enterprise culture. People strove to make a living by running their own businesses as self-employed entrepreneurs. It was a period that turned wage labourers into self-employed business owners in large numbers (Strüder, 2003). Until the 1990s, employment in the KT communities was dominated by the textile industry, and the decline of this industry had a profound impact on the economic well-being of the communities, leading to mass unemployment among the KT communities (Change Institute, 2009).

Even though the historical, social background of Kurdish and Turkish migrations to the UK is quite different in many ways, we can observe convergence in their labour market incorporation and in the ways in which they cope with the difficulties in their new environment.

In a very short time period of time, Kurds and Turks have managed to establish their businesses. Turkish Catering News (2002), a Turkish magazine estimated the increase in the number of catering businesses to be from 200 at most in 1975 to 15,000 in 2001. The whole KT communities once almost entirely employed in the textile industry (London Medya, 2003) searched for a new means of survival and decided to invest in small business ownership.

2. Towards a Non-Essentialist Account of Migrant Entrepreneurship

Within the context provided above, shared interests, particularly economic ones, have activated networks of solidarity and instrumental ethnic ties. Economic interests and networks of solidarity reinforce each other. Ethnic ties are instrumental in fostering ethnic businesses. Thus, emerging interests in the host society may foster the development of instrumental ethnic identities and attachments which do not exist in the home country. The following sections discuss the ways in which shared interests within the KT communities paved the way to shifting and changing ethnic attachments, cultural practices and gender roles. The following sections are going to discuss these changes.

However, there is a huge body of literature focusing on the impact of supposed values of a specific ethnic community on the success and failure of entrepreneurship (e.g. Altinay, 2008; Altinay & Altinay, 2006; Basu & Altinay, 2002; Basu, 1998; McEvoy & Hafeez, 2007; Srinivasan, 1995; Werbner, 1984, 1990). Those authors argue that cultural differences lead to divergence in entrepreneurial performance. They focus on personal characteristics of entrepreneurs. The cultural practices are considered to be fixed and unchanging, and they ignore the fact that they adapt to changing circumstances. Each minority group is considered as a homogeneous group that has a “collective programming of mind” (Hofstede, 1991). They highlight

the significance of values like thrift, close knit family circles, community networks, trust and self-sacrifice which provide the means for some ethnic communities to compete successfully in business. Entrepreneurship can then be stimulated by the favourable features of immigrants' culture. Werbner's (1984, p. 169) study of Pakistani business owners in Britain, for instance, states that "self-sacrifice, self-denial and an emphasis on hard work and savings (in brief, a "Protestant ethic") ... characterise the Pakistani 'ethos'" (as cited in Pécoud, 2000, p. 447). However, on the other side of the debate, according to Ram (1992), Asian drive into small business ownership is better explained by a survivalist strategy during a period of de-industrialisation and huge unemployment. In a similar vein, working on "factors influencing business growth: the rise of Turkish entrepreneurship in the UK", Altınay (2008, p. 33) states that "in the case of Turkish ethnic minority entrepreneurship... small business owners managed to break out of the ethnic enclave and move away from traditional Turkish culture with Islamic dominance". Thus, the analysis emphasises the positive correlation between "moving away from traditional Turkish culture with Islamic dominance" (ibid) and business success. In other words, he considers Islamic values to be incompatible with modern capitalism.

Moreover, according to Waldinger et al. (1990, p. 3), ethnic entrepreneurship is based on "a set of connections and regular patterns of interaction among people sharing common national background or migration experiences". However, the quotation ignores the fact that interaction among people does not necessarily originate from a shared national background or migration experience. Rather, shared experiences in the occupational structure and shared interests within different ethnic groups whose migration experiences correspond to different time periods could result in new alliances and identity constructions that facilitate networks utilised for entrepreneurship. Their assertion ignores the dynamics in ethnic attachment formation or dissolution. There is no pre-existing necessity for common national backgrounds to contact each other and interact.

The above discussed accounts of migrant entrepreneurship view cultural practices and ethnic attachments as fixed and unchanging. This study, however, opposes both *primordialist* conceptualisations of ethnic identity and essentialist conceptualisations of culture in ethnic entrepreneurship literature and engages with the constructivist approach. As Craig Calhoun (1997, p. 18) asserts,

Essentialism refers to a reduction of the diversity in a population to some single criterion held to constitute its defining "essence" and most crucial character. This is often coupled with the claim that the essence is unavoidable or given by nature. It is common to assume that these cultural categories address really existing and discretely identifiable collections of people.

In addition, primordialism is a concept that contends that “identities or attachments are ‘given’, a priori, un-derived, prior to all experience or interaction – in fact, all interaction is carried out within the primordial realities” (Eller & Coughlan, 1996, p. 45). On the contrary, this paper promotes the central ideas of constructivist account of culture and identity. The paper focuses on the changing and shifting cultural practices and identifications of Kurdish and Turkish (KT) communities in London. **This main research question of this study is how changes in the political economy in London paved the way for the construction of a new self-identification, transposition of cultural practices, and finally dissolution and ossification of gender roles brought from the home country within KT communities.** It argues that the re-enactment and dissolution/persistence of cultural practises are dependent upon structural changes characterising British cities and the structure of the groups.

3. Methods and Data Collection

The paper draws on qualitative research methodology. The results of this study are based on the data gathered from preliminary and main fieldwork studies on Turkish-speaking business owners and key persons in various community organisations including cultural, faith-based and political organisations, and business consultants of Turkish, Kurdish and Turkish Cypriot origins (see Karan, 2015). The field study generated 65 semi-structured face-to-face interviews in London in total. 25 interviews were conducted during the preliminary fieldwork with various small business owners in the service sector, including hairdressers, mini-cab owners, restaurant owners, florists and bookstore owners. The first part of fieldwork took place during the summer of 2010. The pilot interviews were designed to create a general idea about the demographic characteristics of business owners, their working conditions, how they set up and run their businesses and mobilise resources and finally how they use their networks and the “culture” of the country of origin as a collective resource.

The initial outcomes from the preliminary fieldwork generated themes to be explored further. The generated themes could be listed under four broad categories such as interest, networks, mobilisation, and opportunity structure. First, the *interests* component of my research design include themes for further search such as interest in migration, changing interests with de-industrialisation, interests and constructivist account of ethnicity and culture and interest alignment. Second, *networks* include formal and informal networks. Third, codes for *mobilisation* comprise acquiring information, obtaining economic capital, acquiring training and skills, recruiting and managing workers, dispute resolution, claim making, safety. Finally, *opportunity structure* has sub-themes such as changes in the economic

structures, legal regulatory framework, competition, protection from racist attacks, intensification of work.

The preliminary fieldwork provided an understanding of the basic properties of these communities. The pilot interviews inductively generated knowledge for clarifying my research questions. The object of the pilot interviews was to access further instances of themes identified in the initial data. The codes of thematic analysis arose from the textual data gathered in pilot interviews rather than from focusing on predefined categories and themes. This is because of the nature of the study as it adopted a synthesis of deductive and inductive approaches. The process began with analysing pilot interviews in order to focus on further themes to be researched. Then, each transcript was coded thoroughly so that particular topics could be identified and evidenced. The subjects identified during the preliminary fieldwork were further examined in the main fieldwork. At this stage, inductive methodology synthesises with deductive methodology to produce a theory generated from initial outcomes, which can then be tested. The main field study draws on forty interviews, consisting of owners of restaurants, off-licences, kebab shops, coffee shops, supermarkets, wholesalers and various community organisations based in North London. They were conducted in 2011. The number of interviews conducted with Kurdish, Turkish, and Turkish Cypriot business owners were respectively twelve, eight, and six. The number of interviews conducted with key informants, including community organisations, consultants, was fourteen.

The selection criteria used for the inclusion of business owners to be interviewed could be summarised as follows. First, business owners from three ethnic groups, Turkish Cypriot, Turkish and Kurdish, were chosen to be interviewed. Secondly, specific sectors were identified to represent three broad Kurdish, Turkish, and Turkish Cypriot business owners, namely catering and retail sectors. The reason for choosing these sectors was that most people from the target groups find employment in these sectors (Dedeoglu, 2014, p. 118). Finally, the shopkeepers interviewed were drawn from London boroughs of Hackney and Haringey. Following the London Borough of Enfield, the largest groups of the KT community members concentrated in the boroughs of Hackney and Haringey as the KT population grew over the years from 26,000 in 1991 to over 180,000 in 2011 (Sirkeci & Esipova, 2013, p. 6; Karan, 2015). According to the 2011 UK Census, London accommodates over 64% of Turkish and Kurdish populations in the UK (Sirkeci et al., 2016). This is why the city of London was chosen as the object of research.

A major difficulty that arose during the fieldwork while I was conducting interviews was that it appeared that all of my interviewees were either of Turkish or Kurdish origin, and none appeared to have a Turkish Cypriot background. In order to gain access to Turkish Cypriots' businesses, I asked several members of Turkish Cypriot organisations and the chairperson of the

traders' association in Haringey to name some business owners from their community. They could name few middle-sized Turkish Cypriot businesses in the target sectors, employing more than ten workers in Haringey. All KT shop owners and members of community organisations confirmed that the Turkish Cypriot community had almost entirely moved away from the ethnic business niche to more professional jobs, becoming lawyers, accountants, bankers and so on.

	Born in Turkey	% of Turkish born in total	% of Turkish born among foreign born	% of Turkish born among non-EU foreign born	% of foreign born in total
London	59,596	0.73	1.99	2.98	36.68
Inner London	31,717	0.98	2.32	3.61	42.21
Outer London	27,879	0.56	1.71	2.48	33.07
Top 10 London Boroughs					
Enfield	13,968	4.47	12.74	25.17	35.08
Haringey	10,096	3.96	8.88	17.92	44.60
Hackney	8,982	3.65	9.33	15.42	39.08

Tab. 1. Resident population born in Turkey by areas and boroughs of London, 2011 UK Census. Source: Sirkeci et al. (2016).

With regard to my positionality in this study, being a native Turkish-speaking researcher helped me in gaining research access to conduct interviews with Turkish Cypriots, Kurdish and Turkish community members. Apart from one Turkish Cypriot interviewee, all interviews were conducted in Turkish. Using the Turkish language served to give me insider qualities with respect to the Turkish-speaking communities in North London. This helped me in gaining research participants' trust and nurturing rapport. Since I share a common cultural and ethnic background with the research participants, I was able to understand the experiences of interviewees, historical processes affecting them in Turkey, and the implications behind many of the things they told me. This helped me to generate meaningful follow up questions for clarifying issues important for the research purposes.

However, as Sharan B. Merriam et al. (2001, p. 405) mention, "more recent discussions of insider/outsider status have unveiled the complexity inherent in either status and have acknowledged that the boundaries between the two positions are not all that clearly delineated". There may be strong divides between the researcher characteristics and the informants that put the researcher's position into question (Carling, Bivand, & Ezzati, 2013). Carling et al. further state that "insider-outsider divides are relationally

constructed in the encounter between researcher and informant” (p. 41). For instance, during the fieldwork, in some cases, my higher educational background was one of the issues that threw my insider position into question. Some of the informants got shy to talk to me because of their low educational status. This was an unanticipated insider problem that I had to shift between insider and outsider positions. I did not expect to be treated like an outsider. In order to switch my position, I downplayed my researcher status and told them that I did not have the skills to set up and run a business like theirs. I said that there were different difficulties in any kind of job and it was beyond my skills to do what they did for a living. In so doing, I was able to balance humility and status in the encounter with some informants.

Interviewee	Occupation	Current Residence	London Residence (>years)	Ethnic Origin	Age	Gender	Marital Status
Candy	Off-license	Haringey	23	Kurdish	47	M	Married
Gorki	Coffee shop owner and member of community association	Haringey	23	Turkish	52	M	Married
Mint	Off-licence	Hackney	23	Kurdish	43	M	Married
Tobacco	Off-license	Hackney	23	Kurdish	32	M	Married
Isle	Restaurateur and board member at a community organisation	Haringey	55	Turkish Cypriot	62	M	Married
Egg	Coffee shop	Hackney	23	Turkish	49	M	Married
Potato	Off-licence and restaurateur	Hackney	23	Turkish	47	M	Married
Daisy	Restaurateur	Hackney	23	Turkish	44	M	Married
Tomato	Mini-market	Haringey	15	Turkish		M	Married
Melon	Mini-market	Haringey	12	Turkish	45	M	Married
Lemon	Mini-market owner	Haringey	11	Kurdish		M	Married
Orange	Mini-market	Haringey	12	Kurdish		M	Married
Pickle	Wholesaler	Haringey	23	Turkish	52	M	Married
Thyme	Restaurateur	Haringey	23	Kurdish		M	Married
Arcade	Mini-market	Haringey	9	Kurdish	37	M	Married
Broccoli	Restaurateur	Haringey	28	Turkish	42	M	Single

Interviewee	Occupation	Current Residence	London Residence (>years)	Ethnic Origin	Age	Gender	Marital Status
Cabbage	Wholesaler	Haringey	52	Turkish Cypriot	67	M	Married
Cheese	Chain supermarket owner	Haringey		Turkish Cypriot		M	
Omlette	Coffee shop	Haringey	3	Turkish	38	M	Married
Pepper	Coffee shop and bakery	Haringey	6	Turkish Cypriot	32	F	Married
Olive	Restaurateur	Hackney	21	Turkish	45	M	Married
Fish	Restaurateur	Hackney	8	Turkish	38	M	Married
Sea	Mini-market	Hackney	21	Turkish	40	M	Married
Green	Mini-market	Haringey	18	Kurdish		M	Married
Onion	Wholesaler	Hackney		Turkish Cypriot		M	Married
Textile	Retired textile businessman and mini-market owner	Hackney	41	Turkish Cypriot	66	M	Married

Tab. 2 Personal profile of the shopkeepers.

Interviewee	Occupation	Gender
Sumac	Chair of a community organisation	M
Parsley	Chair of a craftsmen union	M
Faith	Chair of a faith organisation	M
Seasoning	Staff member at a community organisation	F
Sword	Chair of a consulting firm	M
Aubergine	Chair of a community organisation	M
Lotus	Shop designer and market consultant	F
Corn	Chair of a community organisation	M
Acacia	Chair of a community organisation	M
Sufi	Chair of a community organisation	M
Linden	Chair of a community organisation	M
Cinnamon	Staff member at a community organisation	M
Cactus	Councillor at London borough of Hackney	F
Pear	Chair of a tradesmen association and a wholesaler	M

Tab. 3. Key informants.

Furthermore, the structure of interviews with members of community organisations aimed to understand the link between organisations and the migrant communities, particularly how cultural, social and faith-based organisations have contributed to the KT communities generating resources to establish and maintain catering and retail businesses.

Four out of forty interviewees were women and only one of these owned a shop. Pseudonyms were used in order to maintain the interviewees' anonymity.

4. Discussion

The following sections discuss the findings of this study. The aim is to elaborate on the interplay between culture and structural changes in the British economy. I focus on, first, the ways in which shared interests and experiences within the KT communities instrumentally paved the way for the construction of a self-identification called “*Türkiyeli*”. Second, it analyses how the patriarchal relationships attached to the mode of production were initially largely dissolved and restructured according to the changes in the British economy. Third, while village-scale collectivistic cultural practices were, to a large extent, eroded during the textile industry years, when KT populations alike found employment as waged labourers, with the collapse of the textile industry, unemployment and conditions in urban life activated collectivistic cultural practices such as *imece/zibare*. Overall, my research shows that identification of shared interests and interest alignment constructed in the UK promotes the construction of new self-identifications, and transposition and/or dissolution of cultural practices brought from the home country.

4.1. *Türkiyeli*

The aim of this section is to examine the ways in which shared interests and experiences within the Turkish and Kurdish communities instrumentally paved the way for the construction of an identity called “*Türkiyeli*” (People from Turkey). It argues that self-identifications and identities brought from the home country are not fixed, but that ethnic identities are socially constructed and open to redefinitions.

KT communities were mainly employed in textile factories from the 1970s to the middle of the 1990s. However, they suddenly found themselves unemployed due to structural changes in the British economy such as de-industrialisation. As one of the interviewees states, “in one week 1500 textile ateliers were shut down. The people who used to work in those ateliers were made idle” (Daisy, restaurant owner). There was a general tendency at that time for increasing numbers of the unemployed in the Turkish and Kurdish communities to start discussing their employment prospects, and anxiety was widespread during this time. Candy’s case below is an example

of a process the author of this study calls interest alignment towards business ownership. The interest in setting-up a shop and the possible benefits of it were jointly calculated with his co-ethnics and relatives. Setting up a shop as a viable means of survival is socially constructed and elaborated by the micro-mobilisation of networks. This is a process that all my interviewees went through. As Candy mentions,

I started to search for opportunities after the collapse of the textile industry. You have to do that in order to survive. You must earn your living. You evaluate in your mind the things they tell you and recommend. You choose the option that is suitable, the one to suit your conditions. Yet, your relative also plays a role in the direction you take. We were socialising at an association, passing time with friends there. My friends from the association recommended this shop to me. They informed me that the shop was for sale (Candy, off-licence owner).

Ethnic groups strategically redefine their attachments according to whom they cooperate with (Bonacich & Modell, 1980, p. 3). Turkish and Kurdish communities facing similar problems and sharing meanings and definitions around their situation strategically form ethnic ties in order to achieve common ends. This perspective underlines the constructivist idea of ethnicity in a sense that the assertion of “Türkiyeli” or “our people” by Kurdish and Turkish communities is instrumental in acquiring power and advancing interests.

The shared experiences, problems and interests bring Kurdish and Turkish people into constant contact in their daily lives. During textile years, as mentioned in the previous section, the pre-existing economy and community organisations in the Turkish Cypriot and Turkish community facilitated the insertion of Kurds into already existing economic networks and eased the hardship faced in adapting to their new country of settlement. Situational interests and shared experiences common to the Kurdish and Turkish communities resulted in a collective consciousness in both communities. It was common during the interviews to hear that Kurdish and Turkish communities in the UK were called “our people” or “Türkiyeli”. One of my interviewees explains how situational problems, grievances and interests in their daily lives paved the way to a socially constructed shared identity and networks of solidarity:

There are lots of reasons that bind Turkish and Kurdish communities. The child of a Kurdish parent and child of a Turkish nationalist go to the same school. Child of a Kurdish nationalist and a Turkish nationalist go to the same school. They both experience the same problems. They become closer. For instance, both Turks and Kurds have to have a resident permit to stay in the UK. They had to use the same consultancy and translation services. They exchange information in their neighbourhoods. They live in the same ghettos. They have adaptation problems. Children have poor educational success. As they do not see any future in school life they search for new areas of existence. Some of them become gang members. Both Turks and Kurds face the same problems in hospitals and elsewhere. When people from various social backgrounds sit next to each other, they can support each other. Another example is the riots. All Turkish and

Kurdish people supported each other. There is a political dissidence between Turks and Kurds in Turkey. The disintegration between Kurds and Turks is a problem in Turkey. Here, the shared common problems can bring people together (Thyme, restaurant owner).

As Erdemir and Vasta (2007, p. 7) observed in their fieldwork with members of KT communities, their respondents' self-identification was the Turkish neologism 'Türkiyeli'. The term Türkiyeli has been used since the 1980s by some left-wing academics in Turkey to overcome the nationalistic discourse that identifies people of Turkey regardless of their religion and ethnic identity as Turkish. It proposes an umbrella identity that can encompass all ethnic and religious groups and move away from the Turkish centred identity and nationalistic ideology. However, while the term 'Türkiyeli' does not have any uptake among both KT communities in Turkey, the majority of KT nationals whom I encountered in London also preferred to use the term 'Türkiyeli' to identify their communities. It should be noted that the salience of Türkiyeli self-identification does not mean that sub-ethnic and religious affiliations such as Alevi, Sunni, Kurdish, Turkish, Kurdish-Alevi, Alevi Kurdish or Turkish-Alevi are eroded. Previous and my research findings suggest that Türkiyeli self-identification is strategically constructed to establish bonds of cooperation and solidarity to achieve common ends, which is not salient in the home country.

The ideological, religious, and ethnic differences that cause major conflicts in the home country rarely become salient in the host country. Interests in the host country bring different identities together. Instrumental identities could be observed within partnerships of KT, secular-religious migrants. For instance, non-religious Turkish wholesaler Sancak established a joint venture with a religious Kurdish wholesaler to produce meat-related products. The wholesalers aligned their interests for the joint venture even though their ethnic and religious identities are a potential source of conflict in their home country. The tensions in their home country do not appear to influence the community relations in the UK. Ethnic sentiments do not affect businesses.

The relationships between Greek and Turkish Cypriots offer a similar case study. My informant Aubergine, who is a Turkish Cypriot, mentions that relations between the Greek and Turkish Cypriots in the 1970s in the UK were amicable and mutually helpful, even though the Turkish invasion of Cyprus took place in 1974. Likewise, the relations between Kurds and Turks in the UK are amicable nowadays. The communities that once had conflicting relations between each other in their home countries have amicable relations in their host countries due to the shared problems and interests they have in their new environment. The shared interests and problems are the main motive to establish bonds of cooperation for survival in the host country, where mainstream institutions and larger society could not provide safety

networks for the newly arrived migrants. Thus, the Cyprus dispute between Greece and Turkey and tensions between Turks and Kurds in Turkey did not and do not create tensions between Greek and Turkish Cypriots and Kurds and Turks in the UK. In his own words,

In 1974, there was a war between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. There was a political apathy between sides. However, our relations with Greek Cypriots in the UK were not like the relations between Turkish and Greek Cypriots in Cyprus in the 1970s. The elected Greek Cypriot local councillors in London had a great positive impact on us. In the UK, they do not have something to share. We (Turkish Cypriots) benefited a lot from Greek Cypriots in various spheres of life, such as in employment, housing and social life. This cooperation and amicable relations between Greek and Turkish Cypriots in the UK in the 1970s applies to the relations between Kurds and Turks in the UK (Aubergine, chair of a community organisation).

Cooperation between Kurdish and Turkish community members whose ideological orientations are conflicting is salient. Partnerships were instrumental in gathering the necessary economic capital to set up shops and reduce the risk of failures. The interest alignment within the Kurdish and Turkish secular and religious groupings paved the way for new forms of ethnic and religious ties. It should be noted that newly constructed attachments between individuals with previously conflicting identities in the home country are instrumental and situational, but not only limited to Turkey originated communities. Sea mentions:

We have a great social network. We prefer to work with Indians, Iranians, Philippians and Turks. In general, we prefer to work with them because we share the same destiny. We treat all migrants as if they are Turkish. We share the same situation, the same life, and the same conditions. The British state treats them in the same way it treats us. It exploits them in the same way as it exploits us. They do not differentiate when they exploit. Thus, we should not discriminate when we unite (Sea, mini-market owner).

New forms of ethnic attachments and interest alignment are not only limited to Turkish-speaking communities, but also observable between various ethnic groups. This is because of the shared meanings and definitions that different ethnic groups bring to their situation. The interest alignment between various ethnic groups is situational in the sense that they face the same problems and share a common class position.

4.2. Changing Gender roles in Waged Labour and Self-Employment

Turkish born women who work in small shops tended to be involved in their husbands' businesses, perceiving themselves as building up a family business (Westwood & Bhachu, 1998, p. 43; Change Institute, 2009, p. 44). As Westwood and Bhachu mention, it is officially the man who is registered as managing the business, and in some cases the woman might be registered as his employee (Ibid). That is, the enterprise is conceived socially to be an extension of home. This is even physically true where the upper floor

of the shop is used as a home. The family is an economic unit for migrants where they can acquire basic unpaid labour for migrant enterprises, which could provide them with a competitive advantage over native enterprises needed for survival. Westwood and Bhachu further argued that “those ethnic groups deemed to be more ‘successful’ in the business world than others are characterized by social structures which give easier access to female labour subordinated to patriarchal control mechanisms” (Ibid, p. 22). Accordingly, the social relations within the family shaped by the material base of the enterprise are patriarchal, i.e. men have control over women’s labour power. Moreover, the control of labour power within the family does not only apply to the labour power of women. It also results in some parents actively discouraging their children from pursuing post-school higher education and encouraging them to take up the running of family businesses instead (Change Institute, 2009, p. 8).

Patriarchal relationships attached to the mode of production were initially largely dissolved and restructured according to the changes in the British economy. Cultural practices are not fixed and stable. Initially, the shift towards waged labour in factories, where all men and women had to perform the same tasks for equal wages, led to the changes in village-scale practices such as patron-client relationships and male-headed households. It is asserted that the woman’s role and position within the family is affected when she finds employment as a waged labourer. This also increases women’s individual power and self-confidence (Karaoglan & Ökten, 2012). Female Turkish-speaking community members, to a considerable extent, had higher autonomy over their own earnings. They had greater control over the budget. However, the closure of the textile factories in turn has largely pushed the KT communities to set up small shops, to a large extent based on family labour where women’s labour is unpaid and consumed within the family. According to my interviewees, employment in the textile factories provided equal wages for male and female members of the Turkish community. KT women had greater control over their own earnings and had a higher degree of independence with respect to their decisions.

The shift from factory work to small household-level businesses in the Turkish-speaking communities affected women members of the KT communities, where women’s labour is unpaid and consumed within the family. Women started to work in coffee shops, restaurants, and off-licences mainly helping their husbands. Thus, many women have lost their economic independence. In sum, it is possible to say that “all that is solid melts into air” (Marx & Engels, 2004), but that which has melted into air may once again become solid. That is to say, the home town culture may be dissolved in time due to changes that have taken place in the political economy, but once dissolved it is also possible that the practices may once again be reproduced. As Cornell and Hartman (2007, p. 61) state, “both identity and action ... are mediated, if not determined, by the circumstances and contexts

in which individuals and groups find themselves". Cultural practices are not fixed and unchanging as the culturalist theories assert; but rather the mode of production can influence the relation of production and cultural practices as well. In addition, the reconstructed cultural practices in the new setting also have an impact on the means and relations of production such as access to capital, markets, labour and information as well as gender relations.

Cultural practices prevalent in village-scale collaborative production, and the patron-client and patriarchal relationships attached to the mode of production, were initially dissolved and reproduced according to the changes in the British economy. I suggest that the re-enactment and persistence of ethnic collective identity and practices are dependent upon structural changes characterising British cities and the structure of the groups. Yet, the reproduction of Turkish village-scale collaboration, practices and values to deal with adverse circumstances appears in a post-industrial London

4.3. Imece/Zibare

One of the most crucial traditions that has been re-enacted after immigration is imece/zibare. The evidence gathered in this paper defends the idea that home country village-scale practices, such as imece/zibare and solidarity in various forms, have been transposed to the host country. These are the Turkish and Kurdish names given to village-scale collaborations for harvesting, constructing a water pipeline, providing security for village grazing borders with neighbouring villages. Several interviewees stated that the re-enactment of imece/zibare played a role in overcoming various problems in starting up and maintaining businesses (Pear, chair of a tradesman association and wholesaler; Gorke, coffee shop owner; Sword, shop consultant; Lotus, shop designer; Fish, restaurant owner).

This tradition has been reconstructed in a big modern city. Imece/zibare is a voluntary activity yet has its unwritten rules and obligations. Particularly when members of the community are co-located, reciprocity is expected (Erginkaya, 2012, p. 10).

The fundamental source of solidarity is situational, since it is the structural changes that took place in the British economy that activated dormant home customs. Many cultural practices do not become salient and are not transposed to a new setting after immigration spontaneously, but usually result from the structural conditions, so, in this sense, they are an emergent product (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993). Hence, it is worth mentioning the re-enacted village-level collaboration of imece/zibare in London.

As stated above, these collective actions are situational in the sense that the ethnic community acts collectively on specific issues for bettering living conditions and finding solutions to the existing problems that have been identified.

Pear, chair of a craftsmen's union and a wholesaler states:

We came here via social solidarity. We didn't know how the society functions; we could not open bank accounts. We didn't have residence permit. Thus, we could not apply for bank loans to set up businesses. We could generate capital via the Anatolian tradition called imece. That was the way to set up businesses. If someone wants to set up a shop, the amount of capital that she or he had was not enough. They gathered capital via their relatives, friends, and acquaintances. In time, those who gathered capital managed to earn money and provided loans to their acquaintances (Pear, chair of a tradesman association and a wholesaler).

While the above quote is confined to the acquisition of economic capital, the reproduction of village-scale collaboration is not limited to this. The KT communities provide an excellent example of the reactivation of a cultural repertoire as an adaptation to structural changes in the economy. In other words, the cultural repertoire of imece/zibare is based on village-scale collaboration is brought from the home country. The transposition of imece/zibare to the new context is not only limited to capital acquisition, but also entails providing information, protection of business premises, providing free labour, gaining skills and training. The unwritten rule of imece/zibare is mutuality, reciprocity and is underpinned by the threat of sanctions. The reconstruction of imece/zibare due to structural changes in the economy exemplifies the constructivist account of ethnic identity, which asserts that aspects of ethnic identity are changeable and situational depending on the circumstances at a given time and in a given space.

It is important to note that while Turkish and Kurdish communities are fragmented and, on some occasions, have tense relationships because of the armed conflict in Turkey, the issues related to Turkish politics do not cause polarisation. The "fundamental source of solidarity is situational, shaped by the daily needs of the community, since it is the reality of discrimination and minority status that activates" (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993, p. 1330) bounded solidarity.

As mentioned earlier, the cultural practice of imece/zibare connotes collective mobilisation and action for various purposes. One purpose mentioned was providing security for village grazing borders. Similarly, this cultural practice was transposed to the host country during four days of London riots in August 2011, when the police could not provide any protection against possible attacks (see Hackney Citizen, 9 August 2011; Guardian, 10 August 2011). This is also a clear example of reactivation of the village boundary defence mentioned earlier. The social capital in the Kurdish and Turkish migrant neighbourhoods was activated to protect shop owners' economic interests. The territory of the neighbourhoods is more than an administrative area. It symbolises the identity of the Kurdish and Turkish communities where economic interests are realised. The economic interests of shop owners are dependent on the land. Any attack by the

rioters on the businesses is an implicit attack on the economic interests and identity of the Turkish-speaking communities. The collective mobilisation of the Kurdish and Turkish communities to defend their territory is situational in times of incidents such as theft and arson. The shared interest and interest alignment are to defend the territory from potential incidents, and this causes Kurdish and Turkish community members to form unities, which make collective action possible. The territory is defended regardless of quarrels and disputes within the neighbourhood communities. Interests promote a common identity and a unifying structure among the Turkish speaking communities. The lack of police protection provided to the shop keepers has been identified as one of the problems faced by the Turkish-speaking businesses.

As has been mentioned, KT people used to be wage labourers in the textile industry. It was de-industrialisation and wider structural changes in the British economy that facilitated a unified identity among KT people, collective resource mobilisation, the transposition of cultural practices and values, such as imece/zibare, to the UK. The evidence gathered in this study defends the idea that home country village-scale practices, such as imece and solidarity in various forms, have been transposed to the host country. As stated above, these collective actions are situational in the sense that the ethnic community acts collectively on specific issues for bettering living conditions and finding solutions to the existing problems that have been identified. The transposition of imece/zibare to the new context is actually not only limited to capital acquisition, but also entails providing information, protection of business premises, providing free labour, gaining skills and training. The unwritten rule of imece/zibare is mutuality, reciprocity and is underpinned by the threat of sanctions. The reconstruction of imece/zibare due to structural changes in the economy exemplifies the constructivist account of cultural practices, which asserts that aspects of culture are changeable and situational depending on the circumstances at a particular time and in a particular space.

The “fundamental source of solidarity is still situational” (ibid, p. 1330), since it is the structural changes that took place in the British economy that activated dormant home customs. Hence, it is worth mentioning the re-enacted village-level collaboration of imece/zibare in London.

5. Conclusions

The research question of this study was how changes in the political economy in London paved the way for, first, the construction of a new self-identification, second, transposition of cultural practices and, finally, dissolution and ossification of gender roles brought from the home country within KT communities.

Due to the structural changes in the British economy such as de-industrialisation, KT communities started to search for alternative means of livelihood. Members of KT communities regularly attended KT community organisations, meeting with friends, discussing possible alternatives, getting recommendations, and sharing information for survival. Such micro-mobilisation in co-ethnic networks involves the process of interest alignment towards business ownership. This interest alignment on the issues that matter to them brought people and communities together and enhanced feelings of solidarity.

With regard to self-identification, the tensions in Turkey did not constitute a problem between Kurds and Turks in terms of their cooperation on various issues in London. Similarly, religious and secular wholesalers could establish a joint venture. The interviewees explained how situational problems, grievances, and interests in their daily lives led them to create networks of solidarity and new ethnic attachments. Situational interests and shared experiences common to KT communities resulted in collective consciousness within both communities. Turkish and Kurdish communities facing similar problems and sharing meanings and definitions around their situation strategically form ethnic ties in order to achieve common ends. This perspective underlines the constructivist idea of ethnicity in a sense that the assertion of “Türkiyeli” or “our people” by Kurdish and Turkish communities is instrumental in acquiring power and advancing interests.

Finally, in terms of transposition of cultural practices, the use of interest alignment enables us to understand how the salience of many cultural practices is open to erosion and re-enactment. The cultural practices transposed to the host country are understood as instrumental in overcoming adverse circumstances. While being wage labourers in the textile industry contributed to the dissolution of *imece/zibare* in the work place, small business ownership has led to the re-emergence of this collective practice.

With regard to dissolution and ossification of gender roles, patriarchal relationships attached to the mode of production were initially dissolved and reproduced according to the changes in the British economy. Initially, the shift towards waged labour in factories, where all men and women had to perform the same tasks for equal wages, led to the changes in village-scale practices such as relationships and women’s gendered roles performed for the reproduction of the family. Turkish-speaking women had greater control over their own earnings and had a higher degree of autonomy with respect to their decisions. The structural shift from the textile industry to catering and retail businesses in the KT communities caused women not only to lose an independent source of income and a large network of often female colleagues in the textile industry but also to find themselves sucked backed into the kinship system which emphasises patrilinearity.

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