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*The Capacity to Engage? Assessing Nonprofits and Immigrant
Engagement in Social Cities*

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ABSTRACT

“Best practices,” derived from social capital theory and new public management models now drive “good practices” in European and transnational standards for urban community renewal. The emphasis on *organizational capacity* over *mobilizing capacity* heightens the tension between social movement and social capital models for generating engagement and interacts with immigrant participation in several ways: (1) the social capital model emphasizes resident input in policy implementation and deemphasizes social movement goals of mobilizing residents to set the urban policy agenda, (2) programs employing standards for organizational capacity favor professionalized community institutions to deliver broad-spectrum programs, rather than those serving the interests of specific sub-groups, such as immigrants, and (3) new public management models deemphasize community level political mobilization of community residents and organizations, but stress creating horizontal and vertical linkages between residents, government officials, public and private agencies. In calculating the risks and benefits of engaging in urban renewal programs, groups servicing immigrant residents are more likely to be cautious in contacts with public officials and less likely to attempt rigorous linkage building that could risk disengaging their constituencies. Taken in combination, these elements suggest a dampening rather than mobilizing effect on immigrant organizations in urban revitalization programs that apply a social capital model. This paper examines the role of immigrant residents in community rebuilding efforts and tests the hypothesis that the social capital model implicit in the Social Cities approach lessens immigrant participation. Findings are reported from a three-city (Berlin, Hamburg, Dortmund) study of immigrant participation in German community revitalization and “Social City” programs. The paper reports highest participation levels by immigrants in sites where immigrants were engaged in early planning stages and heavy outreach to already active, immigrant organizations was employed. It does not find higher levels of participation resulting from unique aspects of Social City. Both Social City sites and a site not funded by the program produced more immigrant engagement where outreach and networking with existing immigrant groups was employed.

Introduction

The current peak in global migration is having its strongest impact on the densest and often poorest urban neighborhoods. In European cities, where significant migration began in the 1950s, immigrant communities are maturing, communities are networking, intercity and transnational organizations are supporting local efforts in providing community and education services, and cultural institution-building. Emerging *in tandem*, a new global language is framing standards, or “best practices,” in rebuilding distressed city neighborhoods. Derived from social capital theory and new public management models, standards that shape community revitalization stress the organizational capacity of city administration and service-providing community non-profit organizations supported by the three rudiments of new public management: assembling the stakeholders in a particular program area, pooling public and private resources, and using integrative administrative practices to focus related agencies on a shared target. These priorities interface with the emergent notion in the social sciences that civic engagement is positively associated with high levels of trust and networking and shared community norms of reciprocity or, taken together, “social capital.” Fed by early research findings that social capital enhances “engagement,” public policies that set standards for “engaging” program “stakeholders” in community revitalization programs began to flourish. As characterized by Hambleton (2002), the new city management, managerial and democratic trends have reached a point of synergy. From the OBAZ Program in the Netherlands to the American Empowerment Zones, the Neighborhood Renewal Strategy in the UK and Social City Program in Germany, universal and recurrent themes are revitalization through civic engagement and assembling public and private regeneration partners (Bocqué et al., 2003; Lelieveldt, 2004; Sander, 2002).

With early international assessments now emerging, the findings on the ability to generate community involvement are decidedly mixed, but the widespread adaptation of the social capital paradigm to urban policy is undeterred and continuing its “sweep” through global policy networks (Mayer, 2003). Diverse challenges are reported including public administrators resisting the decentralized and integrated nature of social community regeneration programs (Blanc, 2001), community residents opting out of participation (Hanhoerster, 2000), or attempting to assert more control over decision making than administrators bargained for (Bockmeyer, 2000). Blanc argues that difficulties are tied to implementing “ready to use” solutions universally. As he observes, “What is relevant in a specific context might be irrelevant elsewhere (2002, p.224). What is generally absent in the growing body of social capital research is a focus on what impact the community development approach is having on immigrant communities. The discussion below assesses the impact of the social capital and new city management emphases on immigrant, community level participation in German urban regeneration programs, principally the Social City program. The paper outlines Social City goals, presents four revitalization cases where immigrants are a significant proportion of the site population, and analyzes the impact of the Social City program on immigrant participation in community revitalization. Finally, the paper addresses the potential of the

Social City approach, contrasted with self-organization, to increase immigrant engagement in revitalizing distressed areas.

Social Capital, Community Development and the Social Cities Program

For community development practitioners and scholars, urban communities have widely come to be viewed as instruments for addressing the needs of disadvantaged sub-groups, including low-income families, seniors and ethnic minorities, by generating investment in neighborhoods through links to public officials and private for- and non-profit investors (Chaskin et al., 2001; Vidal & Keating, 2004). The notion of community development as a “place-based approach” to generate assets for disadvantaged areas (Vidal & Keating, 2004, 125) has become so extensive in the United States that building linkages to investors and securing funding have become dominant activities for community organizations engaged in neighborhood revitalization (Bockmeyer, 2003; Silverman, 2003). Community based initiatives and advocacy groups have largely been replaced by or metamorphose into so-called community development corporations (CDCs)—by 1999 numbering approximately 3,600. Their emphasis on market place goals is indicated by their definition as “nonprofit community-based organizations whose distinctive feature is their focus on fostering physical and economic assets in their communities” (Vidal and Keating, 2004, 127). Scholars, looking for community attributes that would predict the ability of community residents to cooperate in collectively beneficial endeavors, found social capital—norms of reciprocity, high levels of trust and networking—to be vital (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1993). Whether the concept of social capital emerged from the anti-poverty approach of building assets, networking and linking to external resources, or helped produce it, the notions of community development and social capital have become fully intertwined and globally applied.

The European Union URBAN Community Initiative program is one attempt to apply the social capital and new management reform approach to community renewal practices. Germany’s component is the joint nation/state effort, “Districts with Special Development Needs – The Socially Integrative City,”—or simply “Social City”—which began to run in September 1999. Far from an entirely new approach, Social City placed under its umbrella various related renewal programs already running, such as North Rhine-Westphalia’s “Districts with Special Development Needs,” which emerged in 1993, and Hamburg’s Project to Combat Poverty, created in 1994 (Becker, Franke, Löhr, Rösner, 2002). Others, as in Berlin, were launched as new initiatives, but were applied in districts where layers of urban renewal programs had been applied since the late 1970s (Bockmeyer, 1994; Schubert, 2002). In urban sites where distressed communities have witnessed a succession of city, state and national renewal programs, Social City is simply the latest taking its place on the stage. As Häusserman (2002) argues, Social City would demonstrate a significant new direction by steering urban policy away from managing disadvantaged districts and toward integrating them gradually into the larger city through social rights and integration; the time and public investment required to address the complexity of mediating social and market forces to treat the source of distress, however, are contradicted by the program’s scale and private sector approach. URBAN I, the first round of the EU effort, ran for just five years, from 1994 to 1999, in 118 cities. URBAN

It was to extend the the URBAN Community Initiative, but narrowed its focus to just 70 “cities and neighbourhoods in crisis,” while expanding eligibility beyond urban centers to “towns and cities.” And as much as providing anti-poverty programs, URBAN II emphasized a European exchange of information about “good practices” and “actions to build the capacity of urban actors” (European Commission, 2003). With such a long list of ambitious goals, the commitment to including residents in program decision making is threatened with becoming an outside target, and one that in some cases is missed even when projects obtain other goals (Blanc, 2002). Social City may be nonetheless unique where it alters processes for community interest articulation. After decades of urban renewal strategies, the extent of voice residents achieve can ultimately determine whether revitalization programs elicit enthusiastic participation, disinterest and disengagement or in the worst-case scenario, can reinforce a sense of betrayal or distrust left from earlier renewal experiences.

What is Different About Social Cities?

One unique aspect of Social Cities is that it denies it is an urban program. Of the 249 districts selected in Germany, only 23% are in cities with a population over 500,000 and of those, some sites hug city edges, such as those targeting dense, high-rise housing developments built during the 1960s and 1970s as settlements within cities. Only approximately one-fifth of the Social City districts in Germany are in inner-city urban areas (Becker et al., 2002). The challenges of tailoring the program to specific district types are manifest in the program’s large range of districts: urban and smaller cities, inner-city or city edge, and areas as varied as massive eastern German housing estates (*Plattensiedlungen*) and densely built urban inner-core immigrant districts (Becker et al.). The tremendous diversity of districts challenges district level administrators to stretch-to-fit the basic program tenets to individual, wide-ranging problem areas. Germany’s Social City program sets three ambitious goals: to encourage resource “pooling” of various sources toward targeted urban districts with special needs, to generate integrative administration through “flexible management,” and to utilize district level resident networks and organizations to activate program participation. The built-in contradiction appears in the top-down management required by the two former goals, which discourages inhabitant participation required in the latter.

The clearest emphasis is on “pooling resources” drawn from various public departments, private sector resources, including community non-profit organizations and housing companies. Financing requirements of the program call for inclusion of so-called third-parties such as employment programs, housing associations, and the European Structural Fund (ARGEBAU, Section 6.1, Guidelines of 1 March 2000, quoted in Becker et al., 2002, p.9). The emphasis is to be on coordinating various existing resources from multiple programs and sponsors in a “wholistic approach.” Given the scant investment in Social Cities at approximately 230 million Euros renewable annually, critics observe that the neighborhood management approach may also be viewed as a cost-cutting strategy to convert grassroots community initiatives into service providers (Mayer, 2002).¹ This aspect of Social Cities raises one of the most widely held critiques of the community development approach: that it converts community advocacy groups into “more formally structured organizations focused on policy implementation” (Silverman, 2003, 2731).

How extensively residents are able to participate in advance of program implementation is a key test of the resident engagement goals of Social City.

A second Social Cities goal is closely related to resource pooling and emerges from global trends in new public management to integrate diverse policy areas and target them on concrete geographical areas. The so-called integrative approach demonstrates an emphasis on reorganizing the management of resources rather than applying new investment. The range of departments responsible for youth, seniors, women, training, migrant integration are encouraged to contribute portions of their budgets to Social City programs (Becker et al., 2002)—a process which is repeated by state and city levels to the extent possible. Using this approach, Social City emphasis is drawn away from targeted groups such as immigrants, women, or the disabled, as emphasis is placed on promoting social partners in community building. Concurrently, attention to unique group interests is purposefully diminished. Community-wide representatives seated on Neighborhood Management panels deliberate on issues that can be viewed as addressing community-wide concerns. In the effort to find common themes in which all community “stakeholders” share a general purpose interest, however, attention tends to focus on the least common denominator: services deliverable at the lowest cost such as improving playgrounds, enlisting parents to create after-school homework help centers, street—or sometimes, public school bathroom—beautification. The ongoing priorities of existing immigrant nonprofit organizations, for example, to mobilize immigrant parents to advocate for an increased presence of Turkish-ancestry teachers in public school and bilingual education, are less likely to appear among new community priorities than after school homework help for neighborhood school children or repainting playground equipment.

Social City and the Capacity to Engage

Taken together, resource pooling and integrative or, “flexible management” are to increase cooperation between levels of government, between departments—from social welfare and youth to economic development and housing—and public and private entities. Social Cities aims to weaken bureaucratic territoriality and requires centralized management to bring diverse players and interests to achieve coordinated implementation. As DIFU researchers acknowledge: “the implementation phase generally require[s] more top-down proposals to get the ball rolling (Becker et al., 2002, p.16). Centralizing administrative elements, however, creates new obstacles to encouraging resident engagement in the program on the district level, obstacles that are common to social capital model programs. As Silverman found in Detroit, community development groups became “sub-contractors in a subordinate position to government, private and larger non-profit sector organizations.” This hampered their ability to play an advocacy role in policy formation (2003, p. 2736). Program expectations are that residents might share ideas and “cooperate” in program implementation, as described by DIFU, without scrambling new managerial goals.

The addition of ideas from residents and their cooperation in implementing programmes and projects is an integral part of activation. However, inhabitants’ ideas often clash with municipal government’s concrete project design concepts, timetables and performance indicators” (Becker et al., 2002, p.26).

As an effort to restructure the administration of urban community development programs, the Social City program battles severe internal discontinuities. As a top-down structure, residents' input comes into play only in the final stages of program construction. In this late stage, residents are invited to cooperate with professional district-level administrative staff to devise an "Integrative Action Plan" as a tool "to establish a common self-image and group awareness in the neighborhood and discuss urban measures, projects and procedures" (Becker et al., 2002, p.16). The critical role of opening the process is left entirely to district "managers" who, as outsiders, must identify residents' organizations, networks and potential participants and create strategies to generate their involvement. Since the program is largely in place by this final step, a potential weakness in Social Cities is that residents' organizations have few compelling incentives to work Social City activities into their existing agenda. DIFU's three year assessment of Social City observes that activating residents relies upon the presence of onsite "experts and the availability of contact points, and that, "[w]here possible, local individuals and groups already involved in the neighborhood should assume responsibility for its management" (Becker et al., p. 23). Particularly since program funding levels are low and their duration short-term, community groups have little compelling motivation to take on such a task. This may explain DIFU's final assessment that:

Efforts to marshal disadvantaged population segments in particular must be redoubled, because we are failing to reach certain people (e.g. migrant families, the long-term unemployed, the elderly) in many districts. Many activities remain middle-class affairs (Becker et al., 2002, p. 28)

Globally, and across a variety of revitalization programs, the inability to engage neighborhood residents appears to be their most fundamental weakness. Field research points to a variety of explanatory variables. Van den Berg et al. (2003) attributed Strasbourg's low engagement level to the reliance on partisan actors and poor communications of program goals. Links to the community were undermined by elections and the decline of public support for those elected officials associated with the program. Blanc (2003), furthermore, finds in France that residents fear becoming "active citizens," while city officials are hesitant to relinquish control over local programs.

Is Social City an Inclusive Renewal Program?

The well-being of Germany's sizeable immigrant population and improving social and economic inclusion have become the focus recently of both German social policy and the European Union in its commitment to reducing the levels of social exclusion for targeted populations. Europe's large migrant population is one area of greatest concern. In Germany, as in other EU nations, inner city, urban areas have witnessed increased concentrations of immigrant residents. Faist and Häussermann (1996) reported that after nearly three decades of immigration, by 1987, of the total foreign population, over 71% lived in urban centers, and almost 44% in inner city districts compared with only about 56% of Germans residing in urban areas, and only 27% of the total population settling in the inner city (p.93). This trend toward immigrant concentration has continued, particularly as the ethnic-German demographic trends indicate both decline overall and a shift away from urban areas.

Further, Germany's National Action Plan for Inclusion (NAPincl) to the EU (Huster, Benz & Boeckh, 2003) on measures taken to address affected groups, found that on various measures of socio-economic well-being, conditions for immigrants remain substandard compared with the German population. In occupational areas, 51 percent are employed as unskilled laborers, compared with 10 percent of Germans. In terms of educational success and training for vocations, immigrant students are faring poorly: nineteen percent of immigrant students drop out of school without taking qualifying exams compared with only 8 percent of German students; and only 10 percent of immigrant students (compared with 26 percents of Germans) who take the exams pass them (p.36). The lack of vocational and academic skills as a determinant of high unemployment is underscored when assessing those immigrants who are unemployed. The German NAP found that 74.5% of the foreign unemployed residents had not completed vocational training, compared with only 36.2% of unemployed Germans (Strategies, 2003, p. 10). Inadequate preparation for the job market may explain the high immigrant unemployment rates, which reached 21.6 percent by 2003 (Huster, Benz & Boeckh, 2003, p.15). Most alarming is the poverty rate for non-Germans, which now stands at 21.6 percent compared with 6.6 percent for Germans (p.37).

To combat economic distress in immigrant communities, the German NAP cites the Social City program as its most important strategy, setting as its key goal, "obtaining equality for socially disadvantaged citizens." And central to accomplishing Social City goals, it suggests, is "involv[ing] local players in processes and decisions. The activities of the players on the spot are a key prerequisite for the longer term success of the programme" (Strategies, 2003, p.23). The now decades-long settlement of immigrants in major European cities and emphasis on integrating diverse populations into civil society has produced a substantial nonprofit sector of immigrant and non-immigrant organizations serving urban, largely low-income, high density immigrant communities. As the social capital model has taken hold of service delivery, immigrant-serving nonprofits have been encouraged for their presumed ability to create social capital, to contract out community services to non-profit providers, and as Huntoon (2001) has observed in Spanish cities, to use immigrant groups as a "communication channel" between immigrants and government (p.158). Social capital becomes redefined as a device for shrinking immigrant demands on the public sector. As Huntoon views social capital, for instance, it is "a web of association which helps individuals succeed and decreases the need for state social welfare support or likelihood of state intervention in social conflicts" (2001, p. 157).

Expanding the web of neighborhood association can further be viewed as part of the larger Europeanization process. Across a range of EU-funded programs, mechanisms are now in place for building local horizontal partnerships and vertical EU-local ties to promote civil society and build multi-level governance. Germany's federal system already has distributed many policy areas to the states (*Länder*), including urban development. It has now made "subtle re-orientations within the policy networks" (John, 2001, p.83) to disperse EU program administration to public and private, formal and informal "partners." Welfare non-profit organizations, for example, demanded and received a role in shaping the National Action Plan on social inclusion (NAPincl). As a part of Social Cities, the way in which German charity organizations gained a foothold in urban renewal policies is also key to understanding how a competition would emerge

between nonprofit organizations at later stages. URBAN I and URBAN II community regeneration efforts, in other words, are simply a continuation of trends toward local governance over formal government. And while this can result in passing a greater role to community-level non-profit organizations, it can also heighten both the stakes for those groups and the competition between them for funding and service delivery contracts. As Huster et al. write of the role of social inclusion policy “partners,” “on a number of concrete topics, there is also a competition between the partners, either in improving living conditions or in economizing, or in reforming the use of the legal and financial resources” (2003, p.44). In other words, social policy partners come to the table with different and competing interests, whether immigrant-based organizations seeking support for their community projects, traditional charity groups competing for contract to serve low income area, public administrators seeking to both reduce social conflict and improve service delivery efficiency, or urban planners hoping to realize new notions of community redesign. As some “partners” emerge with greater decision making voice, their priorities also take on greater strength.

European scholars now liken these trends toward *governance*—meant here as the use of informal networks of individuals and interests in decision making, rather than traditional formal, governmental structures—to the United States’ long experience with urban regimes, non-profitization and the growing use of informal governing structures at the local or neighborhood level (Hambleton, 2002; John, 2001).ⁱⁱ In the United States, these processes have produced larger, professionalized community development corporations (CDCs) and comprehensive community initiatives (CCIs) rather than broad band participation by neighborhood residents (Bockmeyer, 2003). Examination of the impact of these processes on community residents’ engagement in community decision making in Europe indicates similar concerns with increased complexity, fragmentation of political institutions and diffuse policy networks (John, 2001). As Peter John concluded in comparing traditional governmental structures to new governance, current transformations threaten the possibility that “governance can weaken democracy.” Representative government is designed to provide accountability and opportunities to organize new populations through political institutions, such as parties, to “achieve political action” (2001, p. 155). Since many non-EU immigrants may not be citizens with voting rights and the ability to participate in political parties, their access to informal arrangements could democratize decision making for them by opening access for non-citizen residents at the community level. When those processes, however, also place immigrant associations in competition with professionalized German non-profit organizations, the resulting intensified competition challenges an evolving immigrant nonprofit network. The possible outcomes—loss of funding or sponsorship for programs serving immigrant communities—reinforces the notion that informal governance structures may be a chimera, rather than a realization of inclusion. Additionally, as Hambleton (2002) observes, the challenge for the new city management elements of URBAN II programs is to avoid a public perception that governance could create structures with a “dangerous democratic deficit” (p. 153).

Immigrants and Engagement

Even where urban regeneration plans have elicited community input, immigrants and ethnic minority residents are those least often participating. In a survey of seven European countries running urban regeneration programs, the persistent challenge to achieving participation across EU sites might be summarized as two-fold: low levels of trust in potential partners (including renewal officials), and the Social Cities approach of overriding community networks to seat diverse representatives on community steering committees. The absence of strong trust is anticipated in most participating cities resulting from decades of centralized urban renewal decision making. A top-down approach faded in many countries since the 1970s in France, Germany, England, the United States. In others—notably the Netherlands—renewal remained centralized throughout the 1980s. Reversing perceptions that inhabitant-led decision making is unimportant, unwelcome, or merely symbolic and establishing expectations that participation is necessary and genuine, is a gradual process (Franke, 2003) evolving, in many cases, over decades (Bockmeyer, 2000).

Factors explaining overall low political participation rates in all forms of engagement in the “receiving” country have included low socioeconomic status and low educational attainment (Verba, Schlozman & Brady, 1995), lack of interest in the receiving nation due to intentions to eventually return to the nation of origin (Jones-Correa, 1998), a lack of formal citizenship rights (Soysal, 1994), and a rational calculation of perceived risks and benefits performed by potential participants regardless of immigrant status (Jones-Correa, 1998; McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly, 1997). In immigrants’ calculations, positive outreach by politicians in the “receiving nation” indicates likely benefits that may surpass the perceived risks of threats to legal status or increased demands by sending country politics. In what Jones-Correa (1998) characterizes as a catch-22 situation, however, those immigrants who are not already mobilized are not valued by politicians and if they are already mobilized they do not need outreach by politicians (pp. 89-90). The chief alternative for immigrants is self-mobilization through immigrant associations which, to avoid controversy and risk to noncitizen members, take on the nonpolitical identities of cultural, social, or family-oriented groups (Jones-Correa, 1998). More crucially, immigrant associations seek to avoid both cooptation by receiving country politicians and demands on them by sending country politics. Jones-Correa likened immigrant “mobilizations” to adapting to their “in-between existence:”

The “politics of in-between,” expressed through the organizational and group life of immigrants, shape how they mobilize collectively, and the timing of this mobilization. In this sense, immigrant politics are not simply irregular, sporadic mobilization, or it might be viewed from the outside. Rather, these mobilizations are like ocean islands—occasionally breaking the surface of the water, but as part of a continuous organizational life that sustains these startling appearances in the larger public space (1998, p.147).

Forging participatory urban planning processes is particularly impacted by the mechanisms of immigrant engagement. Neighborhood improvement associations in use in Santa Ana, California were found by Harwood and Myers (2002) to draw voluntary participation by largely middle-class homeowners who are citizens, and for fewer of the

renters and foreign-born residents who had become a majority of city residents, leading to a characterization of the majority immigrant residents as the “invisible population” (2002, p. 87). This unequal position led to a dominance of middle-class issues in the neighborhood associations such as over-crowding controls and limits on street vending, garage sales and “swap meets” used by newer low-income immigrants to make low cost purchases.

A now substantial body of research on immigrant participation in the United States underscores the role, not simply of citizenship status—neighborhood associations and immigrant organizations, after all, are normally open to all interested residents—but of additional participatory skills (Bedolla, 2000; Jones-Correa, 1998; Verba, Schlozman & Brady, 1995). Voting is facilitated by educational attainment and income. But particularly when speaking of problem-solving activities, like the community revitalization planning under investigation here, the key determinant of participation is the presence of civic skills such as writing, public speaking, and organizational skills needed to engage in activities over time, contrasted with voting participation which is a one-time act (Verba, Schlozman & Brady, 1995, p. 359). As communities are asked to “engage” in programs centered in neighborhoods, as in the Social City program, it often falls to public officials accustomed to controlling decision making, not only to transfer parts of their domain, but to teach decision making skills to lower income residents with less experience in deliberative processes (Jacquier, 2003).

One implication of these findings is that the path to successful inclusive renewal is through the development of strong civic skills via immigrant self-organization or through careful intervention and outreach to facilitate the networking of existing immigrant non-profits. After more than a decade of urban settlement by German’s largest immigrant ethnic group, the Turks, a range has developed of small self-help neighborhood groups, secular and Mosque associations, inter-city parents’ associations, professional associations, explicitly political committees targeting politics both in Turkey and in the “receiving” nation, Germany. Particularly before the German Republic took steps toward citizenship reforms in 1990 and 2000, voluntary organizations served the dual purposes of providing services to fellow immigrants and mobilizing immigrants under several large umbrella groups to advocate for citizenship reforms.ⁱⁱⁱ Of the three cities presented here—Berlin, Hamburg and Dortmund—Berlin had the most active nonprofit sector, with groups organized city-wide and as many as 42 nonprofit organizations serving immigrants in the district of Kreuzberg, some of which are also represented by two large umbrella groups, the Turkish Community of Berlin (*Türkische Gemeinde zu Berlin*) (TGB), and the Turkish Union in Berlin (*Türkischer Bund Berlin*) (TBB). Both umbrella groups are also found in Hamburg and have had loose ties with those associations. In addition, the Turkish Parents Associations are found throughout Germany, are members of the TGB, and keep close intercity ties between their member organizations. Dortmund has a substantially lower level of Turkish, and other immigrant, nonprofit organizing.

Methodology

The project examines three urban neighborhoods that are among those with the highest concentrations of immigrants in Germany: Berlin-Kreuzberg, Dortmund-Nordstadt and

Hamburg-Wilhelmsburg. The three districts are also targeted as urban revitalization or Social City sites and were selected in order to assess levels of immigrant inclusion in community revitalization. Qualitative analysis of planning documents, materials from nonprofit organizations, and archival data is combined with 39 semi-structured personal interviews with 45 interviewees conducted between August, 1999 and January, 2004, including 15 interviews in immigrant and German nonprofit organizations in the three sites and interviews with city and state urban development and planning officials, neighborhood management leadership, immigrant officials in all three cities, political party, union and housing officials responsible for immigrant affairs as well as other relevant actors such as academic experts and other community-level officials. Relevant events and meetings were also observed.

Three Cases in Revitalization of Immigrant Communities

Dortmund-Nordstadt: Continuing Projects

Although the administrative structure for Social Cities differs from earlier urban renewal programs, on the ground level the community projects it sponsors are either closely similar in approach or, more common, use projects that were created by nonprofit organizations prior to URBAN II in many cases. A chief criticism of many current national neighborhood revitalization programs has been that cities are simply making use of “an accumulation of existing projects” (Kloosterman & Broeders, 2002, p.136). The first of the cases to be examined here, that of Dortmund-Nordstadt, is illustrative of districts long subjected to renewal attempts. Nordstadt is historically an industrial workers’ district within view of the steel production sites that are today largely at rest. Many area workers were attracted to Dortmund as “guest workers” on contract from countries including Turkey, Greece, Italy and Portugal beginning in the mid-1950s. When the largest coal concern employing them, Hansa-Huckarde, closed and Hoesch steel operations dropped to half between 1964 and 1985, many Nordstadt immigrant residents, who had settled permanently in Germany, became part of the long-term unemployed (Högl, 1994; Staubach, 1995). Like the bulk of other German Social City areas, it has also seen layers of urban renewal approaches applied over the decades since its more economically vital years. It was slated for urban renewal by the mid-1960s and was the site of numerous controversies over clearance projects, planning priorities and the role of residents in community planning throughout the 1970s and 80s (Staubach, 1995). As Dortmund lost much of its steel, coal and beer production and stumbled through a rough transition to a now largely service economy, Nordstadt was particularly hard hit by high unemployment and outward migration by German-ancestry residents. Nordstadt has the highest concentration of immigrants in Dortmund. In its three statistical districts of Hafen, Nordmarket, and Borsigplatz, the immigrant population comprised, respectively, 33%, 44% and 45% of their total resident populations, with the largest group, at approximately 41% of immigrants, having Turkish ancestry (Stadt Dortmund Statistik und Wahlen, 1999, Tables 25, 26). In 1996 the district became the focus of an integrated administrative program intended to network various renewal elements—economic, social and urban development—already underway (Ministerium für Stadtentwicklung, Kulture und Sport des NRW, 1998; p.21). The program, “Areas with Special Development Needs” was not a radical break with old approaches, but a more subtle knitting together

of ongoing efforts. Under the program, the state administrative offices for economic development had the primary responsibility for choosing projects within revitalization areas drawn by municipalities. City development officials then prioritized the slate of projects, at times taking cues from political relationships. As a project planner outlined, “Sometimes political actors said for various political reasons, ‘this district needs to be renewed.’” Another project worker said with more confidence, “Political parties decide about the projects. At the neighborhood level they try to control the process. They are reluctant to give away decision making.” At other times projects were attributed to community residents. But no interviewees mentioned significant participation by immigrant residents. One observed instead:

As long as parties play a role, there is no real benefit from the process to immigrants. There is no chance to decide anything. There are many reasons not to get involved.

The designation of Nordstadt as an URBAN II site in 2000 also did not signal dramatic transformations in revitalization strategies. It expanded media and public attention on positive developments in the area and, most importantly, added a new layer of funding. Of total funding for the Dortmund-Nordstadt initiative URBAN II contributed 28.6 million Euros, the European Fund for Regional Development added 10 million. The State of Nordrhein-Westfalen and the city of Dortmund contributed 15.3 million euros together and other public agencies and private sources added 3 million (URBAN II, 2003). While the longer list of contributors reinforces URBAN II emphases on the notions of building partnerships and focusing various agency efforts on special needs areas, it also indicates the current uniformity in urban revitalization concepts and goals. Nordrhein-Westfalen had already accumulated a decade of experience in “Communities with Special Renewal Needs.” In this sense, it may be more accurate to characterize URBAN II as a contributor to the ongoing state-city Dortmund effort in Nordstadt, rather than a unique effort; some of the Neighborhood Management staff worked previously in funded communities with special needs projects; projects funded through URBAN II had been earlier proposed to the City of Dortmund Dept. of Urban Development.

One fresh aspect under URBAN II is the addition of Neighborhood Management in Nordstadt. The management offices opened in 2002 and many of the projects have not yet been launched. Thus far, the managers appear to have made some gains over the more centralized administration of “Communities with Special Renewal Needs.” Of the three Neighborhood Management Offices, at least two have immigrant community residents, and long time community nonprofit activists in positions as managers. In another step that indicates greater community control, two projects long proposed by nonprofits as promoting the interests of resident immigrants, have been designated as URBAN II projects. One is a House of Culture, or meeting place and office space long sought by immigrant nonprofits, but rejected by local politicians as too costly; another is an conflict resolution project sponsored by Nordstadt’s leading nonprofit for participatory community planning, Planerladen e.V. While these are incremental measures in promoting the local interests of community residents, they may indicate a greater community role.

Berlin-Kreuzberg: Capacity for Whom?

As in the cases of Dortmund-Nordstadt and Hamburg-Wilhelmsburg, Berlin-Kreuzberg has a history as an economically distressed community where affordable, if at times substandard, housing has drawn new immigrants over the last four decades. In the two Neighborhood Management districts designated for Kreuzberg, Wrangelkiez and Wassertorplatz, both claim immigrant concentrations of over 40%; Wassertorplatz managers cite a district non-German ancestry concentration of about 55%. Both districts cite unemployment rates of approximately 30% and very high proportions of residents receiving public assistance, with Wassertorplatz claiming 42% of its residents as receiving assistance (Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, 2004). As the neighborhood closest to the Berlin Wall until its fall in 1989, Kreuzberg has a long history of population loss, disinvestments, in-migration of immigrants and layers of urban clearance, renewal, “careful renewal.” Throughout this period, immigrants have organized, networked and built large and stable organization that have taken on issues such as education reform and bilingual programs, voting and naturalization rights, employment opportunities and anti-discrimination measures. Kreuzberg is the address for three major immigrant non-profit umbrella organizations: Turkish Union of Berlin (TBB), Turkish Community of Berlin (TGB) and the Turkish Parents Association, part of a Germany-wide network. In addition, immigrants have won elected office in the district legislature and the Berlin Parliament.

Despite both the size of the immigrant population and the remarkable mobilization of immigrants in Kreuzberg, there are weak ties between the newly established Neighborhood Management teams and these organizations. Some part of the explanation can be found in the administrative parameters set in creating Neighborhood Management in Berlin. Guidelines developed for hiring teams required that staff be hired from outside the neighborhood, that a proportion of members for the jury to choose the projects to be funded would be selected from a randomly generated list of neighborhood residents who would agree to participate, and that pre-existing organizations could only be represented in a portion of 49% of the jury representatives. The purpose of both measures was to dilute the sometimes overbearing voice of district activists and organizations. In the case of Wrangelkiez, the impact did not significantly diminish immigrant representation. Both team managers are of immigrant ancestry and immigrant representation on the district jury was strong. In Wassertorplatz, however, all members of the management team are of German ancestry, and the selection jury appears to underrepresent immigrant residents.

Both district juries have “engaged” by voting examining project proposals and choosing among them. In this sense, an element of deliberation was achieved in Neighborhood Management. In the current stage of the program, the jury is deactivated, and the projects selected are mostly implemented. Among the projects in both districts are after school homework help for school children, beautification projects of streets, gardens and play areas, interior painting projects for recovering substance abusers, repainting of public school bathrooms. Overall, the projects are both short-term and, in many cases, insignificant given the dimension of revitalization needs in both districts. To the extent that new ties between residents, local immigrant organizations, city-state officials and other actors are formed, some more lasting impact might result. Interviews with local project sponsors and nonprofit organizations, however, do not indicate that linkages have been created or networking promoted. In one case, an immigrant

organization reached out to Social City officials and urged them to go into immigrant districts and work through local immigrant organizations. Their recommendation was that district managers work with at least five immigrant organizations in each district. Instead, Neighborhood Management was first constructed and then new staff searched for contacts with immigrants.

No one complained though. To use a German phrase, ‘Berliners are happy to have their own soup.’

In other words, when local groups were funded to do a small project, that the Social City program fails in other goals is of less concern. Other groups interviewed ‘didn’t bother’ to apply for funds that they deemed insignificant. Overall, there was limited evidence that either the Berlin Senat or Neighborhood Management staff reached out sufficiently to expand networks beyond what they were. If the case of Wassertorplatz, the challenge seemed to identify the extant community network. More importantly, with district lines determined by city level officials and consultants hired to assist them, the formula for selecting district jurors determined by the Senat Department for Urban Development, the remaining areas in which district residents can participate are narrowed substantially.

Hamburg-Wilhelmsburg: Knocking on Doors

Wilhelmsburg takes a unique position among the cases presented here. It is a large and diverse community on an island in the Elbe River seeming, in many regards, to have slight connections with the bustling commercial and cultural center of Hamburg. The island has stretches of countryside, areas with traces of industry, and a number of residential neighborhoods with small shopping areas. Historically, Wilhelmsburg was Germany’s shipping port and point of emigration. As such, it has represented a point of departure. Ironically, it is now one of Hamburg’s three areas with highest concentrations of immigrants. In its demographic make-up Hamburg’s Wilhelmsburg is similar to Dortmund-Nordstadt and Berlin-Kreuzberg. What its remote site provided for Hamburg were large, undeveloped tracts of land for affordable housing. Large housing developments were constructed, like those in the neighborhood of Kirchdorf-Süd. Immigrants were attracted to the area in part for its low-cost housing developments. By 2003 the immigrant proportion of Wilhelmsburg was almost 35%, the majority of which is Turkish, compared with a 15.5% immigrant population for Hamburg (Hamburg, 2003). There are also indications of economic distress: Nearly 38% of the neighborhood’s housing is publicly supported, in contrast to Hamburg’s total of 17%; unemployment for Wilhelmsburg was high at 10.7% in 2003, compared with 7.3% for Hamburg; and the proportion of public assistance recipients is almost double that of the larger city (13.2%, in comparison with Hamburg’s total of 7.1%) (Hamburg, 2003).

To address the district’s social isolation, economic distress and to create resident engagement, in 1997 a group of city planners, working with the Hamburg Department of Urban Development, or STEB (*Stadtentwicklungsbehörde Hamburg*), and associated with the local university, created a participatory community planning group, MIT-Wil (*Mitwirken in Wilhelmsburg*). The organizational office, *MIT-Büro*, as it describes itself, takes the work and functions of neighborhood management (Machule et al., 2003). But the structure and overall approach of MIT-Wil is a stark contrast to the neighborhood management center participating in the Social City program. In fact, it is important to note that Wilhelmsburg is not a designated URBAN II or Social City area. And yet it has

elicited a higher level of engagement than the Social City sites discussed above. Beginning in 1997, Mit-Wil divided the island into three regions and formed a project group for each and several project groups for other specific interests (such as “living together”). All relevant community organizations and individuals were then invited to create community plans and projects at regular group meetings. Mit-Büro, anchored by a core group of volunteer professional planners, worked monthly to conceptualize plans, pulled community members into meetings and steered groups toward decisions. Planners then worked with the Department of Urban Development to fund and realize the plans. Documentation of meetings indicates that they were very well attended, and without the usual drop-off in interest once ideas are hatched. In interviews, planners explained that they used every possible tactic to keep groups members engaged, including visiting immigrant nonprofit offices regularly to keep residents involved. The commitment evidenced by ‘knocking on doors’ or ‘doing whatever it takes,’ did seem to produce results. Although immigrant residents recounted similar feelings of exclusion heard in interviews in Berlin and Dortmund, when questioned about the planning efforts in Wilhelmsburg, responses were more positive. A number of small immigrant nonprofit organizations are present in Wilhelmsburg and many of Germany’s largest and most influential immigrant nonprofits are also active in Hamburg, and Wilhelmsburg specifically, but ethnic, political gender and religious differences create strong barriers to working together on the neighborhood level. The views that immigrant nonprofits have about one another as expressed in interviews—for example, that one is ‘fascist’ or that another will not work with women—would seem to confirm Mit-Wil’s notion that building partnerships between actors is not always a productive goal. Mit-Wil has attempted instead to create concrete topics or goals in community planning and to bring residents together regularly to work taking steps toward meeting goals. This approach seems to straddle the chief concerns heard on each side: by immigrant groups concerned that when Germans become involved in community concerns they make the decisions and fail to hear local immigrants’ views: “The problem is that no one asks immigrants. The needs are assumed;” and on the other where immigrant officials expressed frustration that immigrant organizations fail to understand what legal procedures must be undertaken to gain official group status, compete for government funding, and work independently toward their goals. One German official captured similar sentiments expressed by three:

OK, now we talked about it. Now you do it... They have the idea that they come with their begging to the government and some officials says, OK, we will make this happen. It is not done in Germany. You have to write it down; you have to go through a process.

Mit-Wil’s alternative approach is conceived as bringing parts of the community together “like a salad:”

The discussions are to fill in the gaps... Not partnerships, though, they don’t have to leave their worlds, but find some common ideas. MIT-Büro tries to stay in the background; their role is to say how this idea can be made into practice.

Given the difficulty of participatory planning for diverse communities, perhaps most impressive is that Mitwirken in Wilhelmsburg has survived and continues, to hold bi-monthly planning meetings.

Conclusions :

Social City and URBAN II are ongoing programs that seek to use an integrative approach to focus resources from a number of policy areas on distressed communities in a manner that attempts to engage local residents and build local capacity. This paper has attempted to assess whether this approach could be effective in communities where immigrants are concentrated. In comparing three sites in Germany to assess the early impact of Social City on immigrant engagement, the paper finds that although the program is still underway and progress will need continued monitoring, there are early indications that levels of immigrant participation in community revitalization are unlikely to increase significantly using the Social City approach. Four key points are summarized below.

First, projects receiving funding and competing for funding are rarely new initiatives, but are often previously unfunded nonprofit organization projects or are receiving aid to continue ongoing projects. Many projects appear to be sound efforts, but do not speak to unique elements within the Social City approach. In a related point, the nature of Social City decision making encourages organizations to “follow the funding” and apply for Social City designation if it increases the likelihood that their groups will receive city contracts; in other words, incremental efforts, rather than comprehensive goals and community planning, seem the result of Social City thus far.

Second, city officials, where possible, will use funding as part of a larger economic development and political agenda. If URBAN II funding can be joined to ongoing development projects favored by city and political party officials, it will be. Similarly, when city officials have an opportunity to steer support toward organizations aligned with party elites or supporters, they likely will (see also Krummacher et al., 2003; van den Berg et al., 2003). Particularly in the Dortmund site, local officials appeared most successful at maintaining close control over the regeneration process, but this is consistent with wider European experiences, as city administrators and politicians hesitate to relinquish local decision making (Blanc, 2002). In other words, the claim that Social Cities create bottom-up decision making would not seem, in all cases, to be true.

Third, although some individual projects could be of long-term value, given the short term nature of URBAN II (2001-2006), it is questionable whether it will enable projects to realize their goals. In what Krummacher et al. (2003) call “go and stop” support, Social City initiatives will have to seek continuing funding from other sources or end before they see results. Given the substantial time frame required to build trust between immigrant communities and public officials, and create networks within the communities, it is unlikely that a short-term program could accomplish these ambitious goals. Hamburg-Wilhelmsburg’s MIT-Wil effort appeared better able to create sustained resident engagement by using residents’ consistent inclusion in community planning over a longer time period.

More importantly, in most of the cases analyzed above, there is not yet evidence that Social City will substantially improve the engagement of immigrant residents in community revitalization decision making. While immigrant residents are present in some of the organizations and projects supported by URBAN II funding, and in some cases are employed as Neighborhood Management leadership or staff, the majority-minority demographics of all the sites examined here indicates a severe underrepresentation of immigrant interests in the Social City program. Of the cases presented above, Hamburg-Wilhelmsburg seems the most likely to gradually yield the

result of greater engagement. By bringing immigrant organizations and a good proportion of immigrant leadership together on a bi-monthly basis for an ongoing dialogue about community planning, relationships have time to mature and ties between city planners and the community have greater potential to develop into a meaningful exchange. More to the point, the highlighted social capital model goals of the Social City program to enhance networking on the community level and building bridges to city administration and the private sector appear overly ambitious given the political dynamics of the nonprofit sector and community development. Particularly when larger well-established charities are present to “represent” the interests of immigrants, the necessities of organizational maintenance pull them toward goals that will not necessarily align with the long term interests of immigrants in the community.

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ⁱ An initial 100DM annual investment by the federal government was increased in 2001 to 150DM and matched by the state and municipal levels to total 450DM (230 million Euro) (Becker et al., 2003; 6).

ⁱⁱ Stone's (1989) development of urban regime theory is often evoked to explain the function of governance in the United States. In contrast with European governance, however, Stone's use of *regime* specifies long term, stable, agenda-setting power by stakeholders and is usually applied in the U.S. to city-wide, not community-level governance; this is in stark contrast to the governmentally mandated citizens' councils or panels that give some form of input to residents in European community renewal programs. As John (2001) notes, governance may operate through relationships between individuals "in a diverse set of organizations located at various territorial levels" (p.9).

ⁱⁱⁱ The Naturalization Reform of January 1, 2000 granted German citizenship to children born in Germany of non-German parents if at least one had been a legal resident of Germany for eight years or more with a residence entitlement for at least 3 years. At age 23, however, to keep German citizenship the person must choose to give up their non-German citizenship or to relinquish German citizenship. The law also sped up the residency requirement needed when applying for naturalization to eight years from the earlier requirement of fifteen years (see Europäisches Forum für Migrationsstudium (efms), 2001).