

PICCOLO
- SALAT - BURGER - und mehr

**AL AKAWI Teigwaren &
Saal für Familien**

“New diversities”
and “urban arrival
infrastructures”?

The socio-spatial appropriation
and footprints of refugees in
Berlin-Neukölln

Acamp	2,50	3,50	4,50
Canberra	2,50	3,50	4,50
Minestrone	2,50	3,50	4,50
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Pollo al Chianti	2,50	3,50	4,50
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Mista	2,50	3,50	4,50
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Tauco	2,50	3,50	4,50
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Vegetaria	2,50	3,50	4,50
Mistral	2,50	3,50	4,50
Bacon	2,50	3,50	4,50
Margherita	2,50	3,50	4,50
Napoli	2,50	3,50	4,50
Pasta fatta	2,50	3,50	4,50
Calzone	2,50	3,50	4,50
Calzone Vegetaria	2,50	3,50	4,50
Prosciutto al Funghi	2,50	3,50	4,50
Gorgonzola	2,50	3,50	4,50
Salami al Gorgonzola	2,50	3,50	4,50
Clav Piccilli	2,50	3,50	4,50
Broccoli	2,50	3,50	4,50
Spaghetti Bolognaise	2,50	3,50	4,50
Religione	2,50	3,50	4,50



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Winter Semester 2017/18
Seminar MA Urb, MA Arch, MASRP: WP

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Introduction

Benjamin Seidel, Esther Pearce, Ana Martin Yuste, Robin Hueppe

What are diversity and “new diversities” and why do they matter?

In recent years, discourses and discussions about globalization trends, migration flows and local integration have become more relevant and visible than they had ever been before. In order to respond to this and, at the same time, as an antipodal answer to previous modernist urban planning paradigms of segregation of homogenous areas and design by destruction in some progressive debates diversity has been proposed and positioned as a new paradigm. However, to make use of this concept productively, certain questions have to be considered. In the first place, for example, Fainstein (2005) argues that there exists a multiplicity of its meanings in and across different disciplines and referring to different aspects such as building types, uses, ethnic backgrounds, etc., all of which need to be discussed and clarified. Secondly, the term diversity itself tends towards strengthening dichotomies and dualistic perspectives ranging between either overly problematizing or euphoric perceptions, as can be seen in the case of Sonnenallee, the area of our fieldwork, as well. Third, diversity is also often being used to label social mix strategies that can, in its consequences, lead to driving out certain sectors of inhabitants. Fainstein, thus asks how appropriate it is to use diversity as a planning principle.

Nevertheless, we face situations where different kinds of diversity have to be considered as important elements as well in the analysis of as in the planning for and within society. Some scholars even argue in the context of Europe-

an Cities for the implementation of the term “hyper-diversity” (Tasan-Kok et al. 2013). It is hence important to ask for a complex and locally grounded understanding of diversity, which has been one aim of the research project and TU Berlin Master class “‘New diversities’ and ‘urban arrival infrastructures’? The socio-spatial appropriation and footprints of refugees in Berlin-Neukölln” during the winter semester 2017-2018. So, by looking at Sonnenallee, one specific interest of the project was to gather multiple perspectives on the different dimensions of diversity in the area. To ask for “new diversities” in the context of this street in Neukölln, consequently means to look at how different elements - like for example class, ethnic background and gender - are constituted and related to each other, if or how they have changed over time and if and how these potential alterations are being perceived and evaluated on site and from the outside.

What are “urban arrival infrastructures”?

“Urban arrival infrastructures” or also “urban transition zones” can be defined as areas that are “[...] specialized in the arrival and transition of newcomers [...]”, provide “[...] localized resources that are nurtured in these areas and potentially contribute to the integration of migrants in society” (Schillebeeckx 2015: 2).

Considering Sonnenallee a potential site of arrival, another aim of the project thus was to “urban arrival infrastructures”, their conditions, functioning, structures and what they might in- or exclude.

Places of arrival and their “arrival infrastructures” seem to play a crucial and supportive role when arriving newly to a place for finding housing, a job, social networks, provision places, access to practical information, every-day knowledge or, more broadly, the local context. In a study on the ethnically diverse neighborhood Antwerpen-Noord Schillebeeckx (2015) showed more specifically that local expertise was “not only present in the organizations that [were] specialized in offering welfare provision to newcomers, [but that it was] also latent in the local community” (ibid.: 19). Furthermore, “reciprocal dense informal social networks” (ibid.: 20) seemed to play an important role for newcomers in the process of settling in and that the “concentration of migrant newcomers in particular neighbourhoods allow[ed] for the specialisation of these neighbourhoods in arrival and transition” (ibid.: 22).

Why did we choose Sonnenallee?

With the research undertaken during the semester we wanted to look at how inside of Neukölln different groups of especially newly arrived people make use of and change the district. To get a more specified close-up we decided to narrow our analysis down to the northern parts of Sonnenallee that have been highly present in debates on immigration and arrival in Berlin. The outside image of Sonnenallee from the media in most cases is a very conflictual one: The views often show high levels of stigmatization but also an often “othering”-curiosity as shown by some newspaper headlines like: “That’s how a day passes by on Planet Sonnenallee” already from 2010 (Keseling), “Sonnenallee: The Arabic Street” in August 2016 (Küpper), or “Causing friendship with sweets” in 2017 (Abdi). With regard to diversity and its possible changes over time, Sonnenallee also is of particular interest as Neukölln - like Berlin’s other historic working class districts Kreuzberg

and Wedding - since the start of contractual working migration in the 1960s has served as an area for newcomers to settle. Recently, with the arrival of more refugees from Arabic speaking countries, the area has seen larger shifts in this respect. Moreover, inhabitants and shop owners on Sonnenallee, like in most of Berlin, during the last few years had to deal with rapidly rising rents, while the street has been the city’s most covered one by the media and has even made it into international press and travel guides (e.g. Glassberg or Larsson 2017). Hence, it seemed fruitful to us to conduct research on “urban arrival infrastructures” and “new diversities” in this specific area – a street strip where we assumed that multiple diversities and continuing arrival leave concrete spatial and social observable footprints.

Who are we?

The Master course was directed by Dr. Anna Steigemann at the Habitat Unit of the TU Berlin. The group of researchers consisted of 32 Master students, many of which have migration backgrounds themselves and are newcomers to Berlin, while having very diverse professional backgrounds, such as in Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Urban Design, Urban Planning, Sociology, History, and Psychology.

What did we focus on and how did we conduct the research?

In our research we wanted to get a more detailed and deep understanding of how Sonnenallee “works”, how it has possibly changed over time and how people that live, work or shop there make use of and appropriate the space. Also, we tried to explore what these different user groups in their varying roles for the street, arrival, existing and emerging new diversities perceive as challenges or potentials. The main question that guided the work during the whole

Introduction

process was how we could get a more differentiated perspective on diversities, urban arrival and the concrete space of Sonnenallee. Hence, our focus and research interest reached beyond stressing ethnic backgrounds or origin. Drawing from four core and further additional readings the research was divided into four groups:

Group 1: Change on Sonnenallee

Core reading: *Towards Hyper-Diversified European Cities: A Critical Literature Review*
By Tuna Tasan-Kok, Ronald van Kempen, Mike Raco and Gideon Bolt

Group 2: The Logic of Sonnenallee's Socioeconomics

Core reading: *Cities and Diversity. Should We Want It? Can We Plan For It?*
By Susan S. Fainstein

Group 3: Employment on Sonnenallee

Core reading: *Dealing with diversity in the city: Exploring the arrival and transition infrastructure in the migrant neighbourhood Antwerpen-Noord*
By Elise Schillebeeckx

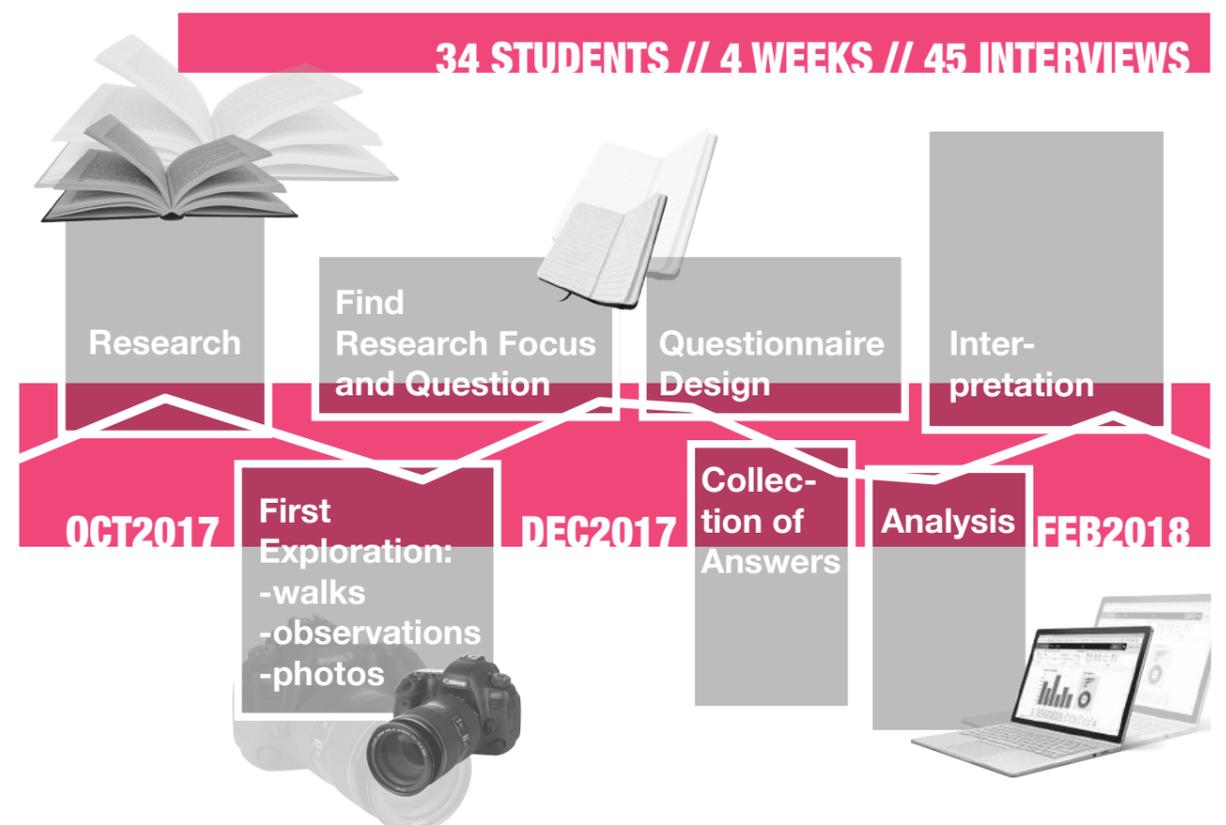
Group 4: Behind the Curtains of Sonnenallee

Core reading: *Locating migrant pathways of economic emplacement: Thinking beyond the ethnic lens*
By Nina Click Schiller, Ayse Caglar

How we proceeded methodologically to answer the in these topics involved questions is explained in the next chapter.

Methodology

Aline Fraikin, Anais Alfieri, Gonçalo Pombo, Natalia Roman, Robert Hummel, Sophie Marthe



Explorative Phase and Logistics

After a short review of the most relevant current urban studies literature on diversity and the concept of arrival infrastructures (Fainstein 2005, Schiller and Çağlar 2013, Tasan-Kok et al. 2013, Schillebeeck 2015), we split into four subgroups to analyze the socio-economic structure of Sonnenallee from a variety of angles. All groups tried to relate their research and work to the overall themes of diversities and arrival infrastructures, while each single group developed their own specific research focus and conceptual approach.

To determine the focus of each group's research project, we engaged in a week-long explorative phase, during which we gathered first impressions by going for walks, running participatory observations, and taking photos of Sonnenallee and its spaces, people, and practices. From the very beginning, all information and experiences were documented and archived. In a second step, each group negotiated their research objectives while linking them back to the results of the literature review.

Methodology

The groups organized themselves as follows:

Group 1: “Change on Sonnenallee” (6 students)

Group 2: “The Logic of Sonnenallee’s Socio-Economics” (4 students)

Group 3: “Sonnenallee – An Arrival Infrastructure in Terms of Employment?” (8 students)

Group 4: “Behind the Curtains of Sonnenallee” (4 students)

Design of the Questionnaires

The design of the questionnaires as a golden thread for the open and narrative in-depth interviews was conducted in multiple steps. First, each of the four groups created different questionnaires depending on their respective research question. These questionnaires were developed for different interview partners: Shop owners, employees, customers, visitors and residents. Secondly, all the questionnaires were brought together and combined into a final questionnaire for each interview group. With this, only the most relevant questions were asked, stimulating the narration flow, and the questionnaires could focus more on the main issue of the course: “New diversities and urban arrival infrastructures on Sonnenallee”. Further, through having equal questionnaires for every group at the end everyone could benefit from all interviews conducted. Thus, the analysis was not limited to just the interviewees of their respective group but could draw on a bigger sample of interview material. Additionally, through asking each interview partner the same questions, we achieved a better comparison of different shop owners and employees. This allowed for and supported a much deeper analysis of the whole street. The questionnaires were designed in English and translated into German and partly Arabic, depending on the

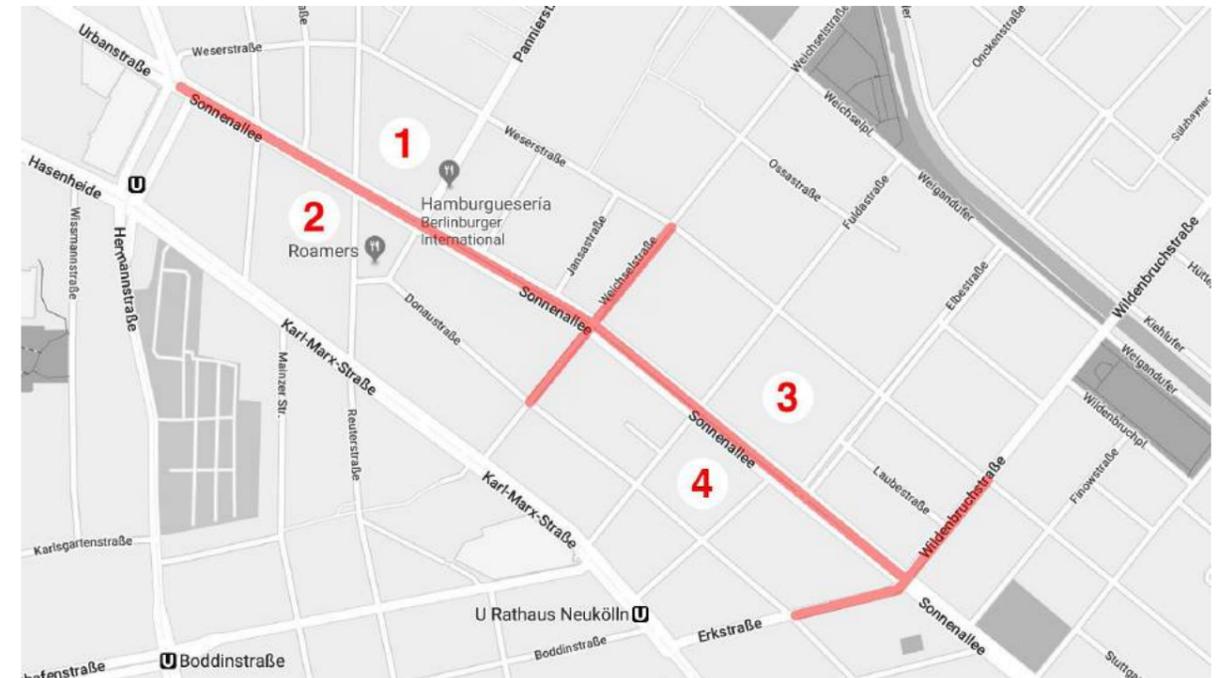
interview partners’ language skills.

Data Collection and Sample

Given the fact that we were a rather large student group and in order to avoid contacting the same interviewee multiple times, we divided Sonnenallee geographically into four segments: two on each side of Sonnenallee from Hermannplatz to Weichselstraße and two up to Wildenbruchstraße (see the map on the following page). Each of the four student groups focused on one of the allocated segments. We looked for interviewees falling into one of the following categories: store owners, employees of stores, NGO employees and customers. Additionally, we had meetings with local experts in Neukölln that either deal with migration and integration issues or with the planning and economic development of the street. The main cooperation partners were Christoph Braun from the Sharehouse Refugio in Lenustraße and Ina Rathfelder from the Stadtteilmanagement Sonnenallee – Unternehmen Neukölln and the Quartiersmanagement Ganghoferstraße team. Additional interview partners (residents, experts, etc.) were contacted directly by the students, either by spontaneously walking into stores and local institutions – sometimes two students together – or in some cases, by setting up an official interview appointment by phone. In other cases, the students were accompanied by friends who could help with Arabic translation. In total, we spent four weeks collecting data and ran 45 interviews with members of our focus groups.

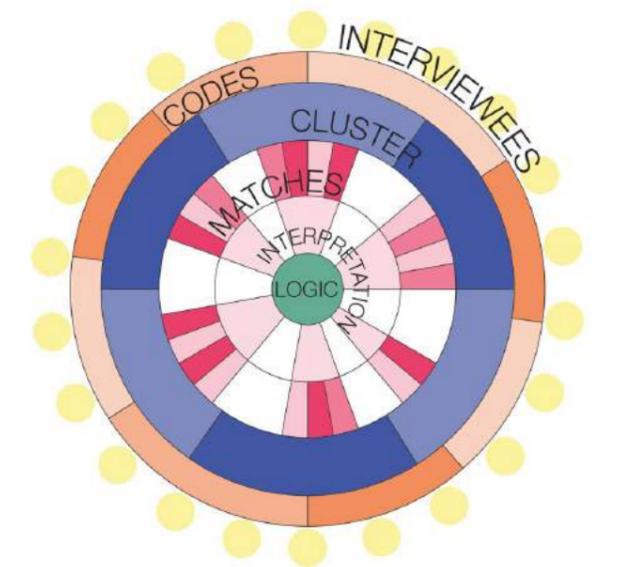
Data evaluation and interpretation

In order to evaluate and interpret the empirical data which was collected mostly through interviews and field observations, the groups used a simplified version of coding the interview material and observation notes. Coding is a way



of organizing and labeling data in order to build up a basis for the analysis. The codes constitute the main element of the method and enable to focus only on the data that is relevant for the specific research. That places great importance on choosing the right codes for the coding process. In order to achieve a good coding process, the researchers constantly have to ask themselves what their inquiry is about. The way the groups used this method included four main steps. The first step was to develop a storyline by skimming through the transcriptions, linking them back to theory and subsequently identifying main themes (codes) that appear throughout the data. The second and most challenging step was linking these main threads back to the respective research question and research aims that the students had developed at the beginning of the project. At this point, the success of the chosen research design and interview questions was unveiled – the easier it was to build up the connection between the produced material and the research issues, the better the interview questions worked. In the third step, the students did an in-depth analysis of their textual data in a systematic way: interview transcriptions, notes, field ob-

servations. Specific text passages or statements were read in their contexts and then categorized by means of the developed codes from the previous steps. The fourth step was to control if the groups’ ideas, concepts and themes were coded to fit the categories. With the codes (main threads) and their contents (statements, text passages, notes), the material was structured and schemes or patterns could easily be read. Thereby the groups were able to straightforwardly answer their research questions.



Change on Sonnenallee

Anais Alfieri, Chloé Mas, Gonçalo Pombo, Lisa Templiner, Sophie Marthe, Tareq Almuhammad

URBAN STRUCTURE

PAST

Location

Sonnenallee as a street was built and extended within the old independent municipality of Rixdorf in the 18th and 19th century. Until its incorporation 1920, Rixdorf (renamed Neukölln in 1912) was an peripheral district in the southeast of Berlin. Due to the immense populations growth, Berlin gradually enclosed Neukölln. Immediately after becoming part of the city of Berlin, Sonnenallee was then integrated into the public transport and road network of the city. As a major thoroughfare, in 1894 Sonnenallee started from Hermannplatz and reached up to Reuterstraße, while being extended to the Ringbahn until 1905.

Hermannplatz

Only since the mid 1920's, Hermannplatz developed into an important public square with the back then

biggest department store of Karstadt und the opening of the U-Bahn station Hermannplatz. Hermannplatz was not only a social center but also the traffic hub of southeast Berlin, where most important streets connecting Neukölln to Berlin and the surrounding area started or ended.



City Scape

Around 1900, the adjacent street to Sonnenallee, Karl-Marx-Straße, represented the main shopping center as well as an administrative center in Berlin on top of the western district's Schloßstraße and Wilmersdorferstraße.

“There were also shops here. And if you ask older people, those were partly even more attractive.” (jeweller)

Sonnenallee in the immediate vicinity of Karl-Marx-Straße benefited from this important supply function and reputation and shopping center. This had an impact of the use and appearance of Sonnenallee's public space, for example, in regard to the construction of important and iconic public buildings as well as in regard to how public space was used and appropriated by different users. Additionally, Sonnenallee was characterized by very magnificent design of the front houses.

“So, my mom told me the other day, that there was a tram on the middle strip, which is today a grass verge. And when she was a child, she used to walk there together with her grandmother.” (resident)

The distribution of the street was basically the same as it is today: sidewalks on both sides, wide lanes with greenery accompanying the street and a bigger median strip. This strip located in the middle of the lanes was originally used for public transport – a tram. The street was paved with cobblestone. In general, there was a lower traffic congestion on the streets.

The Berlin Block

“This is the typical building typology that developed during the Wilhelminian era. In the time when Berlin has grown and boomed so stark. At that time the idea was that condo-

miniums lived in the block themselves. They lived in the most beautiful, most generous apartment in the first floor of the front building. On the ground floor was commercial use. And the further one went into the inner areas of the block, into the rear buildings the social status of the inhabitants decreased.” (resident)

PRESENT

Location

Sonnenallee is centrally located within the S-Bahnring of Berlin. Further, it is connected through the U-Bahnlinie U7 in the east-west-directions and U8 in north-south-directions. In addition, Sonnenallee is connected by the bus line M41 to the main station as well as with the line 171 to the airport Schönefeld.

Hermannplatz

The examined area of Sonnenallee offers very little public green and open space, except Hermannplatz at the northern end. However, its quality is characterized by its use and function as an important supply center and particularly an important traffic hub, where two subway lines intersect, and different arterial roads have their starting point, e.g. Hermannstraße, Karl-Marx-Straße, and Hasenheide.

City Scape

“There are partly high stately and very magnificent Gründerzeit buildings.” (resident)

The bordering five-floor Gründerzeit residential buildings characterize the spatial quality of the examined area in Sonnenallee. The compact form of the Berlin Block reaches a GFZ of 5. The fragmented use and the vertical structure of the often mixed-use residential and commercial buildings is particularly relevant for

Change: Urban Structure



the commercial use of Sonnenallee. Defining the type of the Berlin Block, rear buildings and partially commercial structures are located in the back yards. (Regarding the Berlin Block see below)

“(...) in terms of urban design, the middle strip, all the trees and the sidewalks. That’s all well-proportioned (...)” (resident)

The street space has a width of approximately 34m from building to building. There are side-

walks on both sides. These are highly utilized by neighboring commercial units, meaning for example, furniture, shop display, advertisement, etc. Further narrowing takes place through the occupation of the road-accompanying trees whose tree-disks are bordered by concrete edges and thus constitute a barrier.

“Definitely too much traffic and really blatant car traffic.” (resident)

In both directions are three driving lanes. City

inwards from Pannierstraße to Hermannplatz a bus lane occupies one of the lanes. There are no marked bicycle paths along the entire length of the investigated section of Sonnenallee. It is parked on both sides of the road. It is parked on both sides of the road. The middle strip extends across Sonnenallee up to the S-Bahnring and is heavily used by the stationary traffic as well.

“The Sonnenallee is somehow used, things are just thrown away, if something is not good anymore, sofa are lying around.” (jeweller)

Another often mentioned physical characteristic of the street is the huge amount of garbage and dirt on the street.

FUTURE

In order to analyze how the Sonnenallee might look in the future, we need to distinguish between the interview results and real future developments. On the one hand, the wishes, hopes and visions of the interviewees and on the other hand, real concrete and implemented projects which will shape the street.

Interviews

In regard to the interview results, a distinction between different groups and their visions can be made. The interviewed group of young, so-called international expats or “hipsters” expect an ongoing gentrification on the street, which will speed up and change vastly the current urban but also commercial and demographic structure of the street. They believe that more expensive stores for a different and wealthier clientele will displace smaller, cheap stores, their visitors as well as many residents. They also wish for a cleaner street and more traffic regulations as well as for more walkability and a bike lane.

The new tram line which is planned from “Hermannplatz” to “Görlitzer Park” and until the “Warschauer Straße” supports this argument. Contrary to that the junction point from Sonnenallee to the highway A100 which will lead to the new airport might cause even more traffic than in the present. This could lead to an increased lack of quality on the street. It is uncertain how the street will evolve. On the one hand it could become a street with a higher walkability and space for bikes and public transport. On the other hand, it could get even more uncontrolled traffic and a high congestion of motorized traffic. Thus, the future attractiveness of the street will be determined by current planning decisions.

“So, this is such an absurd duel that is somehow happening, because I think that will very much determine the living quality on the street.” (resident)

Another repeatedly mentioned concern of our interview partners regards are the users, the insufficient greenery and lack of space to rest on the street, for which the interviewees hope for change:

“More playgrounds or how do you say that – green spaces- more benches to sit and so on.” (Supermarket employee)

The commercial structure and the resulting livability on the streets is believed to remain the same in the future or to developed into a higher diversity and number of stores. This means that the small, individual and diverse retail structure will remain as it is and bring even more visitors to the street.

Contrary to that, the Arabic native speaking do not share this view. They do not see an emerging gentrification, but rather predict an expansion of Arabic stores, more car traffic and

Change: Urban Structure

“uncoordinated visitors” on the streets. They believe that the street will become even more Arabic than it is now:

“In 10 years Sonnenallee will be completely Arabic.” (Employee Sports bar)

In general, the Arabic speaking interviewees seem to worry and reflect less about the urban structure of the street. Concerning their future on the street, they mostly referred to the commercial structure, which they believe will remain quite the same. They predict a more chaotic urban street life, which they also believe will intensify due to an expected higher establishment of Arabic stores and customers:

“To be honest, the same. I don’t think it would change.” (visitor)

“I don’t know why it would change. Maybe even more overcrowded!” (visitor)

“With more stores.” (visitor)

Both groups though wish for a better and safer street structure especially for pedestrians and cyclists. One can conclude that to keep the street attractive and livable, the urban structure has to be rethought. It should become less designed for cars and more for people. As we have seen in the past the urban structure enables a use for a high pedestrian fluctuation and thus could be transformed again.

Urban development projects

In the present, there are two urban redevelopment projects taking place on Sonnenallee. Since 2009 a redevelopment project started around the area called “Aktives Zentrum Karl-Marx-Straße / Sonnenallee”. Also, since 2011 the “Sanierungsgebiet Karl-Marx-Straße / Sonnenallee” affects the design and reconstruction of the street and its surrounding neighborhoods. The main aims of the “Sanierungsgebiet”

development plans are the reactivation of the street as an active shopping and service street with a high connectivity. They particularly aim for the attraction and settlement of especially creative businesses. The programs try to avoid a commercial competition with neighboring Karl-Marx-Straße.

Other relevant topics for the effective use of the flexible Berlin Block are creating for new forms of housing and working in the neighborhood and the regeneration of urban green. Therefore, more green spaces will be developed, and the existing ones reactivated. The plan is to connect existing greenery and create a green axis as well as a connection to the nearby channel. It is also planned to improve the street network in general, with more crossing opportunities and the creation of a bike lanes in surroundings streets.

These targets partly overlap with the ones of “Aktives Zentrum”. This project mainly aims towards a new “active center” of Neukölln, for a higher visitor attendance and positive local image. The motto is “Jung, bunt, erfolgreich - handeln, begegnen, erleben” meaning “Young, colorful, successful - act, encounter, experience”. This is also meant to support the diversity of Neukölln’s residents and commercial structure.

Sonnenallee is suggested to become a meeting center for art, culture, trade and services and for that the small and ethnic diverse store structure will be endorsed. Additionally, the quality



of the urban structure and public spaces will be improved. If there will be a bike lane directly on Sonnenallee is uncertain. Nevertheless, the construction of the new tram line is planned to start till 2026.

Change: Urban Structure

CHANGE

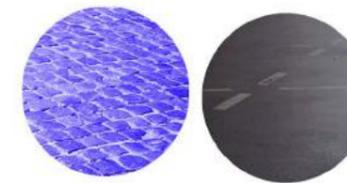
Sonnenallee has rarely changed in its spatial-physical conditions. There were small changes in the materiality, for example the road surface (cobblestone-asphalt) or the decoration of the façades. Those were richly and, in more detail, ornamented in the past. However, there was a considerable change in its use. Today, people complain about a particularly high traffic load, which occupies a large part of the open space and harms the quality of stay. The ground level of the Gründerzeit buildings is still used for commercial purposes even though the range of products, ownership structures and other features and characteristics of the built environment but also the group of visitors and users have changed. With this we conclude that the urban structure of Sonnenallee is very flexible and enables many different uses and the possibility to host and develop further diversities. Especially the wide streets, the middle strip and the ground floor use of the Berlin Block support the adaptation to different purposes and enable a very lively and dynamic social street life.



AROUND 1900s



2017



STREET MATERIAL



FACADE



MIDDLE STRIP

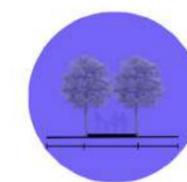
Examples of past and present changes in Sonnenallee



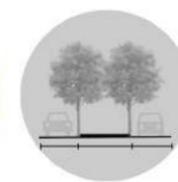
1905



2017



STREET ARRANGEMENT



MIDDLE STRIP



Change: Visitors/Customers

VISITORS/CUSTOMERS

How did the use of Sonnenallee change?

The customer composition changed over time in Sonnenallee in terms of diversity. Even though today's customer and visitor structure seem less diverse than before 2015, our analysis revealed that these structures develop towards hyper-diversity recently. This new hyperdiversity has an impact on the uses on the street. What these use changes look like is at the core of the following analysis:

In order to understand how Sonnenallee is used by the visitors and customers during our field work phase, we interviewed and observed them – also to find out what they do and don't like about and on Sonnenallee.

What do you like about Sonnenallee ?

We often got very similar answers from our interviewees when asked about the things they like about Sonnenallee. Hence, for a broader discussion, we tried to capture their frequency and organized the findings into diagrams with percentages of answers. These are based on all 36 interviews. A further analysing step was their distribution into different categories.

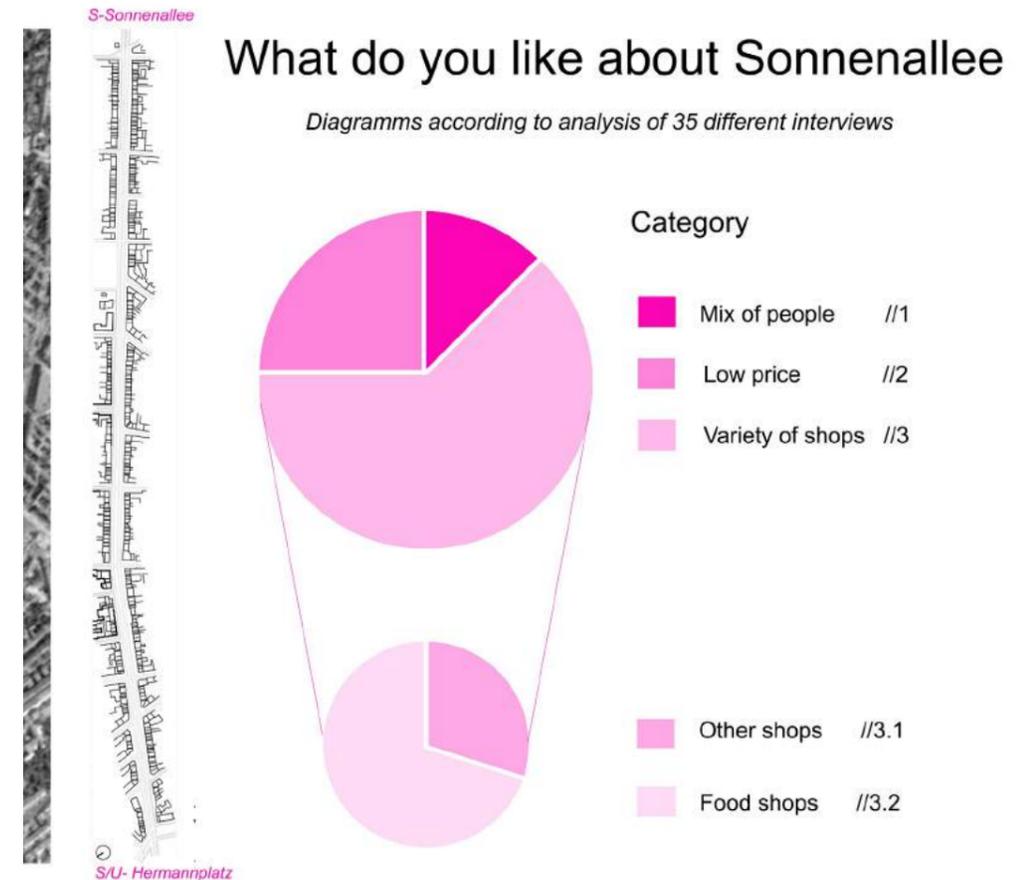
Further openly formulated and free main topics that were discussed more often were the mix of people, the variety of shops and the low

prices. These three points were the most often mentioned positive attributes of Sonnenallee. For instance, *“It's a good place, because you find different people. A lot of people. There's a good mix here.”* (visitor)

As we mentioned before, the customer-visitor structure developed from an already diverse composition towards more hyperdiversity in the last years. One outcome of the interviews was that this is one of the main reasons why people are attracted by Sonnenallee and furthermore, also they come to the street because of the similarly increased and diversified offers and opportunities on the street compared to the less diverse past. In this regard, we interpret that Sonnenallee became well known also as an urban arrival infrastructure since the new Syrian migration from 2015 onwards.

“I like the sense of security it gives refugees once they arrive here, to many the “Arabic street” is the first stop and once you are here and see something familiar and people that speak your language and can help you settle in, suddenly the city is less strange to you and you aren't as worried.” (visitor)

Another outcome from the question about what visitors and customers like on Sonnenallee was



the main use of the street - the huge variety of shops.

“Because they offer food and products you can't find anywhere else.” (visitor)

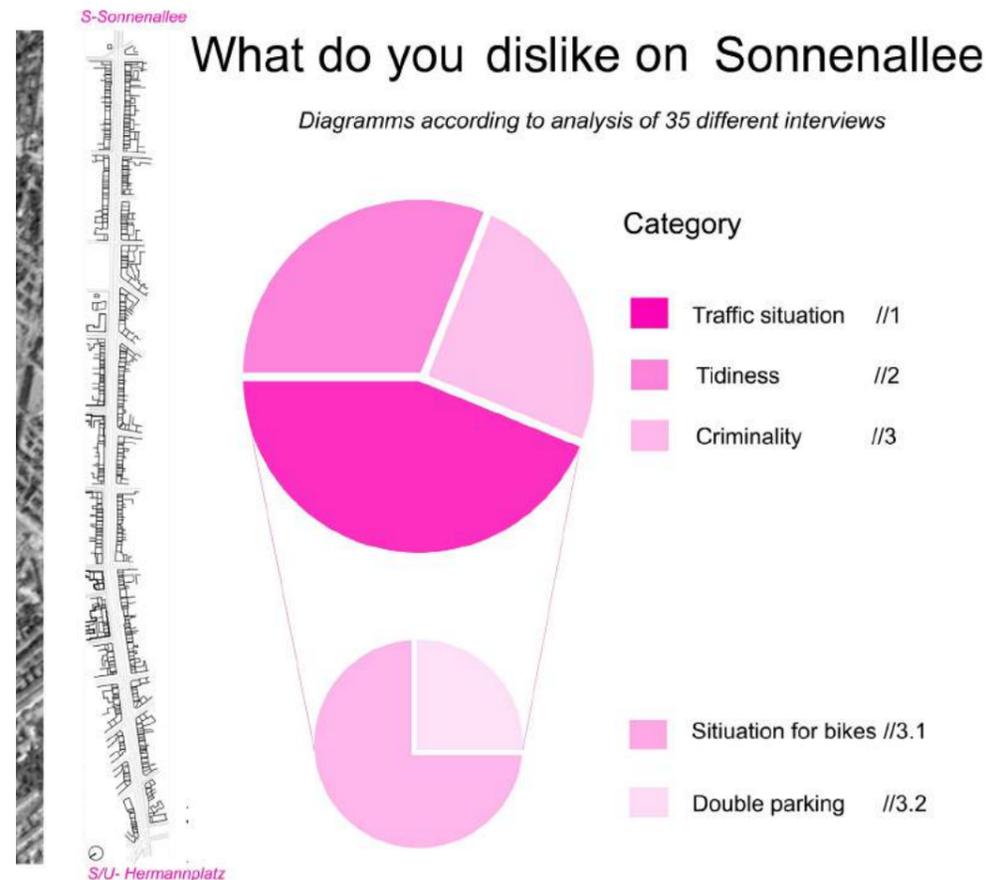
This is closely linked to the special food offers on Sonnenallee. Visitors come for eating out on Sonnenallee on a daily, weekly or monthly basis, they also mention that buying food also drives their motivation to visit Sonnenallee. Put together, around 75% of the visitors come to Sonnenallee to use the shops related to food. Sonnenallee developed into an highly diverse “open-air market”, offering from around the world and particularly Arabic speaking countries, often offering also further services and uses that are rather new for a Berlin or Sonnenallee context. While many refugees come to Sonnenallee to feel the taste and the atmosphere from home, other visitors are students and tourists looking for affordable and new cuisines. As an interviewee mentions, Son-

nenallee's restaurants are special but similar restaurants can also be found in the adjacent district, but *“I can also find these restaurants in Kreuzberg, but it is more expensive.”* (visitor)

“Diversity” is viewed a new paradigm for a globally connected and just city. As Fainstein puts it, diversity *“constitutes an antithesis to previous orientations toward urban design, in which segregation of homogeneous districts was the governing orthodoxy”* (Fainstein 2005). But diversity is also as an attractor and promote an area's “ethnic appeal” and might stimulate and involve gentrification processes. Our analysis revealed that the process of gentrification affects drastically Sonnenallee, and these challenging effects will increase in the future:

“I believe it will change a lot. It is gonna have more coffes. Pannienstrasse not so gentrified, but will be like Kreuzberg, full of English people and Australians.” (visitor)

Change: Visitors/Customers



Consequently, gentrification crawling down from the already gentrified northern neighborhoods already has an impact on the uses and the mix of uses on Sonnenallee. Today, most newcomers and particularly refugees (as both the dominant user groups of the street) can't afford to pay a rent on Sonnenallee – despite the district's past and history as a poor and multi-ethnic working class district. Our observations revealed that most people on Sonnenallee are visitors, who don't live there, but in more affordable and peripheral Berlin districts. But also more affluent tourists and Berlin residents use the street in their search for Arabic food.

What do you dislike on Sonnenallee?

The second question to find out how the uses have changed on Sonnenallee was: what do you

dislike on Sonnenallee? The free main topics that were discussed more often were the traffic situation, the tidiness and the criminality.

"It's the only place in Berlin, where I walk next to my bike." (visitor)

"It's so dirty here, it might be the dirtiest place in Neukölln." (visitor)

"When I moved here I used to take walks with my wife on the Allee, now she feels uncomfortable and is afraid." (visitor)

We found that visitors have seen a degradation of the situation of the street in terms of traffic situation, tidiness, and criminality, mostly because of the fact that the street is becoming more and more crowded. From our observations we concluded that the street level is indeed very lively and crowded with people, cars,



food stands, bike riders, et cetera. For instance, people just stop in the middle of the street next to the sidewalks while driving to chat with passers-by. However, this is how they cause many of the common traffic congestions. Consequently, many interviewees report – which matches our own observations on the street – that users of Sonnenallee are annoyed by the traffic chaos, crowdedness and too fast driving of many car drivers, which also threatens many passers-by and bike drivers. This situation further affects the visitors, and is also named as a severe problem for some of them and a reason why they don't want to visit the street anymore.

The visitors and customers didn't really talk about the future of Sonnenallee during our interviews, hence, we interpreted their complaints as a wish for a better organization on the street level for the future.

Conclusion

As a conclusion of our analysis findings, we argue that the structure of customers and visitors in Sonnenallee has changed from diversity to hyperdiversity in the last years. This is largely connected to the use of and uses on the street level. Sonnenallee is not only diverse in regard to the ethnic backgrounds of visitors and customers, but also in regard to how the different uses are distributed and organized and negotiated on the ground – people come to the street for likewise diverse reasons, e.g. refugees looking for a feeling and sense of home, students looking for “hip coffee shops” or tourists looking for the “place to be” and authenticity (as staged diversity). And these different scales and levels of diversities might further change in the future to different diversity and different uses – depending on further migration flows, gentrification processes, spatial changes in terms of the local urban development programs and negotiations and conflicts between the different user groups.

Change: Shop Owners

SHOP OWNERS

Introduction

“There is a special street in Berlin where the sun shines even in winter,” as one store owner told us. Its warmth is felt not only in its name – sunny alley –, but also through the mixture of foreign languages, singular products, and diverse people that welcome you when strolling down its sidewalks, watching the stores’ front windows and displays and visiting its equally diverse shops. Like the sun being the center of the solar system, Sonnenallee represents the heart of the life of many different people, particularly the ones that recently arrived to the city. Considering the influence of the street’s diversity in the liveliness of the street, it is important to understand the ethnic backgrounds of the shop owners and to gain some information on the number, type, and ownership of the businesses opened in the last decades. How did the shop management and the business spaces as well as its staff affect and change the street in the last years? What kind of diversities result from the type of ownership and the social and ethnic background of the owners for Sonnenallee?

#1 - Sonnenallee is the most well-known place of arrival for many newcomers in Berlin. But the street experienced different phases of migration and different kinds of migrants since its very

beginning, but also in a very condensed way in the last few years. For instance, by the end of the 19th century, many immigrants from the nearby rural areas came to the Berlin neighborhood in order to work in the local industries, characterizing it as a predominantly industrial working-class area (1). Following this tendency, new immigrants from East Europe settled during the 1920s, attracted by the opening of new factories (2). In the 1950s and 1960s, many immigrants from the Soviet sectors and German enclaves in eastern Europe arrived to the area, as well as the many “guest workers” that came mainly from Turkey, south and south-east of Europe. Later refugees and asylum seekers from mostly north of Africa (3) and more refugees came mainly from Iran, Lebanon, Palestine regions, Ghana, India, and Sri Lanka came to Berlin and Sonnenallee (4).

Today, most residents constitute a mixture of a still predominantly working class population from Germany, Poland and Arabic Countries, with increasingly more (gentrifying) middle- and upper-class newcomers from other parts of Berlin, Germany, northern and western Europe and the US. According to the Statistics’ Department Berlin-Brandenburg (5), today’s inhabitants are most often from Turkish descent, or of former Yugoslavian, Lebanese, Romanian, and

Polish descent. In addition, Berlin received a comparatively high amount of asylum seekers mainly from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan in the past few years (6).

The question thus arises, how did the businesses and the local social life change in terms of ethnic background of the business owners and staff and what kind of commercial changes happened on the street? Sonnenallee is commonly known as and referred to as “the Arabic street” since the late 1980s. But what is “Arabic”? And are Arabic businesses not more diverse themselves as the broad term “Arabic” allows for?

We ask these questions also in regard to the street’s past and present economic activities. As our interviews revealed, many people describe a period around ten years ago as being very bad for business.

“The period between 2002 and 2008 was very good... then the period between 2008 and 2012 was very bad for business.... These last years have been more similar to the first period.” (business owner – repair shop).

But in the recent years, with more people coming from Arabic countries (mainly Syria), the street conveys the impression to many users but also to people from outside of the neighborhood that it hosts a cluster of predominantly “Arabic businesses,” as our interviews confirmed. This new cluster led to an economic and social revival of the street. As mentioned by a long-term businessman, *“before, there were not so many people, now a lot of people are here from Syria and Lebanon”* (shop owner of a restaurant). The new arrival of businesses and customers mainly from Syria also led to an increased liveliness and vitality of the street, with more people, more businesses resulting in more traffic, sales and passersby – *“now there’s more life in the street”* (shop owner of a bakery).

Most interviewed people but also the media coverage perceive Sonnenallee as “the Arabic street” but with now increased social and economic exchange.

“Now it is better. Five years ago it was difficult. Now there are more Arabic people. They want to get married. People say this street is the Arabic street.” (shop owner of a women’s clothing store).

This clothing store is very special in the sense that it has a specific kind of (targeted) customer base. The kind of offered fashion is known and familiar to women from Arabic countries. As the owner puts it,

“I think 90% Arabic, 5% Turkish and 5% German [customers]. You can buy Arabic stuff everywhere here. A lot of people from Arabic countries are here. They speak Arabic but they have very different dialects. My wife is from Palestine, but it’s ok, I can understand.”

However, some longer standing businesses on Sonnenallee did not target specific ethnic groups. For example, a Palestinian shop owner said that he needed to flee his country in 2002. The business that he opened in Sonnenallee “doesn’t look so Arabic” in his eyes, because he targets rather diverse and not-ethnically specific customers with his repair shop.

However, today, there are highly diverse businesses on the street, most of which have not only specific target groups but also focus on a specific ethnic customer group, such as Arabic Muslim women as in the case above. As the owner puts it, almost all the clients are Arabic women who want to get married, for which they need special clothes. Also, Sonnenallee’s hairdressers mostly serve Arabic men, offering special cutting, hair dressing and barber services, often known from their home countries.

Change: Shop Owners

Among them, some offer a separate area also for women, a service provided for this specific target group. Contrastingly, some other businesses offer a different range of goods that may be useful for and demanded by a more varied and wider group of people. When entering the local restaurants, the people inside are usually very diverse, including residents from and beyond the neighborhood and with very different ethnic origins. The supermarkets offer daily supply goods for an affordable price, attracting longer-term residents and newcomers alike and those who look for fresh groceries and products. This is in line the most often mentioned main motivation for the interviewed customers on the street – they come for shopping or consuming food and beverages on the street, either in their search for “ethnic cuisines”, longing for “authenticity”, or to provide themselves with goods and services and a dining-out experience known from their home places or just for their everyday supply.

Sonnenallee may seem less diverse in terms of the business types, but on a second sight, the diversity within the dominant cluster is high. A closer look into the type of business, the staff and customers and owners that make the place, reveal a special hyperdiversity- in regard to the business space’s people, practices, place-making, ideas and visions for Sonnenallee. This results in but is also shown by the concrete changes of the space, from the construction of different benches around the trees on the sidewalk to the varied styles of interior decoration and shop windows with Arabic typing advertisements.

The generalization of Sonnenallee as “the Arabic street” is rather a marketing strategy both by state and civil society actors, with the aim of attracting a specific and wealthier clientele that is looking for the “exotic and new” in Berlin. When walking down the street, it smells like a

mix of Shisha smoke in the air, the aroma of the Syrian sweets, spiced Arabic coffee and the fried falafel. The sidewalks are covered with fresh products, foreign spices, fruits, and vegetables as well as decorative objects and clothes known from Arabic countries. However, there is a diverse range of and different scaling of these mentioned diversities. Sonnenallee thus represents a lively and hyperdiverse micro-cosmos, where different interests and aspirations collide, during the day and night.

#2 - As many other streets of Berlin and European cities, gentrification affects the street, its residents, users and above all, its business owners, while competition among the (growing number of) businesses increases as well. Interview partners mention, that the street is getting more competitive with the growth of similar businesses - “it’s too competitive here,” as our interviewed store owners mentioned.

For newcomers, who plan to open a store on the street, it is also getting harder and more expensive to find a shop space: “it took us six months to find this shop” (owner of Syrian bakery). Also, prices of shop spaces have been increasing, leading to sub-renting businesses: “I pay four times the cost of the original rent, because I am sub-renting” (owner of an Arabic supermarket). This may affect negatively particularly those people with rather scarce resources who work for the opening of their own in the future.

The lack of affordable space, the high competition and the ongoing gentrification process threatens already the northern part of Sonnenallee, where new and comparatively expensive cafés have opened on the sunny side of the strip, attracting more investments and different customers to the street. Adjacent Weserstraße, as already the night life hot-spot of Neukölln,

where bars, restaurants and clubs have disappeared and replaced the long-standing small businesses and workshops, increases the pressure on Sonnenallee.

“I imagine a lot of gentrification happening even more in the future, the renting prices are kicking out families. The rents are almost double the price compared to families who live here for a long time” (interviewed resident).

Rising residential and commercial rents increase the competition between the businesses on Sonnenallee for customers and sales, particularly among the restaurants that sell similar goods.

“I believe it will change a lot. It is gonna have more coffees. Pannienstrasse not so gentrified, but will be like Kreuzberg, full of English people and Australians” (interviewed resident).

#3 - What we considered conceptually as urban arrival infrastructure, was often framed as the “birth place” for new business activities by many interview partners. After their first store on Sonnenallee, interviewed owners opened new branches in other parts of the city, and even across Germany.

The conflict in Syria continues to be by far the biggest driver of migration, thus contributing to the most recent influx of migrants in Germany. The image below, shows that among the European Union members, Germany has been the country receiving most newcomers searching for asylum. These new migrants look for a new and safe life, while bringing certain traditions and ways of living, specific stocks of knowledge and practices, but also specific goods with them. They also bring their savings with the aim to invest in Germany and to start their own businesses there. But as

our interview partners from Syria mention, one of the biggest challenges is the initial funding for opening a business, and thus most of the interviewees started their businesses with only their own money or help from friends and family savings, while the new rather upscale businesses run by so-called gentrifiers often received structural support and support by state and commercial agencies.

Their previous business experiences represent the kind of knowledge and training represent for most interviewed business owners the key strategies to open a business, and for doing so, they looked for a place that is already an established arrival or transition zone for previous newcomers and migrants. Therefore and because of expected future migration, they claim, that they will hopefully expand their stores in the future: “we are opening a new branch soon outside Berlin” (store owner of a Syrian bakery). The street is thus an arrival infrastructure but



Change: Shop Owners



also a booster for (not only migrant owned) businesses. With the money earned on Sonnenallee, many store owners plan for further business expansions or have already opened additional branches in other Berlin neighborhoods but also other German cities. As stated by a shop owner, “I opened another store on Kantstraße three years ago.”

Hence, Sonnenalle is a place where many people share some kind of similarities or look for these (often imagined) similarities, often framed as “culture” or “same language”, same “mentality” in our interviews.

However, for a business to thrive it is important that the clients frequent and support the business. Many shop owners said that the first years of business were difficult - it may take time for a business to acquire reputation and gain frequent clients (image above). In addition, most owners struggle with the German trading and business bureaucracy and regulations and also suffer from discrimination by other business people, chambers and authorities.

Put together, Sonnenallee today hosts the biggest cluster of businesses operated by people from Arabic countries in Germany, for which the street enjoys already a well-known but conflicted image and reputation inside and outside of Neukölln, Berlin, Germany and beyond. The manifold and often stereotyping publications

and features have wide consequences not only for the reputation of the street, but also for the livelihood of the businesses, their staff and their users.

History

While the commercial changes on Sonnenallee happened rather gradually until 2012, what followed were rather drastic and clear changes afterwards. As for the more recent history, from the 1970s until the 2000s, there were not so many businesses on the street due to the lack of purchase power, a shrinking population and bad reputation of the area that was mostly occupied by people with a migrant background. A few more businesses opened in the early 2000s and gradually more and more stores opened, but wider changes on Sonnenallee happened in the years after 2012 - when refugees came to Berlin in higher numbers from Syria and the neighbouring regions. Since then, more businesses opened and the street witnessed a change not only in regard to its reputation and reception, but also in regard to the number of visitors and opening businesses. Soon, it was famous for being “friendly to foreigners”, offering food and products from Arabic countries for often comparatively cheap prices:

“Yes it has changed. Before three years ago, on Sonnenallee, I think we didn’t have many people. Now because we have many people from

Syria and Lebanon, and other lands because of the war, they are coming here and it’s better for business. more people” (employee in a restaurant).

Ethnic Background

Discussing the change in Sonnenallee over the past years drew our attention to the ever-changing ethnic background of the people making use of and making the street. Therefore, we wanted to focus on the diversity of the business owners in what is perceived as an “Arabic street”. Our first focus on the “Arabic aspects” of Sonnenallee was rather superficial and not actually describing the reality of the ethnic background on the street because as we found out later, critically reflecting on our first focus, we ended up with many open and challenging questions such as, how can we specify what Arabic is and means and who is actually included in and excluded from this box, what about other users of the streets and their backgrounds?

To a European visitor for example, Sonnenallee might seem overwhelmingly Arabic in that all the restaurants and the shops might seem similar because of their similar offers, design and signs. But for visitors from the middle east, for instance, the street is filled with Arabic people, but from very different countries and regions with very different heritages and histories and cultures, so they might easily grasp the street’s hyper-diversity. The shops on the street include owners and staff and customers from, for instance, Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Turkey, Germany and other countries of the global North and Europe.

Types of shops

As the interview partners mention, in the past, there were more German owned family businesses which were focused mainly around crafts

for example: a clocks maker, a shoe maker and Jewellery store.

“Früher gab es ein Stückchen weiter auch ein Schlüsseldienstgeschäft. Hier bis vor kurzem gab es noch einen Schuster. Der ist auch weg. Also auch so handwerkliche Dienstleister verschwinden auch immer mehr” (German shop owner).

Today, Arabic restaurants and shisha cafes are the most common business type on Sonnenallee in addition to the huge variety of other businesses on the street, such as barbershops, travel agencies, mobile phone shops, etc.

Competition

The interview partners repeatedly referred to the competition between similar businesses on the street. Some of the business owners talked about it as a very present and pressing issue on the street, but others only implicitly referred to the competition by saying that at the end each restaurant has its own customers:

“At the beginning it was very competitive because everyone is opening the same sort of business. but after a while everyone has their own customers” (employee in a shawarma restaurant).

“There’s a lot of competition here but that is normal and I try to live with that” (Turkish shop owner).

This competition is due to the increasing number of stores that provide the same services and their close proximity to each other. The long-standing businesses that have established themselves as the only provider of these services now have to deal and live up with the competition with the newcomers and their professional experiences that affect the negoti-

Change: Shop Owners

ation and management of the competing prices for goods and services on the street in a new and more dynamic but also more challenging way. In the course of few years, the new business people established themselves on the street and achieved to open successful businesses that are able to compete with the older businesses in quality and price. This sometimes resulted in resentment towards the newcomers:

“I hate Arabic people, it’s like another world there... they are offensive to us Turkish people” (a Turkish shop owner).

“I don’t feel comfortable, I’ve been here since 1995 and back then there were only two Arabic shops, the others were German. It was more secure back then” (Palestinian shop owner)

Why Sonnenallee?

Many of the newcomers chose Sonnenallee as their place of business because of the proximity to their targeted customers and the already established cluster of “Arabic” businesses on the street:

“I chose Sonnenallee) because it’s the best market for Arabic products and food and it will attract people who buy those products” (Syrian restaurant employee).

To new business people it made sense to open businesses similar to the ones that they had back home or know from their places of origin, which, for them seems less risky and allows them to increase their level of comfort, especially being in a different country that has different regulations, a different language and different cultural habits. The opening of these shops and the arrival of the newcomers created thus a new environment for both the business owners and the customers in which each helped

the other to continue existing and hopefully thriving on Sonnenallee.

Looking at Sonnenallee in detail, it is important to acknowledge due to its complexity, diversity, and first and foremost, its complex fabric and nature as a “home” for diverse people, some of which might be newcomers, other rather longer standing migrants. As a place that allows people to develop a home or at least a sense of home the street and its businesses allow them to settle much easier and feel more at home more than in any of the other Berlin neighbourhoods - even if most customers and users tend to live in other places across Berlin. However, Sonnenallee achieves to build a bridge between them and their places of origin.

Future of businesses on Sonnenallee

To a lot of owners, doing business on Sonnenallee is successful and they expect more businesses to open on the street and that it will be even busier and livelier than it is right now. When asked about the future of their businesses, some of them mentioned concrete plans to branch out and open new shops not only on Sonnenallee but also in other regions of Berlin and Germany due to the success of their current businesses:

“We are opening a new branch soon in Iserlohn and another branch of different type of Syrian food in Neukölln” (Syrian restaurant employee).

Interview anecdote (Tareq Almuhammad)

In order to reveal the nature of our interviews, I’d like to go into my experiences during one particularly revealing and intense interview that allowed for additional insights into the different and diverse layers of Sonnenallee. The interview was with one of the employees in a restaurant on Sonnenallee, who is the nephew of the owner, which enabled him to have a lot of

information about the restaurant and its situation. Being a former resident of Sonnenallee and currently still living close by, I knew him personally because I am a frequent visitor of the street and the restaurant.

He invited me for shisha and tea in a nearby café where we did the interview. While conducting the interview, friends of the interviewee dropped by. I can best describe them as the kind of younger people from Syria who look very similar to Berlin hipsters and started talking about the party they had in the same café we were sitting at and made plans to meet at one of the girl’s apartment some other day. Later another friend of the interviewee joined us and started talking about how much money the business owners on Sonnenallee are making and about how they like to spend their money here and there to show how much they have and to establish financial dominance (when you spend a lot of money, that means you have a lot of money) . Then he told me about the time when they first opened their store and someone broke their window one day before they opened. When we were done with the interview he invited me to meet with him and his friends and go out sometime.

Change on Sonnenallee

OVERALL GROUP CONCLUSION

Through the analysis of the three different topics and their change over time it became visible that Sonnenallee has always been diverse and most likely increase in diversity in the future. Yet, each of that analyzed diversities through time resulted in very different and distinct physical and social manifestations.

In the past, the diversity was expressed by an urban structure that was oriented towards fluctuant pedestrian uses, with a green avenue which later became the tram line. The commercial structure consisted mainly of small and small-scale service businesses, individually owned by mainly ethnic Germans, such as cobblers, jewelers and locksmiths. The customers on Sonnenallee had less diverse ethnic backgrounds, being mostly from Germany, Turkey and European descent.

Our analysis revealed for the present, that the street has a hyper diverse structure. Even though there is an intensive street use by pedestrians, the urban structure seems to still privilege the motorized traffic. This might be part of the reasons why the rather narrow sidewalks are very overcrowded, and the overall street seems sometimes very chaotic and unorganized, resulting in numerous traffic accidents.

A close look at the everyday life and built structure of the street revealed that both in terms of users as well as in terms of people working or living on the street, there's multiple intersecting, overlapping and contesting diversities define and make the street, while nonetheless the commercial structure is dominated by "Arabic" food stores, including cafes, bakeries, restaurants and shisha-bars.

For the future we expect Sonnenallee to further change towards an again different diversity or diversities. The shop owner structure is mainly expected to remain individually owned and small-scale and with a lot of food stores. Increased diversity will be seen in the ethnic composition of owners and staff, having more diverse descents and origins than today, where most owners come from Germany, Turkey, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria. These new diversities will also attract a more diverse customer structure regarding ethnic, economic and age background. However, the development of the Sonnenallee is very much depending on the transformation of the urban structure. It will surely involve differently, depending on how the streets will be transformed, if motorized or pedestrian traffic will be enhanced and how far the public transport will be reintegrated in the middle strip of Sonnenallee.



Past



Present



Future

The Logic of Sonnenallee's Socioeconomics

Aline Fraikin, Duygu Kaban, Lea Holtmannspötter, Lea Samson, Maria Alice Floriano, Pedro Fortunato, Robin Hueppe

Introduction and Methodological Approach

Our driving motivation was a closer analysis of the so-called arrival infrastructures, a profounder definition of the terms Arabic or Middle-Eastern as well as deeper understanding of everyday routines, challenges, motives, and appreciations of Sonnenallee's current shop and business owners with what we call a research-related ethnic background. Important questions that were posed in first class sessions were, inter alia, which different types of business branches could be found in the defined research area, if there is a visibility of social patterns, who are the owners, and what are their perceptions about and on Sonnenallee. Further questions were what are they selling, how long are they on the street, what are their initial motives for the shop opening and so forth. The assumption was that the street's socio-economic structure reflects the ethnic diversity of the area, which was and is until now noticeably promoted in the local, national, and even international press.

The methodological approach was headed by a very clear limitation of the study area. Three building blocks each on the northern and southern adjacent sides of Sonnenallee had been defined, including the street space itself. The next step dealt with the classification of

economic branches serving as a base to define the range of goods and services offered in the defined area. The results of the mapping process showed impressive results: Various branches and business types were recorded, documented, and represented. The group assumed that there must be a link to the social dynamics of the mapped area.

The next step, crucial for any further action, was the research on a theoretical framing: Firstly, an examination or superficial scan of recent press releases regarding Sonnenallee and its diversity was used as evidence for the ongoing debate and an understanding for contemporary media coverage. Secondly, we researched the theoretical relationship between the economic diversity and local social changes and how they play down in the urban space. Martina Loew's concept of intrinsic logic based on her elaboration on the intrinsic logic of cities (2012), was examined on a potential relationship to the field of research. It was found that the actual term intrinsic logic is predominantly referring to a case study that is based on comparison of two cities. Nevertheless, a distinctive development of the urban area and the resulting force for the structuring and reproduction of practices was evident. The group decided to therefore stay with the term of a socioeconomic logic. With



the perspective to achieve useful results during the qualitative research, a more standardized questionnaire was developed within the project group to complement the mapping of businesses and services with qualitative results.

A pivotal step was the subsequent field work, in which the group distributed the tasks of surveying and interviewing the shops and their owners or employees.

The results have been transcribed and a code was developed to arrange and cluster the answers in a manner that contributes to the revelation of new findings towards the research question, namely the specificity of Sonnenallee's

socioeconomics. In the course of the evaluation, interview results (45 in total) of all other groups have been considered in each code. The first codes were as follows:

- Security
- Networks
- Demographics
- Economic Factors
- Informality
- Customers
- Relation to Sonnenallee
- Image of Sonnenallee

To bring order to chaos, we defined topic clusters deriving from repeating answer patterns

The Logic of Sonnenallee

in order to relate the gained knowledge to the socioeconomic uniqueness of the street, to its logic. The defined clusters were:

- Congestion and Excessive Use
- Cultural Conflicts and Layers
- Personal Networks
- Customer Dynamics
- International Image

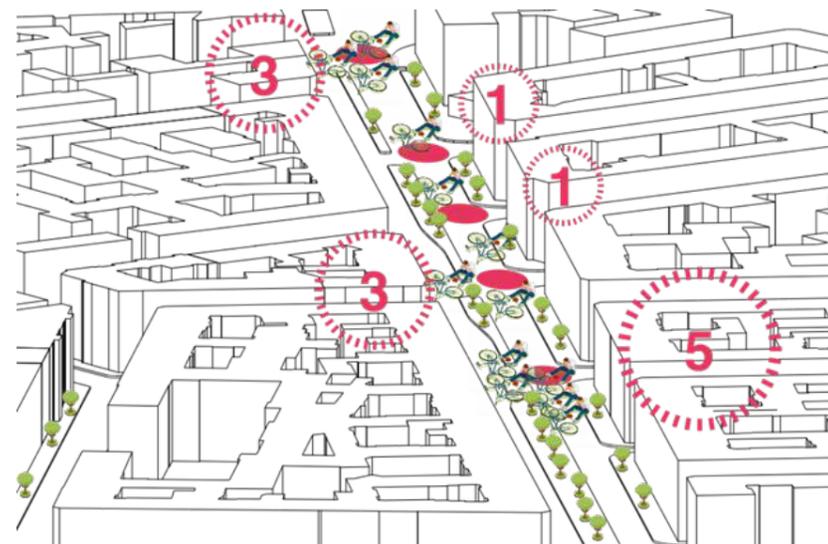
Traffic Congestion and Excessive Use

We further looked for repeated statements in the interviews concerning the street's pollution, dirt/trash, traffic congestion, lively (sometimes chaotic) streetscapes as well as crime and "undesirable business" which could be further defined as Vergügungsstätten in the German construction law, namely casinos, betting offices etc. Regarding the cycling, pedestrian and motorized traffic on the street, interview partners mentioned that Sonnenallee is the "... only place in Berlin where I walk next to my bike. The road is dangerous." Furthermore, they describe the street as "... hard to ride a bike..." on and

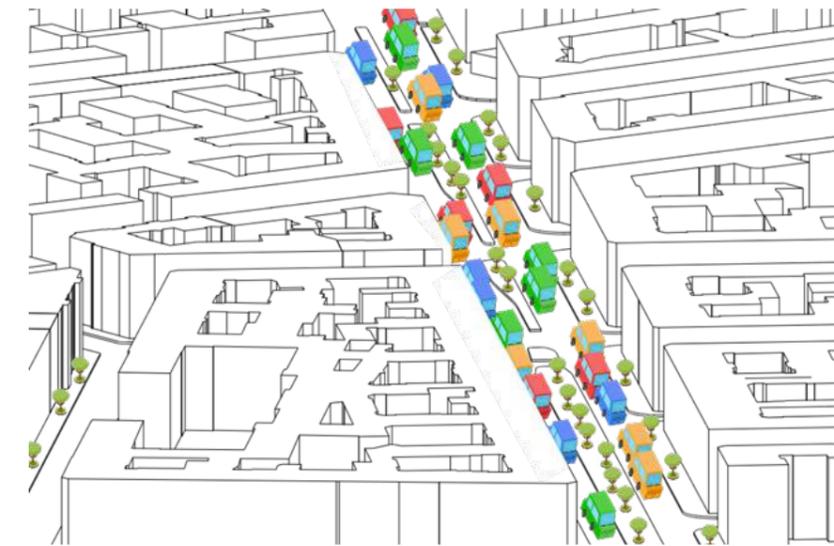
that "... there should be a bike lane on Sonnenallee." A bicycle shop owner mentioned that he "... could sell someone a bike and they could die as soon as they go out in that street."

It was therefore evident that the congested street prevents citizens not to ride a bike in the area which directly affects the overall street velocity. The more dominated by motorized vehicles, the faster and more dangerous the traffic flow will become for all street users.

This also bears a risk for pedestrians attempting to cross the street outside of traffic light junctions. One effect may also be the cut off of Sonnenallee from city-wide bicycle traffic flow. Interview partners furthermore described that the traffic affects negatively parking possibilities and hence delivery processes. Shop owners and interview partners used the terms "... chaos and noise...", assumedly related to "... too many cars...". These circumstances create the "... problem [of] no parking ...". Also, in terms of street congestion, people perceived that "the cars travel so fast, sometimes 70kmh, and the traffic is bad, sometimes the street is completely



Cycling is dangerous: 13 Accidents in one year within the research area (2011)
Source: "Special investigation 'Bicycle Accidents' in Berlin, 2011" of the local police department



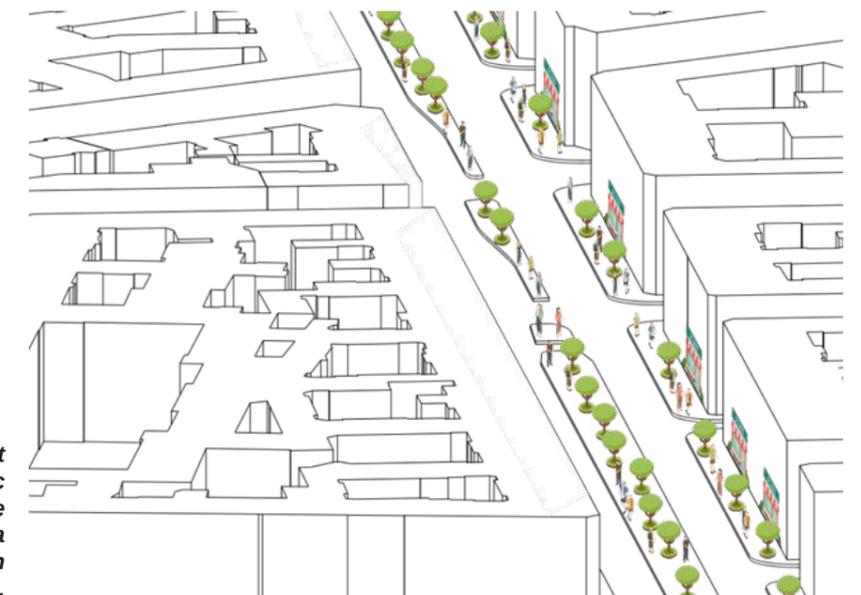
Traffic: 20,000-30,000 vehicles are passing the area in 24h (2015)

Source: Senate Department for Urban Development and Housing, Berlin 2015: traffic and vehicle fluctuation

full of cars." The bus lane is seen as an improvement, however not sufficiently serving the high fluctuation of people on the sidewalk.

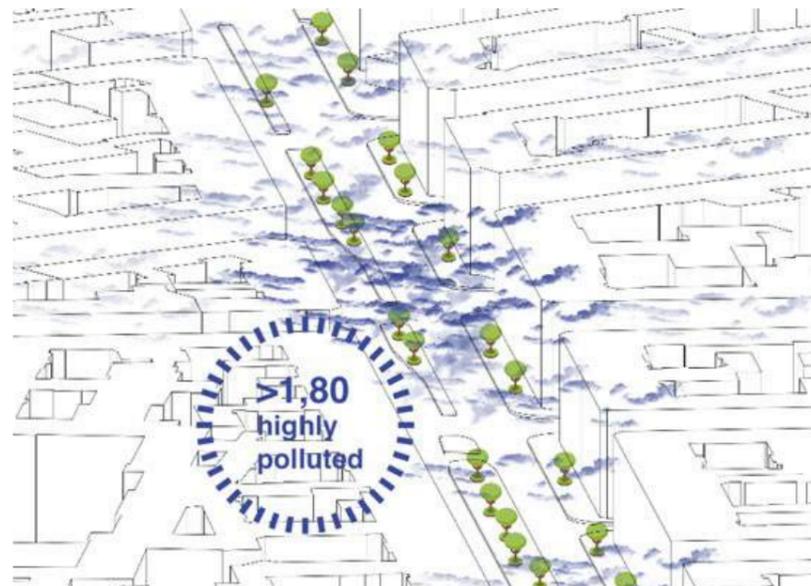
The sidewalks themselves are thus perceived as overcrowded as well. Some interviewees referred to the chaotic street as not really appealing to and pleasant for the high amount of pedestrians: "... very unorganized, especially while walking on the sidewalks." This is sometimes seen as a result of the most recent migration "...after a lot of refugees came into the city." It contributes to the perceived noise exposure as the liveliness is referred to "...people [who] are talking loud in the street." On the other hand, the busy streetscape fosters the existence of "...much Laufkundschaft (walk-in customers)" and customers themselves state that they have "...got everything [they] need as a resident."

This can have a direct impact on the fragmental structure of small shops offering a broad range of goods and services as initially observed. A supportive fluctuation of diverse needs and customers' demands contribute to the current composition of shops and businesses. The interview partners further describe and bemoan the street as exceptionally dirty. Particularly shop owners complain about "...all the dirt and trash..." and the street is regularly described as "...too dirty." Interviewees claim other people would "...leave their garbage on the street..."



Crowded streets: Apart from the perceived chaotic atmosphere, the dense pedestrian flow supports a detailed and diverse formation of shops and businesses.

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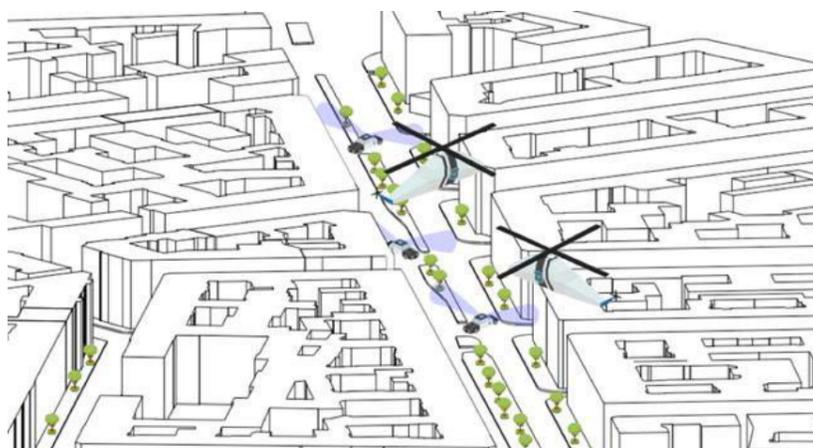


Pollution: High amounts of PM10 and NO2 at the intersection Pannierstraße x Sonnenallee (2015)
 Source: Senate Department for Urban Development and Housing, Berlin: traffic related air pollution in the street

Due to deficient background information and the limited field work, we couldn't work out which user groups or who may be responsible for this behavior. It however is an important visual trait of character of the area, also linked to the heavy use of traffic infrastructures. Moreover, the prevalent dirt and "chaos" and overall appearance of the street may prevent visitors from re-visiting the street, but also from keeping the place clean. The dirty and perceived chaotic situation but also the resulting reputation may further prevent businesses of upper price sections to settle on the street. Furthermore, several interviewees complained about insecurity as well as observed crime and related inconveniences.

Interview partners generally observe that the "...Ordnungsamt and cops show up a lot." The perceived reason for this is "...because there are too many problems..." and "...lots of illegal business." Interviewees are in fact worried about their relatives and belongings: "I have to worry about my kids,... worry about my car..." During the opening period of one of the businesses, "...someone broke the shop window." Business such as "...the weapon store [and] the casino..." are seen as rather undesirable businesses that increase the sense of unsafety.

Increased crime rates may also be the potential outcome of a strong local market competition and "cultural" conflicts. The efficiency of the high police presence is variably rated.



Criminality linked to the opening and running of small street shops may affect future shop openings: Rumors and told stories by interviewees about vandalism linked to shop openings can have a deterrent effect on other entrepreneurs planning to open on Sonnenallee. Observed criminal acts, along with dirt and business such as weapon stores and betting shops can contribute to a rather shady image of the area. Yet undesired, Vergnügungsstätten as defined above, still contribute to an economic diversity in the research area.

Our fieldwork revealed that the traffic and pedestrian congestion has a considerable impact on the fragmental shop and business structure on the street. From the interview analysis follows that crime, security and street cleanliness cannot be linked to a distinguishable socio-economic character.

Networking

Our empirical inquiry shows that networking activities play a crucial role for shop owners on Sonnenallee. We define all social ties to people or businesses as networks. That means that simple friendships or family relationships are considered as social networks as well. We only focused on those networks that are in some way related to the business, though. The relevance of networks is revealed in the fact that only on fifth of the interviewees stated that they do not have any networks that affect their business.

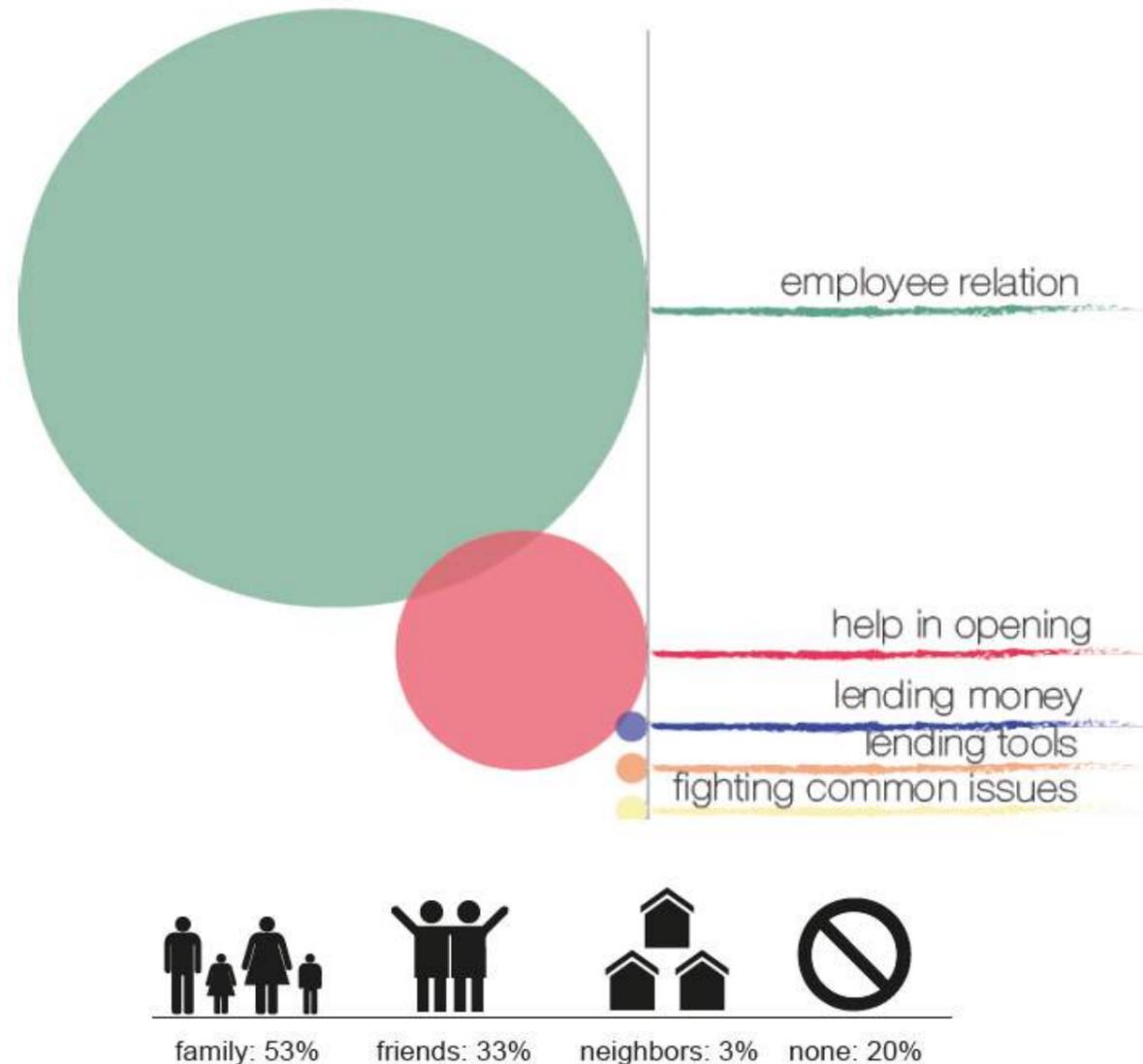
Most of these connections are between family members. More than half of the shop owners that were interviewed have family networks which are related to their business and business operations. The interviewees revealed different examples: the owner of a bakery explained that his wife works together with him or spontaneously helps out whenever she is needed; other interviewees mentioned that they co-own the business with a family member. These

family networks are very useful in the field of trust-dependent issues like co-owning a shop, as the following interviewee confirms: "I did everything myself but lent money from my family to open the shop. Now my nephew and cousin are working with me; it's a family business – built on trust" (Interview with owner of mobile communications business). With this they mean that the trust which is needed to open and operate a business is already established due to the family relationship.

Around one third of the shop owners claims that they benefit from connections with friends. Some of these friendships have lasted for years and travelled distances: one shop owner mentioned that his friends from Damascus now work together with him on Sonnenallee. The neighboring as a friendly social practice and relationship is not very strong and rather to be found uncommon on Sonnenallee. Interviewees mentioned that they "know half of the street" but it was also made clear that these people are either friends or family or that the relation is insignificant to them. The owner of a Späti explained, "neighbors say hello to each other, that's it". Hence intense neighborly relations are rare. Only one of the interviewees expressed that she sometimes lends her neighbor tools or helps him with other things, especially during the process of opening the shop. That underpins our initial impression that people who are not included in any kind of friendships or family ties do not really network with anyone on Sonnenallee. As a result, this lack of interaction and networking makes it difficult for external people and certain newcomers to initiate or create new networks.

Most often, the character of the networks is rather informal - and only one officially organized network was named: Späti e.V., an interest and lobby association of open-late shops and kiosks in Berlin that fight the new and restrict-

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ed regulation law in Berlin that limits drastically their opening hours and not on Sundays. Fighting common issues however does not seem to be an important cause for networking activities, Späti e.V. constitutes the only association for that purpose. Most intentions for networking activities are related to employment. A lot of interviewees indicated that they found employees through family or friend networks. The employers who were interviewed confirmed that: most of them also said that they

found their job through the local networks. Another advantage that evolves from the networks is the mutual help in opening a business that many of the interviewed entrepreneurs need. Especially for newcomers it is hard to understand the way German bureaucracy works – therefore they ask friends and family members how to deal with those issues and for translation services.

In this vein, the new store owners benefit from

experiences already made by friends or family members. The daughter of a bakery owner said for instance that at the time when they opened their business it was not that “*common to get support with opening a business*” from the local business improvement office, so they got help through friends and other family members.

Put together, the way business owners organize themselves and their stores on Sonnenallee usually includes networking activities of some kind. From our field work we conclude that the experiences that these owners share with acquaintances, friends, or family members, motivate and give the newcomers an understanding of how to open a business.

But the strong networks are Janus-faced: while newcomers who already know people on Sonnenallee have quite good chances to settle in the new context of Berlin by working or just making more social contacts through the tight networks, other newcomers who do not know people on the street have only limited chances to settle there and suffer from the restrictions caused by the exclusionary character that most of these networks have for non-members. Therefore, Sonnenallee constitutes good arrival infrastructures for some newcomers, whereas for others, the street makes them feel alienated and excluded.

With regard to diversity we found that despite the fact that especially migrants are welcomed warmly by their already existent networks on Sonnenallee, those networks do not promote but rather limit the diversity: only migrants from certain ethnic backgrounds and origins have already friends and family who work on Sonnenallee. This ethnic composition has stayed the same for quite a while, since “newcomers” or people without (cultural) ties struggle increasingly to enter the social networks and job market on Sonnenallee.

Cultural Layers

The cultural layers of diversity in Sonnenallee were also deemed as a topic worth discussing, not only because the interviewees themselves kept mentioning each other’s origins, but also because it seemed quite relevant to understand the particular ways in which the street functions.

We grounded this discussion in the main literature, particularly in Susan Fainstein and Martina Löw’s work, where the topics of diversity, heterogeneity and the intrinsic logic of the cities were approached and analyzed in depth. Different time frames can be picked to illustrate the different migration phases to Berlin, especially when it comes to Sonnenallee. In the 1960s, high demand for labor attracted the so-called guestworkers to Berlin, the majority of which was of Turkish descent. Since then, succeeding generations settled in the city, integrating themselves into the wider city dynamics. However, in the last five years, the number of people from Syria arriving in Germany has been growing exponentially. And Sonnenallee represents one of the few sites in Berlin (and maybe also in Germany), where the new levels of ethnic diversity and co-existence of multiple migrant communities can be observed in public space.

However, according to Fainstein, this coexistence does not necessarily bring tolerance: “... it can, in fact, produce mutual loathing”. (Fainstein 2005, p. 13). In addition, she writes that if lifestyles are too different in one space, diversity can also enhance prejudice. This argument is supported by some of the interviews, in which the already established store owners demonstrate their aversion to the newcomers. Most often, they complain about lack of security, drug dealing and trash disposal issues, usually blaming the ones who have recently arrived. For example, a Turkish shop owner, who says

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“(…) a lot of illegal business going on there. They are offensive towards us turkish people”, and “if somebody offered me a shop there for free - I would not take it! I hate the arabic people, it’s like another world there”.

A shop employee, who also comes from Turkey, says that “*Sonnenallee is ‘Scheiße’, when only the Germans and Turkish were influencing the street’s image, everything was better*”. Another visitor complains that “*So many more Arabs arrived. They do not have any respect; security has only become an issue in last ten years*”. And a shop owner from Lebanon claims that “*I want a positive change, I feel so uncomfortable here, it’s almost like Little Arabia*”.

But despite some “cultural” conflicts between and the different owners and users, the existing migrant population promotes the welcoming of newcomers of the same background, reinforcing the street’s image as a diverse migrant neighborhood, when compared to the rest of Berlin. The newcomers seem to appreciate the hospitality for refugees, due to the help they seem to get from their networks as well as by the familiar offers and overall atmosphere that can be reminiscent of home. A Syrian shop owner says that “*Arabic people, they miss Arabic feelings, food, feelings from their countries, so they come here*”. A customer from Syria, living in Berlin for one and a half year, explains that

“I like (…) the sense of security it gives refugees once they arrive here. To many the ‘Arabic street’ is the first stop and once you are here and see something familiar and people that speak your language and can help you settle in, suddenly the city is less strange to you and you aren’t as worried”.

Even though the interview partners don’t seem to be annoyed by the already established immigrants, some of the newcomers share similar

complaints with them, such as about the noise, dirtiness and lack of security on Sonnenallee. A Syrian interviewee thinks that “Here, there is too much police on the streets because there are too many problems”.

The interviewed already established immigrants of Turkish majority seem to be more integrated to the “Berlin culture”, as the codes and structures and behavioral rules of the city, as argued by Martina Löw: “(…) *but if a person stays in a place he will have difficulty resisting its influence*” (Löw, 2012, 303), considering that most of the Turkish guest workers arrived in Berlin more than five decades ago.

On the other hand, the recent immigration of a comparatively high number of people from a different background seems to evoke aversion on its first moments, due to the street’s perceived overcrowding and its consequent forced coexistence, leading some to blame the newcomers for Sonnenallee problems stated on the interviews.

Customers

Our research on Sonnenallee further required a closer and more detailed look at the local customer dynamics. During the daytime, the street is busy with customers such as tourists and Berlin residents with manifold intentions for why they visit and use Sonnenallee. Some tourists just read recommendations for the street in travel guides and want to see if the street is as attractive as it is promoted there. We found that particularly Sonnenallee’s food offers attract many people to the street because it is promised in many tourist guides and social media that the prices for “good” Arabic food are low and affordable.

Most of the people living on Sonnenallee as well as local shop owners call the street “Arabic

street”, because of the remarkable increase of Arabic speaking people and business signs on the street.

Shop owners on the street confirmed that there is a huge variety in the customer dynamic. This is also related to the opening hours. Some shops close at night, such as the wedding clothing shops or bakeries. These attract different customers than a bar, which is also open during the night. One shop owner mentions: “*There are... a lot of people on the street who are very different from each other. [But] the kind of people on the street change over the course of the day.*”

Interviewees also told us that the street changed over the time. Today, the street is highly promoted in travel guides and social media, which wasn’t the case until recently. This has the effect that the street enjoys a certain reputation as a tourist destination beyond Germany and receives increasingly more tourists.

The diversity in the customer structure can be also seen in the variety of languages that are spoken in the shops and on the streets. One shop owner of a take-away store commented that “the most common languages in the store are Arabic and German. [It’s a] mix. Tourists, Turkish, Spanish, Lebanese, Syrian, Palestinian. People come from all parts of Berlin. Lots of refugees.” Many Interviewees were talking equally from the change of refugees during the years. This multiculturalism was also mentioned in many interviews.

Some offers were created for the living people on the street, such as a local travel shop which is targeted for and used by Lebanese customers. This travel agency helps them to book flights to their home countries, e.g. flights to Beirut (Interview, TH Reisen).

Some shop owners in kebab stores also said that

it is most often young students who frequent their shops during the night. This underlines how diverse the customer dynamics are during the day and night.

Put together, the customer dynamics change over the course of the day on Sonnenallee because of the huge variety of business branches. The street covers nearly all needs, commercial offers range from bakeries, kebab shops, travel agencies, to wedding clothing shops and others. The increased media coverage and resulting international further changed notably the diversity of customers on the street in the last years. This affects positively the store owners there. In addition, new businesses open on the street exactly because of this reputation as Arabic street or as hip international street. Store owners benefit from these (often ambivalent and changing) images and they describe this change as positive and fortunate. Hence, the hyper diverse structure of customers leads to an equally diverse supply of services and goods. But this reputation and images could also result in further and increased gentrification: Rising food prices could result in a loss of those customers who cannot afford them – among them are most likely many of the local immigrant groups and particularly the refugees.

Image of Sonnenallee

As mentioned before, Sonnenallee acquired in recent years an international reputation, caused by the many newspaper and magazine articles and the coverage travel guides (TRAP and Wiedemeier 2017, p. 111). In this part we will question how this image was created and which role the media played.

A “reputation can be defined as the shared social representation, temporary and localized, associated with a name and after more or less powerful social assessment and formalized” (Chauvin

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2013, pp. 132). We are interested in what builds and strengthens this image.

Initially, Sonnenallee's image was built through some events, including the "construction of a social identity" (Huguet, Mugny, Perez, 1992, p.155). The creation of a single image allows the people to identify with a place and start a process of identification. We find this sense of ownership and identification in the informal change of the street's name into "the Arabic street" *"This is the Arabic street. 99% of the time people speak Arabic, only 1% speak other languages"* (Interview with the store owner of Salon Bon Bon). Residents and store owners on Sonnenallee construct their social identity upon the reputation of Sonnenallee. This is what Chauvin called "transfer of reciprocal reputation" (2013). This identification works through physical markers such as store names, signs and symbols, which refer to "Arabic culture". these references are also made in the interviewed people's framing and descriptions of Sonnenallee.

A second phenomenon that has strengthened a certain image of Sonnenallee is the fact that *"in a context of constant renewal of the supply of goods and services exacerbated and competition, the need to distinguish itself becomes a central issue."* (Jourdain, 2016). Indeed, for merchants to stand out from others is vital. We found a commitment to centering goods around the Arabic and "oriental" cultures on the street. As interview partners mention, this created a strong identity for them that distinguishes their street and its offers from the rest of the shops in Berlin. They thus benefit from the "oriental" picture of each other which allows to single out the street and thus attract more customers.

This commitment and self-ascribed image create a social identity but also helps them to stand out as the Arabic street. The owners themselves helped to gradually build up this image, which

was then amplified on the international level through the coverage in media, social networks and oral history. But it is important to understand that it was not the international press that created the current image of Sonnenallee. Sonnenallee had a strong image since the 19th century – even if with different connotations as thoroughfare, high crime place, mafia place or now as the Arabic street or hip nightlife and ethnic cuisine mile.

Discussing the informal exchanges or oral history that allowed Sonnenallee to be known, "the image of the Arab Quarter" has attracted newcomers in the last years, when the street had been recommended by friends and family orally and informally as place that "allows them to feel at home": *"I want to stay in Germany as long as I can, because the street and lifestyle is similar to my background"* (Alsalam Supermarkt employee). So there is an informal network that promotes Sonnenallee as the Arabic street across different places and even countries to the places of origin of Sonnenallee's customers and business people: *"I heard about it 'the arab street' even before I got to Berlin from friends and people in general."* (Interview with a visitor in Sonnenallee)

Furthermore, the international press, such as the New York Times or the guardian and many international travel guides boosted and spread this reputation. They promote Sonnenallee as a street to eat "Arabic food" (BerlinFoodStories, 2018). Many blogs also feature and recommend Sonnenallee because of its gastronomic offers. These articles are used to develop the image of Sonnenallee into a certain direction, as they cater to an international audience (e.g. Les bonnes adresses de Manon a Berlin, 2017). These means of communication attract also new residents and investments and business-people to the street, whose invasion might also threaten some of the longer-standing business

people that offer the promoted food and goods but are not able to pay the increasing rents. The reputation building of Sonnenallee is therefore a reciprocal phenomenon: the media attracts people to visit Sonnenallee and those of who have already visited the street will communicate it again via social and official media channels which again drives people to the street.

However, we still wonder about the future image and state of Sonnenallee. Since according to Chauvin, it is important to distinguish the "temporary and localized" dimensions of a reputation (2013), Sonnenallee's reputation as the "Arabic street" concerns now only a specific moment in history. So it remains open how the media will affect the generation of a new image of Sonnenallee. It is therefore possible that the strong media coverage will lead to more visitors on the street and in a higher density and frequency. This could push and support ongoing gentrification processes and result in a commercial structure that supports first and foremost the needs of tourists but not local residents and migrants from Arabic speaking countries. *"Not long ago even the gentrifying parts of Neukölln were too gritty for most tourists, but these days, even less adventure some travelers will be charmed by the shops and cafes popping up along its streets."* (The New York Times, september 2013)

Conclusion

Sonnenallee has a distinguished socioeconomic logic in Berlin that is expressed in various ways and routines of everyday life. During our research, the interviewees revealed that the high number of pedestrians supports the detailed organization of shops and services and that the strong local networks provide opportunities of inclusion for newcomers to enter the local job market.

Moreover, physical and social changes were represented by the increased cultural and ethnic diversity of people frequenting the area, such as the costumers, for instance, which in its turn leads to an equally diverse supply of goods and services.

Finally, Sonnenallee has also shown signs of reproducing wider social and economic processes on the local level. There are still the risks of rising rents and food prices, however, as well as exclusion by tight family networks.

Employment on Sonnenallee

Ana Martin Yuste, Aram Lee, Benjamin Seidel, Esther Pearce, Leonie Ziehm, Nadine Krell, Natalia Roman, Robert Hummel

Theoretical Background

In the light of recent migration to Germany, integration policies are at the center of public debates (Geisen et al. 2017). One of the key strategies to ensure the successful integration of these newcomers is the provision of work opportunities and access to the labor market (Süssmuth 2001; Hansen 2012). Employment has been argued to be one of the central resources necessary for integration since it can promote economic independence, foster cross- and intra-communal relationships, provide the opportunity to learn the host country's language and is integral for restoring the migrant's self-esteem (Ager and Strang 2008). While public discourse has focused on economic integration policies on supranational and national levels, it has been argued that local contexts and economies make up for great variation in job opportunities and economic perspectives (Bevelander and Lundh 2007; Click and Çağlar 2008; OECD 2017). This raises the question how specific local environments excel more than others at enabling the migrants' integration into the labor market and the host society at last.

Recent literature on the concept of resourcefulness (MacKinnon 2013) emphasizes that these local environments do so by providing the newcomers with resources such as eased economic opportunities. The provision of such resources spatially concentrates in specific urban hubs which have been coined arrival infrastructures

(Schillebeeckx 2015; Schrooten and Withaecx 2017), a concept which builds on the model of urban transition zones as articulated by the Chicago School of Sociology (Burgess 1925). Arrival infrastructures but also arrival or transition zones have a dual function: they serve as a "port of entry" for migrant newcomers and provide the necessary conditions (as infrastructure) for social mobility. Thus, the formal and informal resources that are offered here in terms of social welfare, housing, and employment can make the migrants become upwardly mobile and ease the way for integrating them into mainstream society (Massey and Denton 1985).

Arrival infrastructures are primarily organized through networks of family and friends (Schillebeeckx 2015; Schrooten and Withaecx 2017), which are generally termed primary (Cooley 1909) or, following Granovetter's (1973) taxonomy, strong ties. They are characterized by intensive personal contact, frequent interaction, and trust as their "governing mechanism" (Uzzi 1996, 682). Weak or secondary ties, in contrast, are marked by emotional distance and rare interaction such as the relationships between business associates or commercial neighbors. On the one hand, strong family dynamics are an important variable in transnational migration (Boyd 1989; Levitt and Jaworsky 2007). They have been argued to decrease its economic, social, and psychological costs (Harzig and

Hoerder 2009; Castles et al. 2014), and organize entrepreneurial networks by enabling new business ventures and opportunities (Aldrich and Cliff 2003, Andersen et al. 2005). On the other hand, the strong presence of family networks has been associated with decreased educational and occupational achievements of especially those migrants who come from families of poor socio-economic backgrounds (Kroneberg 2008).

The strong prevalence of primary ties as an organizing principle in (migrant) communities can thus produce contradictions within the concept of arrival infrastructures. While they provide newcomers with necessary resources enabling them to settle in and "move" into mainstream society, their organization through primary ties can also prevent these very benefits.

Something very similar can be said about areas of a city when, after having served as a "port of entry", these zones actually don't allow for much transition in ways of upward social mobility and hence rather become traps.

Keeping these contradictions in mind and looking through the lens of resourcefulness (MacKinnon 2013), we asked if Sonnenallee represents an arrival infrastructure in terms of employment and what role primary and secondary ties play in its organization. We asked how individuals access the labor market, i.e., how they find jobs or open a business and who helps them in doing so. We analyzed how the employment sector of Sonnenallee is organized and which challenges entrepreneurs and employees face in their everyday work experience. And lastly, to link our research back to the theme of the seminar, we asked how diverse Sonnenallee is in terms of employment and what all this tells us about the inclusion and exclusion of its economic sector.

Methods

To understand individual experiences and perspectives on Sonnenallee as an arrival infrastructure in terms of employment and which network appropriated, qualitative interview method with semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted (cf. chapter 2). Only the interview data of store owners, employees, and NGOs are analyzed to focus on the employment infrastructure and network. The interview data includes 21 store owners, 16 employees, and members of three different NGOs: an NGO working for community network in Neukölln, an NGO working for children and youth on Sonnenallee, and a charity bookshop. We analyzed the interview data through four codes: networks, working conditions, challenges, and location. Network refers to all statements where interpersonal connections were mentioned such as "I loaned money from my family" and "Me, my nephew, cousin, it is a family business built in trust". Working conditions denote the quotes mentioning about working hours, spoken language, or requirement to conduct a certain job; an owner of a late night shop said, "I work mostly 10 to 15 hours a day" and an owner of a hair salon said "All that matters (...) is that we both get along very well und that we can easily communicate (...) I prefer them to speak Arabic". For challenges, we asked which kinds of obstacles make their business harder or less flourishing. The location refers to the relevant answers regarding why they chose Sonnenallee to open their shops and get jobs.

Access to Employment

Our fieldwork revealed that Sonnenallee is a vibrant, commercially thriving street, given the high number of stores and customers, and this is the basis of many people finding jobs here. Surprisingly, many interviewees answered that it was mere coincidence that they opened a store on Sonnenallee, when asked about their

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reasons for working on Sonnenallee. Given that decision-making and behavior are multi-causal and often remain to a large extent unconscious, one has to further interpret the many meanings encoded within this answer. For instance, while the owner of a hair salon speaks explicitly about how he found the business location by coincidence, the owner of a beauty parlor names it “destiny”, given that she was spontaneously approached by the former owner while shopping in a supermarket close by. What is hidden between the lines is that the owner of the hair salon had been looking for a potential business location on Sonnenallee without luck - because Sonnenallee is known as a good market for restaurants - and that the owner of the beauty salon had lived in Neukölln for a long time - so she must have been already well acquainted to Sonnenallee. Therefore, both owners had already concrete connections to the street and knew the street as a hotspot for restaurants or as part of their neighbourhood. Hence their motivations and reasons for why they opened a businesses on Sonnenallee contain more strategy and knowledge than a sole coincidence.

The connections to Sonnenallee are eclectic and go beyond the way some stories were told by the interviewees. The proximity to family and friends living in the area often plays an important role in attracting newcomers to Sonnenallee, as mentioned by an employee of a supermarket: “there are many friends of mine around here, who all speak Arabic”, and in addition, he himself lives close by to the store.

Nevertheless, many interviewees also mention the reputation of the street as a hotspot of “Arabic culture” in this context: “This is the Arabic street, 99% of the time people speak Arabic, only 1% speak other languages”, says the owner of a hair salon. Other interview partners such as the owners of a tobacco and shisha store consider Sonnenallee as: “It is the Arabic street definitely

and that’s why I came here. I can just be in this area without the need to go anywhere”. People have often heard about the street before their arrival and about the possibility of getting-by here more easily by solely speaking Arabic. Given that many newcomers do not yet speak German when arriving to Berlin - it is a continuous magnet for newcomers.

The flourishing commercial activity of the street is also mentioned in interviews, for example by the owner of a mobile shop, when asked why he chose Sonnenallee mentioned that “well, for the obvious reasons first, it is a commercial street that is developing slowly, but also my other business is just down the street so it’s convenient.” However, in most of our interviews the networks of friends and family play a central role, be it by offering financial support, as the owner of a cell repair shop mentions: “I borrowed money from my family to open the shop”, or by directly offering jobs to relatives, as the owner of a travel agency confirms: “My brother called me and he said that he wanted to open a travel agency here and he asked if I could come here to help him.” It is often these rather networks that recommend someone for a position, as an interviewee tells us when asked about their employees: “They are mostly people here recommended to us by friends or other workers.”

While some kind of coincidence - or luck - might play a role, the reputation and the commercially thriving vibe of the street keep bringing people to and support the continued arrival of newcomers on Sonnenallee, a street that seems to offer many jobs, it is the networks of friends and families, which in most of the cases facilitate access to employment on Sonnenallee to some, while preventing others from accessing jobs there.



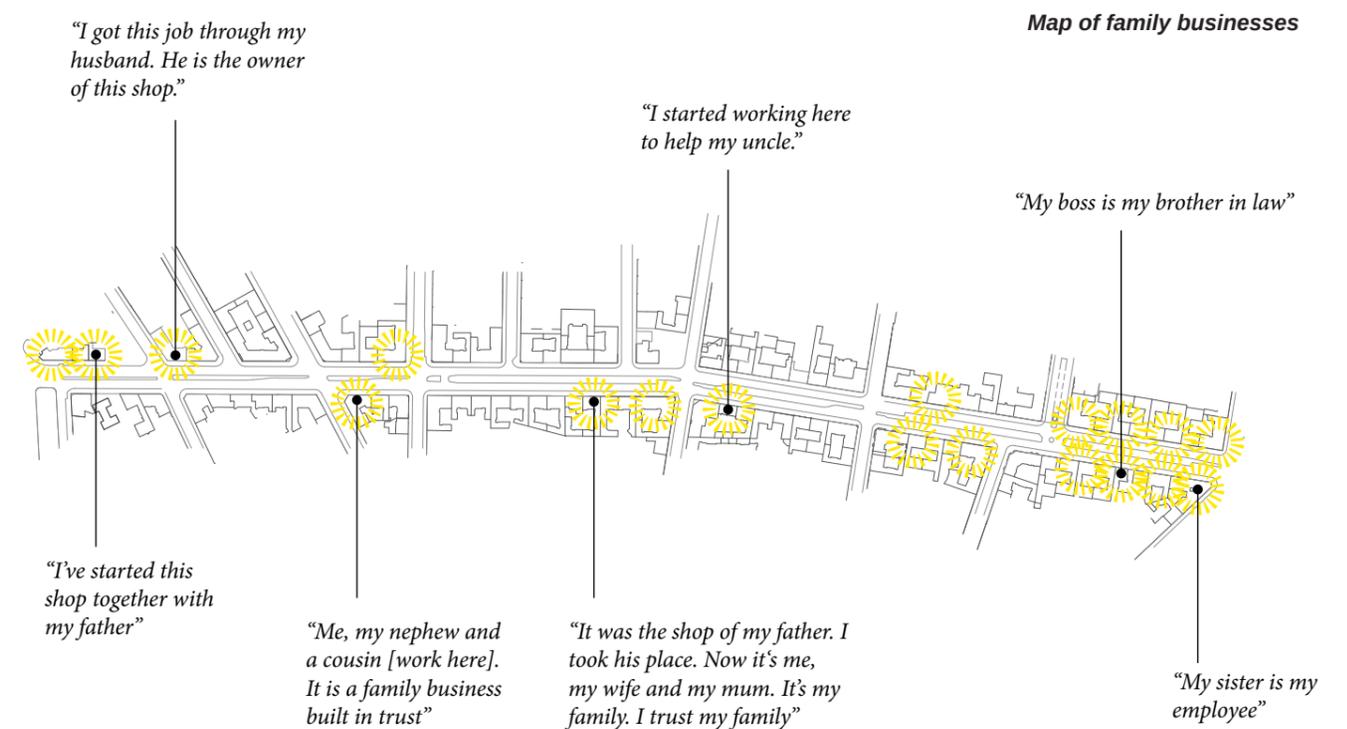
Organization of Employment

Concerning the organization of employment on Sonnenallee, we found that most of the people we interviewed work in the gastronomic sector (restaurants, cafés, etc.) and the service sector (hair salons, travel agencies, repair shops, etc.).

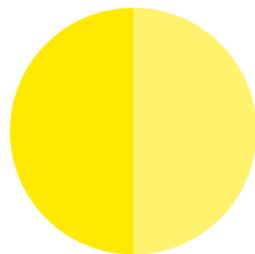
We also identified that many of the businesses we interviewed are family businesses. We define a business as a family business when at least two members work there while at least one

of them is the owner. This can be seen in the quotes of the following map.

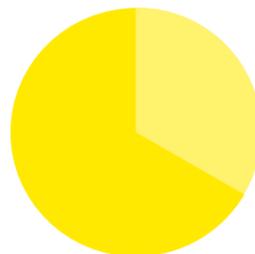
These quotes reveal how families (and friends) are the main actors supporting each other when opening a business. They further demonstrate that employers find new employees mainly through family ties, most often because of the already established trust and - resulting from this - a sense of security while employing people they already know.



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18 out of 36 interviewed shops are family businesses



24 out of 36 interviewed shopowners and employees got help through family and friends while opening and running a business or finding employment

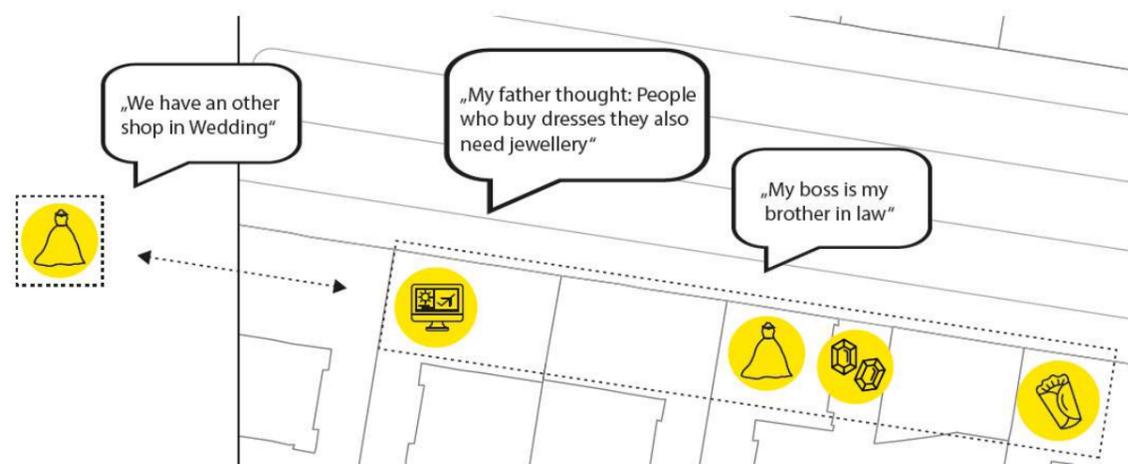
In this diagram, we see that 18 out of 36 interviewed shops are family businesses and 24 out of 36 interviewed shop owners and employees got help through family and friends while opening and running a business or while finding employment. This shows the multitude of family businesses on Sonnenallee and the importance of family and friend-ties.

In some cases, these local networks of families and friends even span over multiple stores on Sonnenallee, just like in this example of a Lebanese family that owns and runs four stores which are even located pretty close to each other on the street. They run a restaurant, a jewelry, a wedding clothes shop, and a travel agency.

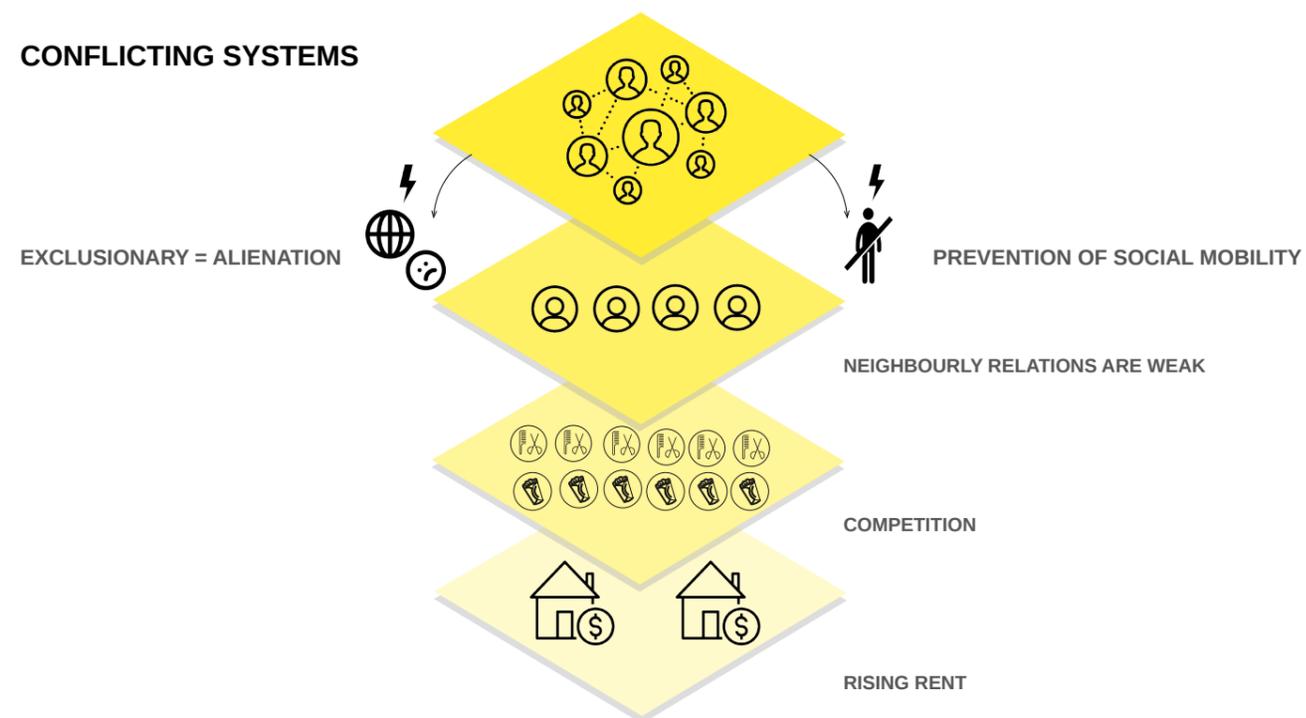
The son of the owner, who runs the jeweler shop, told us:

“My father thought: people who buy dresses also need jewelry, so he opened a jewelry.”

Additionally, we found out that the owner is the brother in law of one employee of the wedding shop. Our analysis further revealed that these local networks of family and friends are vital for finding employment and maintaining it. They seem to be an important source of mutual support. On the other hand, we found out that also certain conflicts exist concerning this organization of employment on Sonnenallee.



CONFLICTING SYSTEMS



Networks of family and friends can also prevent social mobility - as can be seen in the following quote of an NGO we interviewed that helps people in Neukölln with finding employment:

“Migrants are usually strongly tied to their families, and these social networks can help in some cases to find employment and educational training. However, these networks can sometimes also cause harm, especially if they are obstructive when they keep people from taking on a different educational/occupational path than the rest of their family”.

Further, networks of family and friends can also exclude people who do not have these tight connections since many store owners prefer to work with people of their closer social circles as demonstrated by the quote of the son of a butcher who solely find employees through family and acquaintances because “(...) then you know they are alright”.

In contrast to the tight family networks, the neighborly relationships on Sonnenallee seem rather weak and are less often a source of support. The owner of a hairdressing salon in frames these as “hi and bye relationships”.

Additionally, the high and further increasing commercial competition on Sonnenallee affects the rather weak interactions between the stores’ owners and staff. The competition on Sonnenallee is high – partly because many stores offer the same or similar products. They do so because, obviously, there is a high demand for specific products and services in northern Neukölln, and benefit from the reputation as a commercial cluster for these. But this cluster also results in a strong competition between these businesses and in difficult price cuts and price management.

And with increased competition, there are generally less job offers with the result that it

Employment on Sonnenallee



becomes even harder to find employment for those who do not have tight family ties to potential working places.

Other interview partners also name the rising commercial (but also residential) rents in the area as further aggravating the local tensions and high competition between store owners. A wife of a hairdresser describes the tensions resulting from the competition as directly linked to the extremely rising rents:

“We were the first hairdresser in Sonnenallee. There is competition: the new shops of refugees take only 5-8€ per haircut. It’s hard to get a new shop. Rents are rising extremely in this area.”

Diversity of Employment

The term diversity has a broad and conflicted range of meanings, usages and consequences. Therefore we subdivided our findings linking

diversity to employment on Sonnenallee. Generally, we can say that employers, employees, and customers on Sonnenallee are highly ethnically diverse. But we also found high diversity in regard to the wide range of products and services offered on Sonnenallee.

Among the 36 conducted interviews partners, we identified 12 different ethnicities based on the self-ascribed ethnic identities of the people we talked to.

In general, the overall diversity of ethnic groups found on Sonnenallee does not exist on the shop-level. Within the businesses, the owners and employees most often have the same national or ethnic origin. As mentioned before, when asked about how owners find employees when hiring new staff, they stated that they find employees through networks (through networks of family and friends) and through passers-by who ask for job vacancies. Some of these social networks even link the interviewees

back to their places of origin, where “someone knew someone who recommended someone else who just came to Berlin and looked for employment”. Even though some shop owners declared that they hired passers-by who asked for job opportunities, at the shop level, they mostly hired employees of the same ethnic descent. For instance, a restaurant owner mentioned that “12 people work here in cleaning jobs, preparing food, cooking and standing on the grill and cashiers. They are mostly people recommended to us by friends or by other workers here”. Another owner told us in the same vein:

“If I need someone now, I ask some of my workers, if they know someone is looking that they would recommend”,

while an employer at a barber shop mentioned that he found his employees through friends from Damascus.

Diversity in the businesses was mostly found to be diversified by the customers: In terms of their socio-economic and demographic status, our fieldwork revealed that they are the most mixed group. The composition and type of customers changes between the different day- and night- or evening-times: While we observed most often women, men and families during mornings and early afternoons in their search for daily supply needs and for dining and drinking out and spending leisure time on the street, we observed mostly men and groups (of mixed gender) of students and tourists after sunset and during night-time. The diversity of customers also varies from shop to shop. For instance, one barber shop owner said that his business mostly serves Arabic customers, mostly newcomers who don’t speak German yet, but the majority of shops like restaurants, Späti and supermarkets described their customers as more mixed in regard to their age, ethnic background, gender and length of residency in

Berlin or Neukölln.

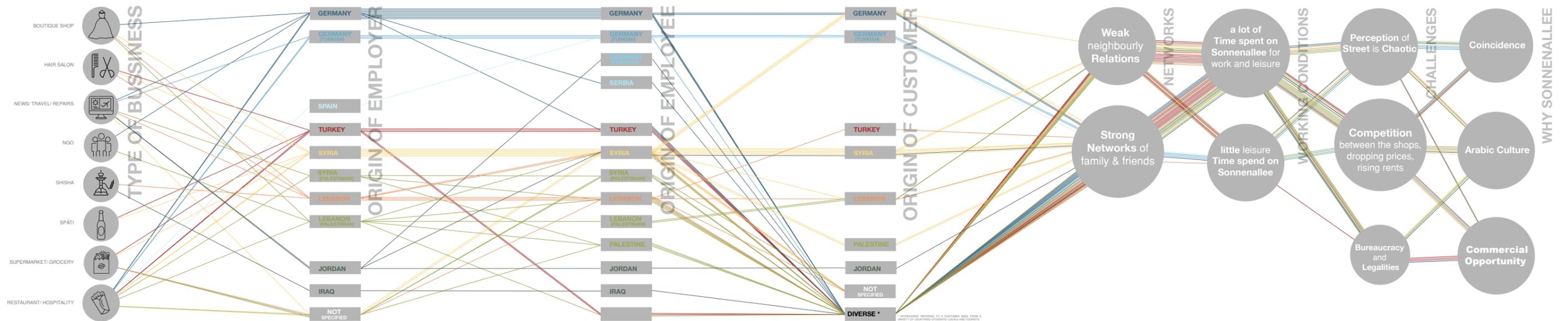
The products offered on Sonnenallee often show Arabic references and attract customers who are looking for products which they know from their places of origin: “There are a lot of things that remind us of home” (Syrian store owner). Another store owner said: “Arabic people, they miss Arabic feelings, food, feelings from their countries, so they come here”. The concentration of offered Arabic products and also the repeated media coverage about Sonnenallee as “the Arabic street” support the demand of certain kind of products as “typical for Sonnenallee” even from people from outside of Berlin:

“Everyday it’s busy. We have been in a lot of programs on television here in Germany and in magazines, so we are maybe ‘famous’ here. We deliver our products from here to outside of Berlin and even outside of Germany. We have good quality sweets. That has helped our reputation.”

Conclusion

Summing up the results of our research, we can generally confirm our first underlying assumption that Sonnenallee is an important hub for employment. However, most interviewees note that the economic situation on the street and in its surroundings has changed a lot during the last couple of years and became more dynamic but also more challenging. On the one hand, there is now more demand for certain kinds of goods on Sonnenallee, especially for Arabic products. On the other hand, competition between store owners increased drastically, partly because of the rising commercial and residential rents – as a city-wide trend. People decide to look for employment on Sonnenallee for a variety of reasons that may or may not be reflected by them consciously. To the extent that they are successful at this, the street is not

Employment on Sonnenallee



just seen and used by many interviewees as an arrival infrastructure, but is also made one by them for others. A crucial role for finding employment or opening a business play the tighter networks of family and friends where strong relations of trust seem to be of substantial importance. Family members and close friends can provide financial but also emotional support, recommendations on business and bureaucratic processes and, not least on potential employees. However, as much as these networks support the ones inside of or close to them, they logically also affect others by exclusion. As seen during our research on Sonnenallee, even immediate and direct neighborly relations are weak and less often a source of support. With an increased and still increasing competition for rentable shops and work places, it thus becomes harder to find employment for those who do not have strong ties to the street and its sources of employment through networks of family and friends.

This analysis, of course, has its limitations. First, we could not interview people who did not find a job on Sonnenallee. The limited fieldwork and time spent on the street also didn't allow us to distinguish precisely between established migrants and recent newcomers. And second, due to the limited scope of this project we could not explore the informal sectors of employment which have been shown to play an important role especially for many undocumented migrants and those waiting for their work permits to be approved (cf. e.g. Okyay 2017).

Schillebeeckx (2015) argues that urban transition zones where migrant communities produce and provide the necessary resources for the arrival and social mobility of migrant newcomers have in many cases been wrongfully targeted by social mix policies. Such policies are legitimized by framing the existing neighborhoods as problematic, economically weak and less productive than other areas in the city, as well as by constructing new narratives of

hipness and authenticity. Consequently, these strategies have been criticized to induce gentrification; a development that has been observed in Nord-Neukölln specifically (Huning and Schuster 2015).

In line with the concept of resourcefulness, we argue that instead of social mix strategies, city administration and development must be careful when intervening in urban transition zones like Sonnenallee. Instead of "mixing up" its demographics they should focus on the resources that are provided on site. These resources, like the eased access to the labor market through primary networks, must be strengthened, rather than undermined, by making them more inclusive and accessible. Which strategies and configurations exactly should be examined and executed in order to achieve this, remains an exciting field for future research.

Behind the Curtains of Sonnenallee

Carolina Monroy Santillán, Claudia Martínez, Tom Mouritz, Venus Ayoub

MOVING 'BEYOND THE ETHNIC LENS'

Scholars of migrant businesses and economic emplacement such as Glick-Schiller and Çağlar (2013) urge city developers and policy makers to look at migrant businesses not only within an ethnic niche, but instead as potentially influential agents of urban regeneration.

Rather than focussing on nationality and ethnicity as the only signifiers, it is important for scholarship to look 'beyond the ethnic lens' as a way to analyze migrant emplacement more broadly. Such a perspective can better recognize the way in which relevant policies, social structures, institutions, and other factors play a considerable role in specific contexts.

Glick-Schiller and Çağlar consider that prior literature on migrant businesses has been too binary and too dependent on categorization by nation-state or ethnicity. In their view, researchers have tended to bundle people into two categories: those native to a nation state are grouped together and people who have left one national territory to settle in another nation are grouped separately. Inevitably, this research has either compared migrants to natives, or considered migrants in divisions based on a generalised interpretation of their place of origin (Glick-Schiller and Çağlar, 2013, p 496-497).

Glick-Schiller and Çağlar (2013, p 499) suggest it would be more effective to study migrant businesses using the concept of 'multiple embeddedness'. They argue this can enable a deeper insight into the emplacement of migrants in a new location. But, first of all, what is emplacement?

Glick-Schiller and Çağlar (2013, p 495) perceive emplacement as the process of migrants settling down and building networks within their place of arrival:

"Emplacement is understood as a relationship between the continuing restructuring of a city within networks of power and migrants' efforts to settle and build networks of connection within the constraints and opportunities of a specific locality."

Overall, they argue that analyzing processes of emplacement "through the ethnic lens" fails to do justice to the complexity of these processes. Rather than a person's nationality or ethnicity determining their process of emplacement, it is also shaped by other factors, such as the political framework on local, national, continental and global scales. In order to move beyond the ethnic lens we should:

- study migrant businesses as modes of emplacement within a larger framework;
- from an appropriate distance, investigate when, why, and how ethnic identities are salient; and
- explore how all people, including migrants, display different frames of action, and belonging.

By following such an approach, researchers will be better placed to shed light on the interdependence of urban policy and migrant economic emplacement. Ultimately it is hoped this can yield benefits for both migrants and localities: for example, research findings can be used to assist migrants their emplacement, while localities may unlock tools to help facilitate or continue trends of recovery or growth. Glick-Schiller and Çağlar (2013, p 510) thus conclude:

"Depending on the relative political, economic and cultural positioning of the city and its response to the global neoliberal agenda, migrant businesses can play different roles at different times not only in terms of the emplacement of migrants in the city but also in terms of the efforts of the city to shape itself for competition within a global market."

RESEARCH APPROACH: INTRODUCTION

Perceptions of Sonnenallee have evolved from the negative and loaded nickname "Gazastreifen" (Ataman, 2008) to the increasingly bustling "Arabische Straße" in recent years (Biermann, 2016). The changing tone of media reports across the past decade reflects this development: it is evident that the focus on Sonnenallee is shifting from stories of conflict and tension to coverage that highlights the increased commercial activity and the emergence of Sonnenallee as a popular shopping and tourist destination within Berlin.

Der Tagespiegel, 13 January 2008:

"The northern end of Sonnenallee has a nickname: Gaza Strip. Because almost all shops here belong to Arabs. They come from Lebanon, Syria or North Africa. There are about 10,000 in the district, they face about 40,000 people of Turkish origin."

"Das nördliche Ende der Sonnenallee hat einen Spitznamen: Gazastreifen. Denn fast alle Geschäfte hier gehören Arabern. Sie kommen aus dem Libanon, Syrien oder aus Nordafrika. Etwa 10,000 sind es im Stadtteil, sie stehen rund 40,000 Türkischstämmigen gegenüber."

BZ Berlin, 7 September 2016:

"In fact, Sonnenallee, which meanwhile is called "Arab Street" by residents, has become much more crowded since the influx of refugees. It feels like there are four times more people walking along here compared to three years ago. Shisha smoke blows in the air, mobile vendors selling cardamom coffee, a bit of Arabia in Berlin."

"Tatsächlich ist die Sonnenallee, die mittlerweile bei Bewohnern auch „Arabische Straße" heißt, seit den Flüchtlingsströmen sehr viel voller geworden. Gefühlt laufen hier vier Mal mehr Menschen entlang wie noch vor drei Jahren. Shisha-Rauch weht durch die Luft, fliegende Händler verkaufen Kardamom-Kaffee, ein bisschen Arabien in Berlin."

Drawing on the approach advocated by Glick-Schiller and Çağlar, we were motivated to use methods that look 'beyond the ethnic lens' in order to identify what really goes on behind the curtains on Sonnenallee, and to explore the layers and nuances underlying retail economic

Behind the Curtains

activity on this important Berlin street.

Although we clearly wish to move past narrow ethnic frames of understanding, we do ultimately consider think that the term “Arabic Street” is quite a helpful shorthand. This label is at once multidimensional and representative of diversity: it reflects the obvious cluster of businesses operated and frequented by Arabic speakers that are found on Sonnenallee, but through the term “Arabic” there is also representation of a diverse group of people originating from more than 20 countries over two continents. Moreover, when expressed in German (“Arabische Straße”) it is also suggestive of the hybrid identities found along Sonnenallee and the adaptation of Arabic culture into German life.

WALK OF A STEREOTYPE Introduction

Our group is made up of relative newcomers to Berlin, with members originating from Mexico, Palestine and Australia. We have various levels

of familiarity with the historical and spatial context of Sonnenallee, as well as German and Arabic, the most common languages spoken on the street.

We used our ‘fresh eyes’ to conduct a walk along Sonnenallee recording the observations of a newcomer. These observations were recorded, organised and mapped in a simple fashion based on the newcomer’s first impressions: these were generally associations informed by stereotypes gleaned from signage (Arabic or Latin script), visible products, shopkeepers or customers. Accordingly, we call this exercise the ‘walk of a stereotype’.

We intended to benchmark the narrow impressions derived from the ‘walk of a stereotype’ against the deeper insights gained through



further research when going behind the curtains. Doing so highlights that the real situation on Sonnenallee is much more complex and diverse than a first impression based on stereotypes and preconceptions.

Methodology

On Sunday, 10 December 2017 a walk was undertaken on a stretch of the northern side of Sonnenallee between Wildenbruchstraße and Weichselstraße.

An online mapping tool was used to pin the locations of over 50 commercial premises along the walk. A photo and any relevant notes could be embedded in each pin to record specific impressions of each shop.

The extent of judgment that could be made was constrained by practical limitations: the viewpoint was restricted to what could be perceived from the footpath. It was noted whether each shop appeared, superficially, to be a “migrant business”, or appeared otherwise more conven-

tionally “German”. The indicator triggering a label of “migrant business” was the presence of signage with Arabic script.

To visualize this process, we stitched together photos of the streetscape along part of the area this walk was conducted. The contrast between the collage of the actual streetscape and the edited version highlights the type of visual details which draw the eye and guide the newcomer’s initial impressions and stereotype-associations. The point we wish to emphasise is that when a judgment of a place is formed based only on a limited set of elements then this is more likely to lead to a narrow perspective.

Outcome

Predictably, the results of this mapping exercise disclosed a relatively binary impression of the streetscape as appearing either ‘Arabic’, ‘German’ or, to a lesser extent, ‘Turkish’.

The walk of a stereotype gauged that there appeared to be an extensive coverage of “migrant”



Behind the Curtains



businesses along this part of Sonnenallee. It was also perceived that shops that looked apparently more “German” were clustered together (such as in pockets between Weichelstraße and Fuldastraße, or near the corner of Sonnenallee and Wildenbruchstraße).

The extent of the limitations of understanding provided by the walk of a stereotype are borne further in the next map. Here an attempt was made to display whatever ‘diversity’ was perceived after having conducted the walk. However, the result was extremely limited, effectively going as far as guessing that a business might be Arabic if it looked ‘exotic’, or maybe Turkish if the shop name had Latin script but did not sound German.

We would later come to find that often these initial impressions based on stereotypes and first associations were inaccurate or wrong; in several cases, stores that were initially regarded

to be Turkish were in fact Albanian businesses.

BEHIND THE CURTAINS LAYER OF RESEARCH

Glick-Schiller and Çağlar (2013) have called for researchers of migrant businesses to remember that all people, including migrants, display different frames of action and belonging.

In this section of our analysis, “behind the curtains”, our research focuses on examining the retail stores on Sonnenallee as normal businesses, and not necessarily as migrant businesses. We do this by implementing the alternative research approaches suggested by Glick-Schiller and Çağlar.

First, we employed the concept of multiple embeddedness, which entails exploring the processes and activities that the individual migrant goes through and performs in their everyday

business practices. This highlights non-ethnic networks and emphasises the importance of the street in providing a range of urban economic opportunities, and recognises the value and contribution of these business to the urban structure (Glick-Schiller and Çağlar, 2013). In our field work this included exploring owner’s proclaimed identities, customer base and supplier networks.

Secondly, we looked at migrants’ local emplacement, the relationship between the growth and development of a city as a dynamic urban entity that is continually regenerating, and migrants’ attempts of settling down in a new locality that has its own challenges and constraints. This requires an examination of the constitution of local, national and transactional factors within uneven hierarchies of networks (Glick-Schiller and Çağlar, 2013) in order to better understand the social role performed by Sonnenallee alongside its role in urban regeneration. For this part

we looked for social patterns, cultural motifs and symbols of home.

Going behind the curtains exposes layers lying beneath the surface and showcases a level of understanding beyond the narrow framework of the stereotypes lens. However, it is also important to note that while we emphasise the phrase “behind the curtains” to describe our overarching research approach, this does not mean that we are limiting our focus to what occurs behind walls, windows and doors. The context of our research is still founded within the discipline of urban studies, and given we are analysing a busy city street, then we also ensure that we pay close attention to what is happening on the footpath and in public spaces. In this sense, it was also necessary to walk along the street, linger, talk to people moving along or hanging around in the exterior spaces of Sonnenallee.



Behind the Curtains

By looking behind the curtains of the shops on Sonnenallee and interacting with owners, employees and customers, we witnessed a mix of migrant (and non-migrant) businesses. These businesses illustrated a variety of characteristics and layers of diversity which challenge reductive stereotypes but also confirmed the recent boom of activity on Sonnenallee and its draw-card factor for recent migrants.

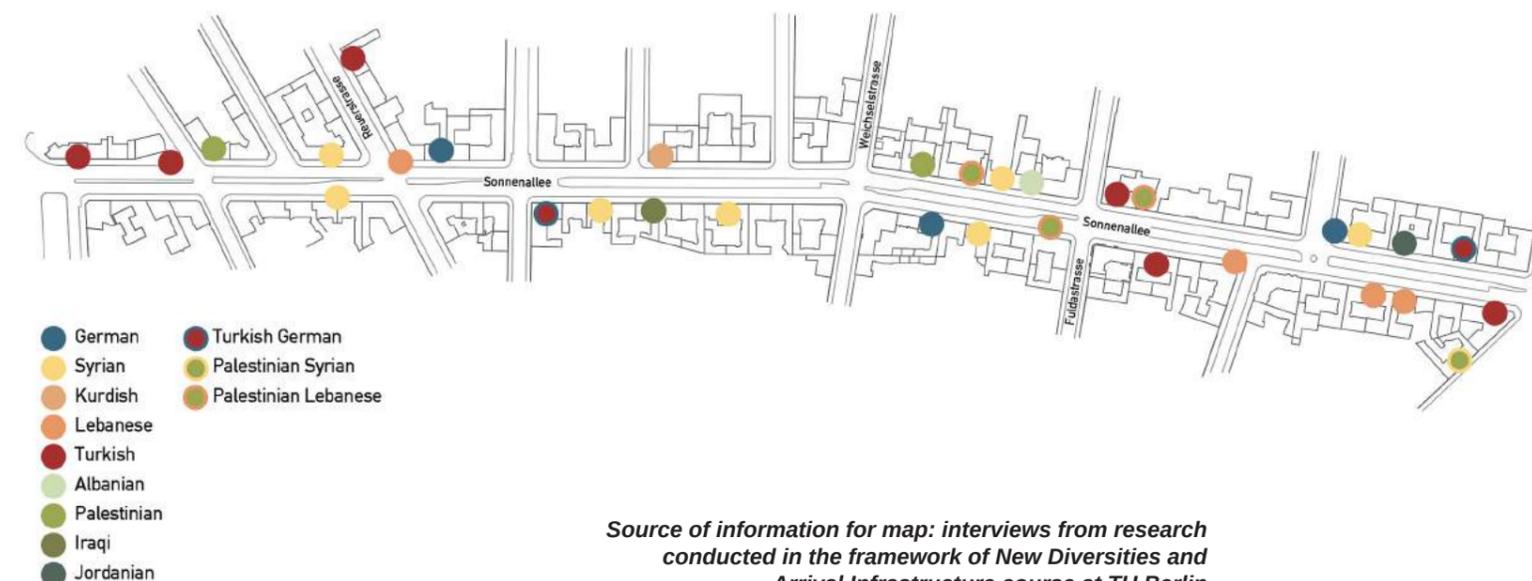
MAPPING RESEARCH RESULTS

Methodological nationalism has shaped most prior literature about migrants' economic integration associating society and culture with the nation state which considers the national borders and boundaries of belonging set up by the nation-state as unit of analysis (Glick Schiller and Çağlar, 2013). This approach approves and supports the political ideology that represents individuals as having only one identity and one country (Glick Schiller and Çağlar, 2013).

Mapping the "proclaimed identities" of the shop owners open the panorama to a wide range of origins and cultures; far more than was initial-

ly perceived on the walk of a stereotype. This diverse multicultural scheme started as a binary distinction between migrant or German businesses; after that: a display of what stores were possibly Turkish, Arabic, German; and finally, a 12-layered map which represents not only the diverse origin of people who operate stores on Sonnenallee but also how they identify themselves. Moreover, these results clash with the assumptions made by scholars of migrants' businesses. Terms such as "Turkish German", "Palestinian Syrian" and "Palestinian Lebanese" suffice as a first coherent indicator that categorizing and narrowing down identities into single terms, nationality or one place of origin is simply irrelevant.

The outcome of the customer origins mapping emphasizes economic activity of the street and the multi-faceted nature of visitors to Sonnenallee. Rather than providing a niche offering for customers of Arabic or refugee background, these businesses serve a wide range of Berlin residents and many (wealthy) Europeans/tourists. It was clear these businesses did not exclusively serve a specific ethnic or national group



Source of information for map: interviews from research conducted in the framework of New Diversities and Arrival Infrastructure course at TU Berlin

but had developed a wide and diverse customer base.

"...it's not busier only because of the refugees now, many Europeans come here now a lot too...to Sonnenallee and the streets that cross it..." (Bookshop manager)

"[I visit] every weekend. A friend told me about the Arabic Street and I googled it." (Italian customer)

"60% of the customers are German. Others are mixed: Arabic, including Syrian or other countries. Every day it's busy." (Syrian sweet shop owner)

"My customers are a mix. Tourists. Turkish, Spanish. Lebanese, Syrian, Palestinian. People come from all parts of Berlin. Lots of refugees." (Palestinian takeaway owner)

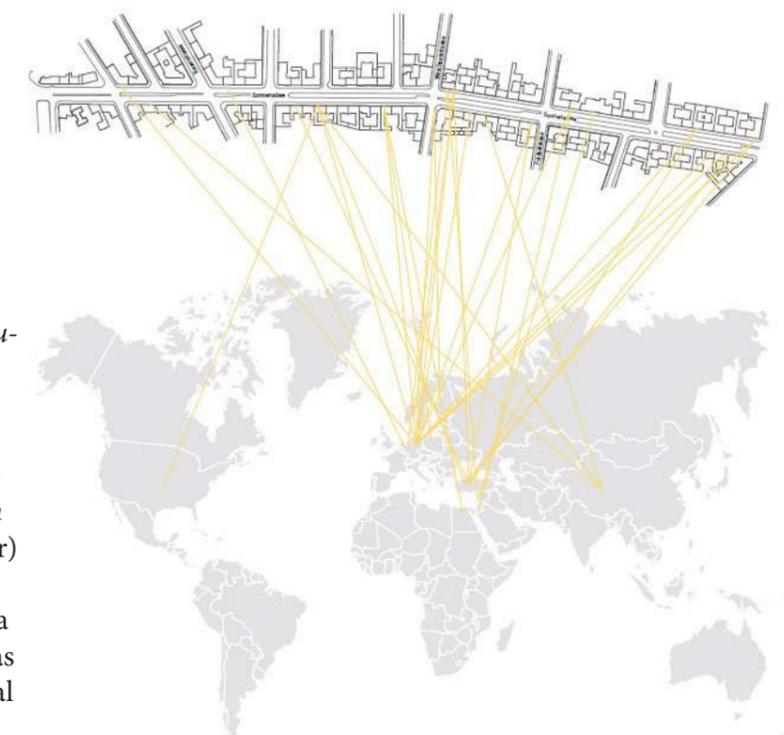
"My cousin ... invited me to this cafe and now I keep coming back to Sonnenallee." (Albanian customer)

"We get some customers from Neukölln. But mostly from elsewhere, you could say, the richer parts of Berlin. People come from outside of Berlin as well, even from Hamburg or Rostock. Because we are a specialty store." (Bike shop owner)

Supplier networks map: This was a way of examining the businesses as regular businesses that draw global networks of suppliers extending



Source of information for maps: interviews from research conducted in the framework of New Diversities and Arrival Infrastructure course at TU Berlin



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from the local (within Berlin and Germany) to the store owners' place of origin, and also many other locations. Enquiries regarding the origins of supplies to businesses on Sonnenallee uncovered linkages stretching across different parts of the globe. This indicates pragmatic and agile commercial instincts and demonstrates how the Arabic façade of a migrant business on Sonnenallee will often mask business practices that are spatially varied and underpinned by networks more complex than initially apparent.

HYBRID IMAGERY AND SYMBOLS OF HOME

We used hybrid imagery to represent the ambiguity between symbols of home and symbols of arrival, and the way that these symbols are transported from a place of origin and adapted into a new context. These images show certain indicators that represent the dualism between the overlapping two layers in the research. Moreover, they show that these businesses do not conform to one stereotype but in fact prove the multiple embeddedness by highlighting the multiple characteristics that exist all together at the same time.

Symbols of home or cultural symbols demonstrate how migrants' place/position forms of belonging into their new environments while the other highlighted layer in the pictures stands for other networks of power. Framed together, these different characters are signifying multiple embeddedness.

We refer to hybrid imagery to the series of photographs taken on Sonnenallee which represent a dualism between a symbol of home and a symbol of arrival (often a globalization reference). These images depict the overlapping of these two layers borne out by our research.

Symbols of home are all signs representing a cultural identity, whether Syrian, Palestinian,



Religious wall icon vs. Coca Cola as a global supplier



Palestinian flag vs. European Bank groups



Palestinian flag vs. Italian-international coffee supplier

Palestinian souvenirs vs. German post company



Behind the Curtains

Turkish, Lebanese or something else. These representations of home are usually seen from the street and refer people to their homeland as well as offering a feeling of wellbeing and comfort.

Religious text or icons, pictures of important holy places, flags, Arabic script, names of the store owners' hometowns, pictures of Arabic icons and, importantly, the food itself are shown in this collage as examples of symbols of Sonnenallee that are displayed prominently on Sonnenallee. As well as offering a sense of belonging to migrants of certain backgrounds, they also help to introduce other users of the streets to their homeland.

Relating to 'symbols of home', one of the Arabic visitor to Sonnenallee stated, "I was surprised how close it is to the streets back home...I like the nostalgia and the similarities to home and the friendly people there".

The street's role in the social life of migrants' (especially those with an Arabic background) has grown rapidly, to the extent where the street's reputation has extended beyond Berlin, or even Germany. About this, different interviewees said:

"I went to Sonnenallee the first day I arrived in Berlin. A friend of mine took me there and I've been going ever since."

"I heard about it "the Arab street" even before I got to Berlin, from friends and people in general."

"[I come here] daily. Sonnenallee was almost my first stop in Berlin."

"Almost first stop in Berlin, I visit it daily since I work nearby."



The results of interviews conducted with visitors highlighted three important aspects of Sonnenallee.

Firstly, the street serves as a first stop and arrival zone in Berlin and Germany, and social networks on the street are commonly a first step for those seeking employment. Secondly, the emergence of Sonnenallee as a key destination in Berlin based on its reputation for hyperdiversity and similarities to home for many people with migrant origins. Lastly, Sonnenallee as a transition gateway for newcomers, on the basis that the informal social systems on the street allows newcomers (refugees in particular) to maintain a connection to home, which helps to minimize the "culture shock" of their new lives.

TRANSACTIONAL vs SOCIAL BUSINESSES

We were interested in the types of services offered on Sonnenallee, in particular ones that are not explicitly advertised. When we began to look behind the curtains we wondered whether there might be layers of social networking or social services on top of the obvious formal retail offerings presented along the streetfront.

In the course conducting interviews with store owners and employees, in several instances we found ourselves spending lengthy periods of time inside a business. These extended interviews, often during business operations, allowed us to develop an appreciation of the social elements at play within some of the migrant businesses on Sonnenallee. Frequently, we observed characteristics that were largely unexpected, such as the use of rooms at the rear of premises (eg. restaurant or bookshop) for communal gatherings of a semi-private, semi-public nature, or learning about the specialized role that a travel agency can play for migrants who wish to make a pilgrimage to Mecca.

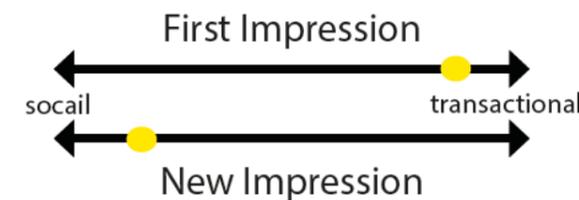
Behind the Curtains

As a way of demonstrating the value of going behind the curtains to obtain a more nuanced perspective of migrant businesses, we selected four case studies from our interview partners. In each of the case studies, we identified our initial impression of the store before commencing the interview, showcase enlightening quotes and then illustrate whether the experience had changed our impression of the social and transactional characteristics of the store.

We consider that a transactional business is one that is primarily geared to sell a product or provide a service in a neutral and efficient manner. However, many small retail businesses are heavily defined by their relational qualities - they may facilitate de facto social services, afford networking opportunities or exhibit cultural values. A business may exhibit a mix of social and transactional elements.

Several times we were forced to revise our understanding of the balance between social and transactional elements at play in migrant businesses on Sonnenallee. In the whole, these businesses were often more social than predicted. That the social qualities of these business were richer than expected and quite varied in nature leads us to conclude that these stores are a key measure of diversity on Sonnenallee: these businesses have the capacity to offer more things to more people.

Maktabat Al Aytam

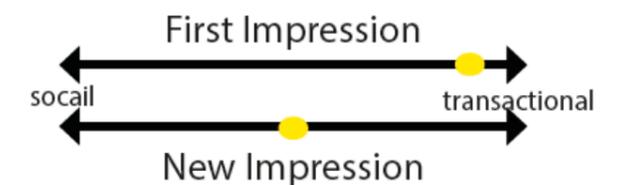


First impression: quiet religious (Islamic) book shop

Quote: “Whatever this bookshop this shop sells goes to charity, the money is sent to Lebanon and used to help orphans. We have many German clients come in asking a lot of questions ... about Islam ... We find ourselves responsible to show the world what Islam is really about. [...] We have unofficial gatherings, having tea, especially on Saturdays.” shop manager

After learning that the shop is not actually a business but a charity and in addition we observed spontaneous social gatherings in the back room of the shop, we recognized new social activities taking place in the shop that resulted in understanding the store’s role differently.

O3 - IT service



First impression: an IT service shop, where you get the service you need and move along...

Quote: “It’s nice to work here... there’s “movement” in the street [...] people coming in and going, people I know just stopping by while they pass here...” shop owner

Before talking to the owner of O3 we wouldn’t have thought about social interactions that went beyond a small talk between the shop owner and his customers, but the interview showed us another social layer that this IT shop carries. In this case the role that Sonnenallee plays, as a vital and very active street in the lives of migrants, is very important to support the social occurrences the shop owner mentioned.

Behind the Curtains

Al Outom Reisen

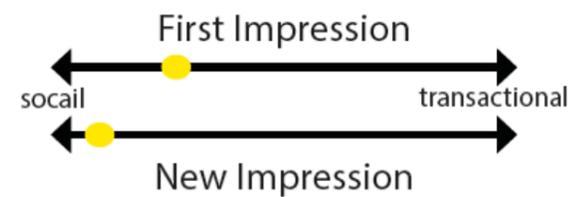


First impression: quiet - in fact often looking empty - travel agency targeting Arabic speaking clients.

Quote: "... We help people with trips [and] visas. And also, there are a lot of people going to Mecca, and we specialise in organising those trips ... Some Syrians ... they had really bad experiences, and... we try to help them, to go back." shop owner

This travel agency does not function as any other travel agency, it plays an important role in helping migrants get travelling visas, which is a more sensitive and difficult issue specially for customers who are refugees. Moreover, the shop also focuses on arranging religious group trips.

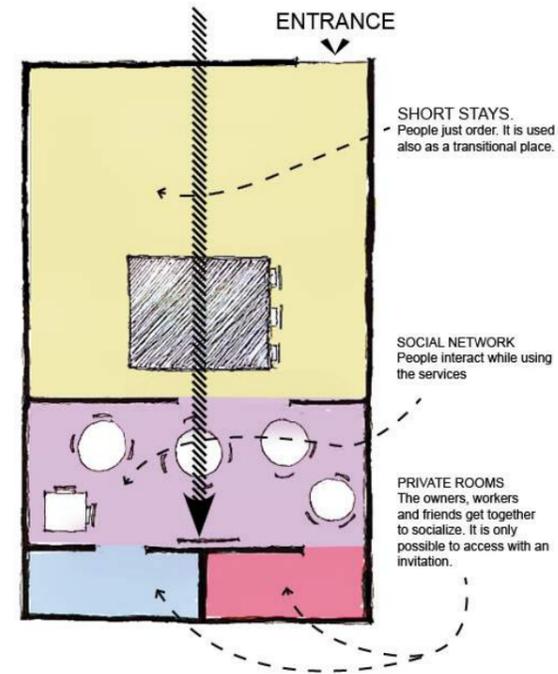
Dy Fazana



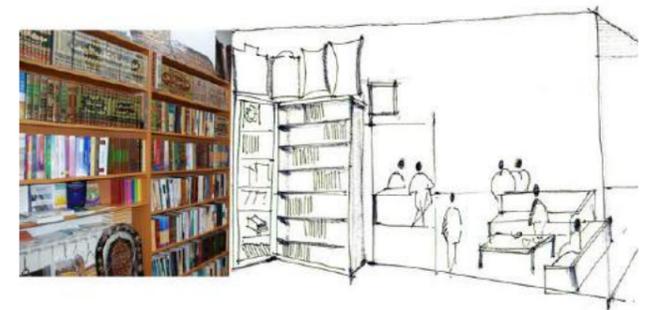
First impression: A smoky cafe - possibly Turkish - filled with men & not particularly inviting to newcomers.

Quote: "I come here, everyday. I like the coffee and because I can talk to Albanian people [...] I have a connection with this store - because I come everyday! When I come everyday, I start to feel at home in this place."

Our first impression categorised the business as a social business but after learning that the shop plays a very important part in the Albanian new-commer's social life, we realized that the social aspects that this story has are stronger than initially anticipated.



Maktabat Al Aytam



Dy Fazana

Very often the stores we visited had back rooms which allowed for more coherent social interaction and gatherings - sometimes also more private social interactions. These sketches of the interior of, respectively, a religious bookshop and an espresso bar, represent the social life and activities occurring behind the curtains within migrant businesses. They suggest the change in perception between transactional to social businesses after an extended period is spent observing and interacting with the key actors who occupy the space behind the curtains.

This floor plan is an indicative example of a model layout commonly employed within migrant businesses on Sonnenallee, with a room behind the façade of the store dividing the transactional activities from the social ones. Sometimes the lines of division may be more blurred. This form of layout inevitably fosters forms of social interaction and provides a comfortable arrival space.

Behind the Curtains

Conclusion

Interviews were conducted with more than 25 owners, operators and employees of businesses on Sonnenallee. More than 90% of interview participants agreed that Sonnenallee has experienced significant change in recent years. The overwhelming theme of responses was to cite increased activity on the street and the presence of two categories of newcomers: refugees and a young and international crowd of tourists and students. On this, the interviewees said:

“Since 2014 many new shops have opened, the street became busier.” (O3 - IT Service, handystore owner)

“When we started this store in 2014, this street was like a ghost street. ... [then] there is a lot of refugees, they start to come and choose Berlin. Because they hear from the news, from friends, from others that here you can find the Arabic stuff, the Arabic products, the Arabic shops, these places. And it started to be so famous, this street.” (Al Outom Reisen manager).

“There is more students living here now mainly from Europe.” (Hairdressing salon owner).

“Neukölln is getting more and more populated and the rate of gentrification is obviously increasing. There are new sorts of bars, new audiences, new demographics.” (Manager from Department of Integration and Social Affairs)

These statements about the change on Sonnenallee in recent years persuaded us to look at migrant businesses as small businesses who are active players in urban regeneration and valuable contributors to the life and identity of the street and its surrounds, rather than simply ethnic actors serving a niche customer base. They are the place-makers of Sonnenallee.

By looking behind the curtains of the shops on Sonnenallee we saw the parallel existence of a diverse range of symbols of home, together with hybrid images. The intersection of these two themes show memories from home, mixed with globalization symbols in Berlin, and represents adaptation to their new lives and the creation of a “home away from home”.

We observed the important role of migrant businesses as infrastructures of arrival, helping newcomers to settle and provide for themselves in their new place of asylum or residence. By examining all the layers in Sonnenallee we understood the importance of taking into account the changing opportunities of the space as well as the shared identity and culture of the residents, owners, workers or visitors in this place.

The changing diversities on Sonnenallee allow newcomers to develop a sense of wellbeing while they maintain a connection to home.

Conclusion

Aram Lee, Carolina Monroy Santillán, Tom Mouritz, Venus Ayoub

In this final chapter of our report we draw conclusions from the focus areas of the respective working groups’ research and analysis. Finally, we synthesise the key threads from each piece of targeted research in an overarching summary of the results of our studies on the new diversities and urban arrival infrastructures on Sonnenallee.

Changing Sonnenallee

In a spatial-physical sense, conditions on Sonnenallee to a large degree have remained unchanged. The use of the street, however, has changed considerably: in particular, the prevalence of automobile traffic reduces amenity and comfort for pedestrians. The types of products and services for sale in the ground level commercial premises are significantly different from what they once were, and the backgrounds of visitors and business owners have become more and more diverse, mostly because of the recent refugee migration to Berlin and Germany.

It can be concluded that the physical characteristics of a wide thoroughfare and activated ground floor premises of the Berlin Block typology are capable of manifold adaptation and help facilitate the lively and dynamic social activity on the street. In a way, these characteristics have helped incubate past and increased present and future

diversities.

Where the commercial structure of Sonnenallee was once dominated by small enterprises such as cobblers, jewelers, and locksmiths, operated by ethnic German and Turkish owners, the street is now characterized by a strong presence of stores operated by people of Arabic descent. While at first glance this might appear somewhat homogenous – as a cluster of “Arabic stores” – a closer look identifies greater levels of diversity among customers, visitors, and shop owners. In the future we anticipate that the diversities on Sonnenallee will continue to evolve, but perhaps in a gentrifying direction that threatens the current diversities because of rising commercial and residential rents. It is predicted that on top of the cluster of Arabic businesses, Sonnenallee will also develop an even stronger international character as a result of the transnational creative class settling in Neukölln.

Socioeconomics

Vibrant levels of everyday activity on Sonnenallee help distinguish the street as an important socio-economic location within Berlin. The manifold informal yet strong local networks provide good opportunities for newcomers to enter the local job market on Sonnenallee. The increased

Conclusion

cultural and ethnic diversity of people frequenting the area – migrants, refugees, tourists, and students from other parts of the city as well as multi-ethnic long-term and newer residents – has in turn lead to an equally diverse range of goods and services available on offer on Sonnenallee.

However, with these increased socio-economic and demographic and commercial diversities also come pitfalls, associated with the emergence of Sonnenallee's distinguished socio-economic logic. As Sonnenallee and its surrounding areas become more popular to visit and live, prices for products and services but also local residential and commercial rents are rising. The local individual and group networks are very strong, but they also develop in a more tightening direction, often resulting or at least risking social and strategic exclusion of those who don't belong to the networks and the respective group – in terms of the spoken language, ethnic background, place of origin, gender, or educational background. This exclusion results from the lack of familial or social connections, which are commonly needed to enter the local job market and benefit from Sonnenallee's socio-economic diversity as well as from its arrival infrastructures that help newcomers to settle.

Employment

Our research and fieldwork revealed that from an employment perspective, Sonnenallee represents an important location in Berlin. The fieldwork and interviews explicitly conveyed the message that economic conditions on Sonnenallee, but also Neukölln and Berlin, have changed drastically in recent years: commercial activity has intensified, driven by factors such as the increased demand for products known from Arabic countries and for the provision of services targeted at the Arabic speaking newcomers. Generally, opportunities for employment have improved, although conditions on Sonnenallee have also become

more competitive, challenged by rising rents.

It was observed that newcomers to Sonnenallee and Berlin rely critically on close networks of family and friends in order to find employment. Friends and family members are also crucial for financial and emotional support and assistance for the complicated German bureaucratic processes necessary to open and operate a business, as well as for applying for asylum and maintain the residency permit. While newcomers with strong networks can draw on strong levels of support and help, these networks may also have the effect of excluding other newcomers from the same opportunities and limiting their ability to enter the job market in Berlin if their connections on Sonnenallee are not equally strong and supportive.

Sonnenallee is the kind of 'urban transition zone' that is often targeted by government authorities with 'social mix' policies that risk becoming patronizing as well as inducing gentrification processes that might be harmful to current residents who contribute to the existing urban qualities as the past and present place-makers. Looking to the future, it is considered that we should be wary of targeting and developing Sonnenallee with 'social mix' policies and instead try to support the existing communities and their networks, but also we should also aim for making the strong, informal primary networks already at play on the street more inclusive and accessible.

Behind the curtains

The research approach to explore Sonnenallee behind the curtains aimed to look beyond the ethnic stereotype that dominates studies of migrant businesses generally and recent perceptions of Sonnenallee specifically. The research has revealed more layers of diversity than initially anticipated through first impressions. Moreover, the information gathered from the interviews

establish that Sonnenallee has experienced a period of change in recent years, mostly perceived as positive. In particular, economic and urban activity has flourished. For example, interviewees stated:

"Since 2014 many new shops have opened, the street became busier." (IT and cell phone store owner)

"When we started this store in 2014, this street was like a ghost street. ... [then] there is a lot of refugees, they start to come and choose Berlin. Because they hear from the news, from friends, from others that here you can find the Arabic stuff, the Arabic products, the Arabic shops, these places. And it started to be so famous, this street." (Manager of travel agency)

These statements also demonstrate that migrant businesses are small enterprises playing an active role in urban regeneration. They are valuable contributors to the life and identity of the street and its surrounds, rather than simply ethnic actors serving a niche customer base. They made and make the place the way it is.

Summary

Although Sonnenallee in Neukölln lies several kilometers away from the traditional center(s) of Berlin, the street has developed into a rich hub of multiple diversities and socioeconomic activities. The strength of this status and its resulting reputation means that Sonnenallee is now known not only beyond Neukölln, but also outside of Berlin - throughout Germany and even internationally.

Another strength of Sonnenallee are its economic networks, which represent a common source of employment for newcomers to Berlin. These networks provide multiple sources of inclusion and integration into economic life.

However, these networks between and across owners, customers, and the wider public are complex, ambivalent and ambiguous. The scale and density of these networks is much bigger, often transnational and far-reaching than might be initially perceived. Despite the common appearance of an "Arabic-oriented" shopfront, a closer examination of supplier-networks discloses economic connections between Sonnenallee businesses and suppliers that extend across Germany, Europe, and the world.

On the other hand, the social networks that exist locally on Sonnenallee are mainly family - and friendship-based ones. They are often a source of support and wellbeing, not only but particularly for migrants in Germany because of structural exclusion and discrimination. These social networks and the resulting social interactions help connect and empower newcomers in an environment where they can simultaneously maintain ties to their places of origin, through language and kinship with other migrants of a similar background.

Among the range of networks and institutions that serve as arrival infrastructures in Berlin, the hyper-diverse qualities of Sonnenallee establish the street as a key location for migrants and refugees trying to settle in the city. With the experience of ethnic and lifestyle diversity as having become an everyday phenomenon in the contemporary city, Sonnenallee represents Berlin's street of the 21st century, where people have already developed "*the capacity live with difference*" (Stuart Hall 1993, p. 361).

More than simply supplying people with food and products, Sonnenallee is a showcase of powerful symbols of home. These offer newcomers a connection to their place of origin and make Berlin a more comfortable place of arrival, helping them transition to their new lives far away from their native lands.

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Interview Guidelines

Final questions for store owners:

1. Where are you from? Which languages do you speak? at home? In the shop?
2. Since when do you live in Berlin? Where do you live? (with family?)
3. Why did you come to Berlin?
4. How did you come to Berlin and via what places? Could you please map the route that you travelled?
5. When did you open your shop? Why?
6. How would you describe the kind of business you run? How much time do you spend on Sonnenallee?
7. Why Sonnenallee? (as a business location)
8. What information did you need opening your store? Where did you get it from?
9. Where do you get your supplies/ products from?
10. Which is the most often used language in the store? (with employees/ customers)
11. What are the major challenges of opening a business? (e.g. specify: in general, in Germany/ Berlin/ Sonnenallee)
12. Who works here? Why? Who does what? (e.g. family members, background of employees)
13. How did you find your employees? How would you find new employees?
14. Do you have any other businesses/ branches? Do you have another source of income?
15. Can you tell us about the layout/ design of your shop? (e.g. why this furniture, decoration...)
16. What's the situation for businesses on Son-

- nenallee? (e.g. competition, cooperation with other store owners, ...)
17. Who are your customers? (let them describe them)
 18. What do you think of Sonnenallee in general?
 19. What has changed on Sonnenallee since you opened your business? What do you think of these changes?
 20. How do you imagine Sonnenallee in the future? What would you wish for?
 21. Are there any challenges regarding regulations and laws? How do political decisions/ changes affect life and business on Sonnenallee?
 22. Which businesses do you frequent on Sonnenallee? (map)

Final questions for customers/visitors:

1. Why do you visit Sonnenallee? (e.g. for shopping, name shops and why there or meeting friends, name where they meet or...)
2. How often do you come to Sonnenallee? Since when do you visit Sonnenallee?
3. Which businesses do you visit in Sonnenallee? Why?
4. Are there any businesses that you can't find somewhere else in Berlin /in Germany?
5. Do you have any personal connections to the store owner/employee?
6. What do you think of Sonnenallee (e.g. like/ dislike)

Interview Guidelines

7. How do you imagine Sonnenallee in the future?

8. Where are you from?

9. Since when do you live in Berlin? Where do you live?

10. How do you get here? Could you please map the route that you travelled?

11. Which language(s) do you speak?

12. Why this store?

Final questions for local residents:

1. Since when do you live on/around Sonnenallee?

2. Why did you select this area as place of residence?

3. What are important places for you on/around Sonnenallee? Why?

4. How would you describe Sonnenallee to outsiders?

5. What do you like about Sonnenallee? What do you dislike about Sonnenallee?

6. Do you shop on Sonnenallee? Where? Why?

7. How do you imagine Sonnenallee in the future? Why?

8. What would you wish for for Sonnenallee?

