ANALYSIS OF URBAN POVERTY BY CULTURAL FACTORS: AN OVERVIEW ON BURSA CASE

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ÖZET

Kentsel Yoksulluk Sorununun Kültürel Faktörlerle Analizi: Bursa Örneği Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme

Bu yazıda kentsel yoksulluk sorunun kültürel/moral nedenlerine dikkat çekilmektedir. Yoksulluk sorunuyla ilgili literatürün çok ağırlıklı bölümü, kentsel yoksulluğun, işsizlik, gelir yetersizliği, sosyal transferlerde yapılan kesintiler gibi ekonomik nedenlerine vurgu yaparken, sosyolojik nitelikteki özelliklerini ihmal etmektedir. Bu yazıda ise, genel olarak "yapısal nedenler" olarak adlandırılan politik-ekonomik nitelikli yaklaşımların dışında kalan tezler tartışılmaktadır. Kültürel nitelikli analizlerin bir bölümü, etnik temelli ayrımcılıktan kaynaklanan sorunlar üzerine yoğunlaşırken; diğer bir grup yaklaşım ise yoksulluk konusunu, maddi yoksunluğun ötesinde bir kültür biçiminde değerlendirmektedir.Yanlış devlet desteğinin yoksulluğun kalıcılaşmasını sağladığı şeklindeki görüşler de yoksulluk kültürü argümanını güçlendirmiştir. Bursa'nın Nilüfer (2004), Yıldırım ve Osmangazi (2006) ilçelerine bağlı yoksulluk alanlarında yürütülen nitel araştırmada, bu konuyla ilgili kayda değer sonuçlar elde edilmiştir. Bu çalışmadan elde edilen sonuçlar, kentsel yoksullukla ilgili kültürel nitelikli kuramsal mülahazaların geçerlilik düzeyi hakkında fikir oluşturmak bakımından da önemlidir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kentsel Yoksulluk, Ayrımcılık, Yoksulluk Kültürü, Yanlış Devlet Desteği.

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ABSTRACT

This article deals with the cultural and moral reasons for urban poverty. A substantial part of the literature on urban poverty focuses on economic, such as unemployment, insufficient income and deductions on social transfers thus neglecting the sociological factors which contribute to this problem. This article, discusses in general the sociological factors other than the political and economic approaches called "structural reasons". While some portion of the cultural analysis dwells on problems resulting from ethnic segregation, another approach considers poverty as a deeply rooted problem in some cultures, the scope of which is beyond any kind of material deprivation. The argument of a culture of poverty is supported by the fact that misused state aid has led poverty to become a permanent problem. In a qualitative study conducted in the poor quarters of Nilüfer (2004), Yıldırım and Osmangazi (2006) districts of Bursa, a number of significant results were obtained concerning this matter. The findings of this study are also important in developing opinions about the actual validity of the theoretical considerations with cultural implications regarding urban poverty.

Key Words: *Urban Poverty, Segregation, Culture of Poverty, Perverse State Incentives.*

1. Introduction

There are two basic approaches for finding solutions to poverty. One of them is to measure, various aspects of the problem and then draw comparisons between different societies. The other approach focuses on how, where and by whom the poverty is experienced rather than measuring the poverty. While the first approach deals with poverty as a technical matter, the latter views it as a sociological matter taking into consideration all of its psycho-cultural implications. While the view of poverty as a sociological phenomenon features the characteristics of the impoverished individual taking into consideration such as age, ethnicity, gender or location, it also considers cultural factors that may play a role in the reproduction of poverty.

It can be suggested that two hypotheses are dominant in an analysis of urban poverty by cultural factors. One of them is the thesis of 'poverty culture' (Lewis) suggesting that poverty is a culture having other characteristics beyond material deprivation. Having derived the thesis of poverty culture from studies conducted by ethnographic method, Lewis (1980, 98) contributed to the development of a sociological perception regarding this social problem. He called attention to the fact that poverty is both a psycho-social phenomenon as well as an economic matter.

The view of Charles Murray (1984) that imprudent or misguided state aid encourages the persistence of poverty in various ways supports the

thesis of poverty culture. According to this view, state aid discourages the poor from working or getting married which results in the development of undesirable work ethical characteristics attributed to the members of "poverty culture". Consequently, Murray's view of emphasizing the effects of imprudent state aids[1] provides an explanation concerning the formation and lasting character of the "poverty culture".

A second thesis that attributes the intensified urban poverty to cultural reasons emphasizes the role of ethnic segregation. The prejudices against foreigners and ethnic minorities constitute an obstacle for these people to gain access to the housing market which encourages the phenomenon of spatial cleavage[2]. Within this framework, the first thesis suggests that the poor isolate themselves from the society more or less in a conscious manner and the other thesis asserts that they are isolated and marginalized from the society by others.

This article points out the cultural and moral reasons of the urban poverty issue as outlined above and discusses the validity of the stated, arguments as applied in a case study of Bursa, Turkey. A substantial part of the literature on poverty focuses on economic and political reasons of urban poverty, such as unemployment, insufficient income and deductions on social transfers, somehow neglecting the sociological aspects of the issue. The studies intended to produce universal solutions for the poverty issue are mostly focused on "structural reasons". However, this study discusses the sociological theses which have been less analyzed so far.

The importance of theses viewing poverty as a sociological issue is that it requires a complete understanding of variables necessary for developing social policies for the poor. That is, alleviating the material deprivation of the poor living in urban areas may not be as easy as remedying their social deprivation. This may involve socialization processes intended to achieve an intellectual transformation in addition to economic measures. In this context, educating the poor (one of the most important means of socialization) may alleviate their material deprivation by enabling them to join the workforce. However, it may not be solely sufficient in addressing their inner deprivation. Without social integration of the poor into mainstream society, the habitation of individuals within

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[1] This view of Murray opposes to the statist views that relate the emergence of poverty to the deductions from social transfers as a requirement of neo-liberal programs.

[2] The concept of "Spatial cleavage" refers to the fact that urban population resides in different parts of the city based on their status, income level, ethnicity, cultural characteristics, etc., forming ghetto locations and dividing into opposing groups in some cases. The concepts of spatial fragmentation /segregation have uses with similar implications.

their own ghettos with some increase in their income levels would not change substantially. Therefore, the issue of social integration cannot solely be overcome by state initiatives. The 'civil' influence leading to the problem of social integration becomes more pronounced when considering the role of 'ethnic segregation' in urban poverty.

2. Urban Poverty and Ethnic Segregation

The primary variable establishing a relationship between urban poverty and social isolation is ethnic segregation. The role of ethnic segregation in reported to be a larger problem in multi-ethnic cities. Ethnic segregation can be found throughout the world in such places as the United States which has had heterogeneous population since its foundation. Many cities and suburbs also have a heterogeneous character due to international immigration. In this context, within Europe the Brussels example[3] illustrates how a city became heterogeneous as a result of international immigration. On the other hand, the cities in Northern America were referred to as an 'ideal type' in most of the literature relating to the spatial-cleavage because they exhibit the concepts of urbanization, feminization and ethnicization of poverty.

While the percentage of the poor living in the metropolitan region in the United States was 12 % in 1969 (i.e., 24.1 million), it increased to 15 % in 1982, reaching 34 million people. Although this increase in poverty is a relatively insignificant percentage of 3 % in general terms, the situation is different considering the increase of poverty in the city center is considered. For example, the poverty level in the city center increased by 59 % from 1969 to 1982. This suggests that poverty seems to *urbanize*. While the number of white poor living in the city center increased by 42 %, the number of black poor increased by 74 % within the same period[4].

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[3] Beaten states that Brussels became a global city after being a center for the European Union and hybridized with immigration due to the European Union and prospered with the infrastructural, office and similar investments, but such enrichment of the city caused formation of isolated poverty regions and problems with minorities triggered right-party slogans such as *the foreigners threaten the local culture*. As a matter of fact, the change of demographic structure due to rapid cosmopolitization of Brussels (While the ratio of citizens not born in Belgium was 8 % in 1961, it increased to 23 % in 1991) aggravated the socio-spatial polarization in city center. Guy Baeten, "The Europeanization of Brussels and the Urbanization of Europe: Hybridizing The City Empowerment and Disempowerment In The EU District", *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 8 (2), 2001, pp.117-130.

[4] William J. Wilson and Robert Aponte, "*Urban Poverty*", Annual Review of Sociology, Vol. 11, 1985, p. 239.

On the other hand, the phenomenon of *feminization* of poverty (another aspect of urban poverty) varies with respect to race (black and white people). In 1982, 81 % of the black poor with a woman as head of the family lived in the metropolitan areas, which equates to about half of all black families living in the metropolitan areas. The increase in woman head of families partly reflects the increase in the rate of illegitimate births. While the rate of illegitimate black babies was only 15 % in 1959, it increased to 56 % in 1981. Also, most of the poor people in these families were dependent on welfare aid and lived in permanent poverty. Empirical studies show that households with a female head of family mostly live in poor urban areas with substantially black constituents. Recognizing the social demographics of these findings, it is a widely accepted notion that there exists a "ghetto underclass"[5],[6].

The cohabitation of different ethnic groups is an exceptional situation for Northern America. All metropolitan areas consist of quarters which are occupied predominantly by Blacks or Whites. The self-segregation of the two races suggests Whites are generally not tolerant in living together with Blacks. The studies conducted in the 1990s suggest that while the spatial cleavages have many complex reasons, ethnic segregation is an obstacle in penetrating the housing market[7]. This situation strengthens the tendency of poverty to concentrate in certain areas.

Any increase in the concentration of poverty in certain locations leads to a change in the socio-economic character of such places. In these locations as the physical infrastructure deteriorates, the criminal disposition increases while educational quality declines. Additionally dependence on governmental assistance increases, and mortality rates rise. According to Douglas S. Massey (1990), spatial segregation of the ethnic poor is aggravated by the prejudices which impede them from accessing the

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[5] The concept of underclass results initially from identification of poor population by typical behavioral styles. In identification of the poor population based on behavioral pattern, the issue of having different attitudes from rest of the community in terms of involvement in business life and ethical matters is brought up. For further information on the concept of underclass, see Paul A Jargowsky and Mary Jo Bane, "Ghetto Poverty In The United States,1970-1980"; in *The Urban Underclass*, edt. C.Jenks – P.Petrson, Washington D.C: The Brooking Institution Press, 1991, pp. 235-236

[6] Op cit., pp. 240-243.

[7] Lauren J. Krivo and Robert L. Kaufman, "How Low Can It Go? Declining Black-White Segregation In a Multi-ethnic Context", *Demography*, Volume 36, Issue 1, Feb 1999, pp.93-95.

housing market. The access of such people to the White-governed areas is prevented by physical and social barriers as well as economic ones[8].

While authors such as Massey, Denton and Egger refer to ethnic discrimination as the basic factors in the concentration of ghetto poverty in Northern America, other authors such as Kasarda (1995) and Wilson(1992) ascribe this situation to the transformation of income-related structural factors. According to Wilson, transition from the production of goods to production of services from the 1970s created a polarization between low- and high-income sectors. Moreover, technological developments, movement of manufacturing industries to suburban areas and periodic economic recessions caused an increase in black poverty rates. The increase in unemployment paralleled an increase in the number of poor living alone and depending on aid. Such problems are even more pronounced in the ghettos of large cities because the poorest members of minorities are concentrated in such places [9].

According to Wilson, the concentration of poverty in ghettos was affected also by the emigration of better educated young blacks to suburbs. This emigration reduced the interaction and contact between the different classes and ethnic groups and exacerbated the negative effects of living in poor areas. The outcomes of this situation were characterized by high levels of unemployment, lack of high-quality educational facilities, increases in marriage breakdown and the inability to establish-maintain informal social bonds. In summary, the socio-economic gap between the city center areas and suburban areas increases as the groups remaining in cities face ethnic problems, have fewer resources and inadequate educational and accommodation facilities[10].

Massey (1990) concurs with Wilson in suggesting that the poverty in American cities is high among minorities. However he also asserts that restructuring industry alone will not lead to an increase in urban poverty. According to Massey, ethnic segregation contributed to the concentration of poverty and the emergence of an underclass isolated in socio-spatial terms in addition to structural changes in the 1970's. Massey disagrees with Wilson based on the outcomes of his research across various American

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[8]   Douglas S. Massey, "American Apartheid: Segregation and The Making of Underclass", *American Journal of Sociology*, Volume 96, Issue 1, Sept. 1990, p. 329.

[9]   John Kasarda, "Industrial Restructuring and the Changing Nature of jobs" in Reynolds Farley ed. *State of the Unions: America 1990s,* Volume One: Economic Trends, New York: Russel Sage Faundations,1995, pp.215-268; William J. Wilson, "Another Look at The Truly Disadvantaged", *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol.106 (4), Winter 1991-92, pp.140

[10]   Ibid., p.141; W. J. Wilson, "When Work Disappears", *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol.1 Issue 4, Winter 1996-97, p.579.

cities. He maintains that as education and income rise, the degree of black segregation does not fall. As a result, an increase in ghetto poverty may cause concentrated poverty only when there is a high rate of segregation[11].

Massey conducted another study in conjunction with Eggers and hypothesized that blacks tend to live close to the poorer areas. However there was no evidence suggesting that these tendencies account for spatial concentration of black poverty. It was determined that middle- and higher-class blacks separated themselves from the poor at a lower level than other privileged groups due to segregation[12]. Additionally, the existence of ethnic segregation in the housing market reduces the chances of blacks to abandon their living areas compared to other privileged groups thus narrowing their housing options outside the ghettos[13].

In conclusion, it is evident that disadvantages stemming from ethnic segregation play a certain role in the spatial concentration of poverty. Although it is not possible to claim that all poverty contexts are linked directly to ethnic segregation, it can be said that all contexts with a disadvantage stemming from ethnic segregation are accompanied by increased poverty. However, it should be emphasized that the degree of ethnic disadvantage increasing poverty will vary depending on geographical, cultural and historical factors.

The thesis associating urban poverty with ethnic disadvantage underscores the cultural and psycho-social implications of the hardships experienced by these disadvantaged groups. The thesis of 'poverty culture' covered in the following section examines the responsibilities of the poor with respect to their own status.

3. Poverty as A Way of Life: Poverty Culture

The concept of poverty culture was raised by Oscar Lewis who has carried out studies in Cultural Anthropology since the 1950s. In his studies, which focused mostly on Latin America, Lewis used a method called 'ethnographic realism' which was based on autobiographic expressions of individuals. Lewis used this method for the first time in a study on the Martinez family, a peasant family living in Mexico. Relying on the

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[11] Douglas S. Massey, "American Apartheid: Segregation and The Making of Underclass", *American Journal of Sociology,* Vol. 96, Issue 2, Sept.1990, p. 330.

[12] Douglas S. Massey and Mitchell L. Eggers, "The Ecology of Inequality: Minorities and The Concentration of Poverty", *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol.95 Issue 5, Mar 1990, p.1186.

[13] D. S. Massey, A. B. Gross and K. Shibuya, "Migration, Segregation and the Geographic Concentration of Poverty", *American Sociology Review*, Vol. 59 Issue 3, June 1994, p. 443.

expression that *"we are given an excellent skeleton, but it lacks flesh and blood"* stated by Malinowski, implying that there was a discord between science and real community, Lewis defended the validity of this claim with his own method[14]. Today, the method of 'qualitative research' frequently used in studies of social sciences benefits from the 'ethnographic realism' based on individual expressions of people where there is no possibility to adequately understand/explain by quantitative or other statistical data.

In his best-known book titled *'The Children of Sanchez'*, Lewis describes his thesis of 'poverty culture'. In this study, he explains that poverty is a protection mechanism and a way of life which is passed from one generation to another and has a specific rationale. Based on the thesis of 'poverty culture'--though it was derived from his observations relating to Mexico--Lewis states that 'poverty culture' may have a universal character, suggesting that a very similar system of values, community consciousness and family structure exist in underclass settlements in London, Glasgow, Paris, Harlem and Mexico City. Lewis lists fifty characteristics that describe the poverty culture in the introduction section of *The Children of Sanchez*. Some of these include decreased life expectancy, lack of education, unemployment, tendency towards crime, illegitimate births, no membership to unions/political parties, and unwillingness to benefit from public facilities such as banks, museums, hospitals[15]. These factors illustrate how both social isolation and low quality of life and different moral values all combine to create the 'poverty culture'.

Contrary to common belief, the poverty culture view espoused by Lewis does not apply to all poor people. Lewis did not claim that all poor people develop a poverty culture. For instance, he states that the impoverished middle class may not be considered as a member of poverty culture although they may have lived in ghettos for some time. Being poor is only one factor leading to the poverty culture, but it is not the whole. Belonging to the member of poverty culture is related on individuals' perception of daily life and his/her reactions to the life experiences within such a perception. Lewis demonstrates this situation by identifying two characteristics of poverty culture. One of them is the feeling of helplessness and homelessness. According to this, the individuals within the poverty culture have an intense feeling of marginality, helplessness, dependence and homelessness. They have a belief that the existing governing bodies disregard their needs and expectations. In addition to a feeling of powerlessness, a feeling of personal unworthiness and inferiority prevails.

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[14]   Oscar Lewis - Ruth Lewis, "A Day In the Mexican Peasant Family", *Marriage and Family Living*, Vol.18 (1), 1956, p.3

[15]   Oscar Lewis, *The Children of Sanchez*, "Introduction", Penguin Books, 1980, pp.xi-xxx.

The second characteristic is related to having a very little sense of history. Accordingly, an individual within the poverty culture is interested only in his/her own conditions or their immediate neighbors' conditions. However individual lacks any knowledge, consciousness and ideology regarding people having the same characteristics with them in other parts of the world. These individuals are not class conscious, although they are sensitive to status. Consequently, if the poor, for example, become union members, acquire a class conscious and develop a universal point of view against the world, it means that he/she have departed from the poverty culture[16].

Although the thesis of poverty culture leads to a perception of holding the victims responsible for their condition, it contributes to the clarification of social perspectives relating to poverty. The most important function provided by the clarification of social perspectives of poverty is that it shows that economic criteria cannot be enough to define poverty status because any definition of poverty in a narrow sense as 'inadequate consumption' leads to an oversimplification of the problem as something easily recoverable by material satiation, hiding the presence of psychological and social aspects. The fact that the social aspects of the problem are hidden relieves the non-poor from their responsibility on one hand and leads to negligence of responsibilities of poor people regarding their own status. The non-poor are relieved from their social responsibility by expecting market forces to solve the problem while the poor think that they have no individual responsibility regarding their own status and they should therefore be excused since everything goes against them. The most critical aspect of this point of view is deformation of the belief that the individuals have a responsibility to strive and run for success under any conditions in order to acquire individual rights[17].

Lewis' thesis considers the status of poverty as *a way of life*. The opinions described in the study *Losing Ground* by Charles Murray (1984)

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[16] Oscar Lewis, "The Culture of Poverty", *Society*, Vol.35 (2), 1998, pp.7-9.

[17] The results attained from a study analyzing the opinions of university students regarding work ethics show that a deformation of similar type has become prevalent among both the poor and non-poor people. For example, an overwhelming part of the students agreed on a proposition that "In Turkey working hard is not as rewarding as having an influential person behind you". Some students stated that they supported the idea that "If earning without working is possible, then why should I work". In the same study, most of the students agreed on the expression that "The one who works hard is not as valuable as who steals in the society". Although the existence of conditions that justify these opinions to some extent may not be denied, the rich/state in the case of the poor and the 'system' not motivating the students may be tools that mitigate the individual responsibility. Veysel Bozkurt, *Püritanizmden Hedonizme Yeni Çalışma Etiği ("New Work Ethics from Puritanism to Hedonism")*, Bursa: Alesta Yayınevi, 2000, p.169-170.

also support the thesis of poverty culture. Murray suggests that imprudent state aid contributes to the persistence of material and inner poverty of the poor. According to this thesis, misguided incentives blunt the motivations of the poor to assume responsibility for their own life and prevent them from reflecting upon their individual attitudes. The significance of the study by Murray is how it questions the adequacy level of technocratic approaches encountered in welfare state practices.

In his thesis built on the demographic data covering a period between 1950 and 1980, Murray emphasizes two basic points: One of them is the moral factors in feminization of poverty and the other is moral and political factors in the persistence of poverty from one generation to another.

The majority of the poor in the United States consists of families with a female head of the household. One of the reasons for this is the increase in illegitimate births. While only 17 out of 100 babies were delivered by single women in 1950, this rate increased to 48 % in 1980. Another contributing factor to the increase in illegitimate births is the increase in the child bearing rate of single teenage women. While the number of children delivered by the single teenage women was approximately 70 thousand in 1950, this number increased to 272 thousand in 1980. The increased rate of illegitimate babies automatically affects the family structure, leading to an increase of families with a female head of family. The majority of such families live in poverty because delivery of a child at an early age deprives the woman from educational opportunities that may provide the woman with better job possibilities. In this case, one of the important sources of the poverty is the *change of ethical values*. The aid provided by the state to persons in such a position serves to affect such change. According to a calculation by Murray, the amount of social aid that a woman would be entitled to due to child bearing and unemployment in 1980 exceeds the minimum wage in the 1960s. If this woman lives with a man who receives unemployment benefits, the total income of this "family" increases, thus providing motivation for creating false relationships as a strategy of life[18]. Accordingly, misguided state aid plays a role in encouraging poor work ethics on the one hand and destabilizes moral values concerning the family on the other.

According to Murray, specific moral values of communities as well as the incentives created by the imprudent social aids also play a role in the emergence of poverty as a culture. For example, social consciousness about competing in mainstream society leads to the exclusion of hard working

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[18] Charles Murray, *Losing Ground / American Social Policy, 1950-1980*, U.S.A: Basic Books, 1984, pp.127, 133, 162.

students by their friends in black inner city high schools. The hard-working students are often ridiculed by their peers for "acting white"[19]. This situation seems to be dominated by the psychological idea of 'equal deprivation' thus ensuring solidarity of the equally deprived.

On the other hand, according to some authors, while having a job or receiving minimal aid is a *necessary condition* for social integration, it is not in itself a *sufficient condition*. For social integration, other methods are needed to address poverty beyond the means of bureaucratic tools. As a matter of fact, the marginalization risk and marginalization feeling of the poor is strong in countries such as Sweden, Norway and Germany, although minimum income support is provided through powerful public-bureaucratic regulations. The informal responsibility potential should be kept afloat in order to cope with the feeling of marginalization. According to the results of a study concerning the methods of struggle with poverty in some European cities, it was seen that local administrations had difficulty mobilizing the informal resources in countries such as Sweden where the struggle with poverty is carried out fully under government regulations. Here the predominant character of the bureaucratic structure prevented the development of civil responsibility. The fact that the non-poor exclude themselves from the struggle with poverty exacerbated their social isolation. On the contrary, involvement of civil society in the struggle with poverty in collaboration with state authorities in cities such as Porto and Lisbon ensured that the problem of social integration was reduced[20]. Accordingly, it seems possible that a solution to poverty may be achieved with the involvement of all social groups.

On the other hand, acceptance of poverty as a negative outcome of culture disregards the fact that the community and state are accountable for the development of abnormal livelihood strategies by the individuals. This accountability is important as the poor may encounter barriers that transcend their own powers in removing the negative effects of poverty and creating conditions to provide everybody with a minimum standard of living. All of these barriers include structural problems such as the inability to access proper educational sources, not having a job to earn regular income and an inability to solve accommodation problems with the formal resources. However, specific research is needed in order to determine which barrier plays a role in which way and at which rate in the context of which form of poverty. Although global trends may explain the formation and development of poverty in one place, other specific factors in addition

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[19]   Ibid., p.189.
[20]   Marco Oberti, "Diversity and Complexity in Local Forms of Urban Anti-Poverty Strategies in Europe", *IJURR*, Vol. 24, Issue 3, 2000, pp.544-553.

to or beyond those may play a role in another place. Consequently, it seems hardly possible that the problem can be analyzed within a general formulation. In other words, the role of geographical, cultural and economic factors concerning poverty should be defined separately for each locality. This necessitates a search in social relationships for less-obvious processes not readily seen using general formulations. To achieve this, a field survey was conducted consisting of deep interviews in various low-income neighborhoods of Nilüfer (2004), Osmangazi and Yıldırım (2006) districts of Bursa.

4. Methodology of Research: Qualitative Research, Deep Interview

In this study, the 'deep interview' technique based on participative observation and face-to-face interviews, which is one of the primary collection techniques of qualitative research, was employed. The ultimate purpose of quantitative interviews is to produce quantitative measurable data that may be subject to statistical analysis. Qualitative interviews are used to understand the inner worlds, feelings and thoughts of research subjects and to gain the perception of the research subject. Therefore, it is essential that comprehensive information is attained beyond what the other forms of data collection can provide, which differentiates this interview technique from quantitative interviews[21].

Under the scope of this study, 40 deep interviews were performed. 23 interviews out of 40 were conducted in the Işıktepe quarter of Nilüfer district. In planning with whom the interviews in this region would be performed, the list of the poor prepared by the office of the headman *mukhtar* was used. Such lists are updated and revised each year and sent to the office of the sub-governors. Free coal and similar state aid are allocated based on these lists of the poor. Other than Nilüfer, 15 interviews were performed in the various slums of Osmangazi and Yıldırım districts. During interviews conducted with the poor people living in these districts, the list and the mediation of a local charitable society operating on support of volunteers were used. In addition, two representatives serving at different levels of this charitable society were interviewed. The total number of persons interviewed was 40. Except for the data on (2) charitable society representatives both of whom were born and raised in Bursa; the demographic data regarding the poor people interviewed included the following: 13 migrants from Bulgaria, 6 from the Black Sea Region, 14

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[21] Elif Kuş, Nicel-Nitel Araştırma Teknikleri ("Quantitative & Qualitative Research Techniques"), Ankara: Anı Yayınevi, 2003, p.50, 87.

from the Eastern Anatolia Region and 2 migrants from relatively nearby Bursa. This also includes 2 Meskhetian migrants which are not yet sufficiently known by the general public. Meskhetian Turks were accepted as the second foreign immigrant group after the emigrants from Bulgaria in a process following the collapse of the former Soviet Russia. In addition to these immigrants, 1 poor person born and raised in Bursa was interviewed as a so-called exceptional example. Thus, the number of all deep interviews reached 40.

The number of interviews in qualitative research is limited compared to the quantitative research, because of the nature of qualitative research. In this context, while 40 interviews conducted are sufficient for qualitative research, it is far from adequate for providing the sufficient data for quantitative analysis. In other words, the findings from this research cannot be assumed to represent all poor groups in Turkey. The results obtained from this research should be considered a qualitative reading intended for ensuring a deeper understanding of the issue rather than producing a quantitative generalization.

A final point about the research method is that interviews performed in Nilüfer were initially recorded on a tape recorder and then transcribed in written form. Considering the difficulty with the transcription process and the resulting loss of time in using this method, the following interviews in Osmangazi and Yıldırım districts were taken note and recorded simultaneously during the interviewing. The actual names of the interviewees were withheld by the interviewer, with pseudonyms used to protect the identity of the interviewees.

Finally, all interviews were conducted personally by the researcher. The findings obtained from the research in a multi-dimensional and detailed manner were systemized and reorganized. The conclusions are discussed in the following section, with reference to the arguments referred to the theoretical section within the context of the Bursa Case.

CONCLUSION: Examination of the Findings Obtained from a Field Survey in terms of "Ethnic Segregation", "Poverty Culture" and "Misguided/Imprudent State Aid" Arguments

In the theoretical section, two approaches focusing on the sociological - cultural reasons for urban poverty issue were discussed. One of these opinions asserts that the poor groups that are ethnically different are segregated from more wealthy areas and are deliberately not allowed into the home rental market. In the Bursa example, the validity of these arguments set forth by Massey et al. was examined and no evidence was found that the interviewees had such a perception. None of the poor people stated that he/she can not go to any other place even if he/she is able to

afford to pay the related expenses. In fact, a few local studies referring to the spatial cleavage issue in Turkey do not report that spatial isolation is linked to ethnic segregation. However, it is suggested that middle classes tend to segregate themselves in terms of cultural capital in parallel with an increase in their economic powers[22]. This tendency is represented by an increase in luxury gated housing areas located away from the city center containing special security units and security walls as seen in the Istanbul, Bahçeşehir example[23]. However, such gated housing sites are not open for anybody other than the residents, irrespective of whether or not they are poor or rich. This does not represent a social barrier as shown in the American example. Rather it should be considered a barrier limited to the economic framework.

On the other hand, even though it is observed that some people from different origins cluster around certain places in the city; this can not be considered as a social barrier in the form of isolation and boundaries as in the American example. The most important reason the poor are not able to leave their current surroundings is that their social mobility is limited meaning they can not afford leisure activities in the city.

A second type of hypothesis included in the cultural reasons category suggests that the poor are fed by their own specific cultures which are segregated from the general community. In this context, the "poverty culture" hypothesis of Lewis and the supporting hypothesis of misguided state aid of Murray can be summarized as follows:

According to Lewis, there are many factors which cause a poverty culture. One significant factor related to the rejection of services of official government institutions such as schools and hospitals. Additionally it is argued that the poor are interested only in their own and their near relatives' conditions, without having a similar interest in events and developments outside their surroundings. Finally another related factor for poverty culture is that the poor have a feeling of self-unworthiness and helplessness and believe that anyone other than their close relations would be indifferent to them.

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[22] Hatice Kurtuluş, "İstanbul'da Kapalı Yerleşmeler Beykoz Konakları Örneği", *İstanbul'da Kentsel Ayrışma ("Secluded Settlements in Istanbul, Beykoz Mansions Example", Urban Segregation in Istanbul)*, Ed. H. Kurtuluş, Istanbul: Bağlam Yayınları 243, 2005, p.168.

[23] Didem Danış, "İstanbul'da Uydu Yerleşmelerin Yaygınlaşması: Bahçeşehir Örneği*", 21.Yüzyıl Karşısında Kent ve İnsan ("Satellite Settlements in Istanbul: Bahçeşehir Example", City and Individual vs. 21st Century),* Ed. F. Gümüşoğlu, Istanbul: Bağlam Yayınları 171, 2001, p.152.

Murray asserts that the family structures of the poor are problematic and such problems constitute a significant factor in the reproduction of poverty. At the same time, imprudent/misguided state aid serves to foster a willingness to isolate themselves from the general community.

According to the findings of the Bursa research, these two hypotheses are only partially borne out. When considered in a sequential manner, the situation of *avoiding relations with official institutions* (one of the most important characteristics of poverty culture) was not a valid factor of the poor according to the research findings. The fact that most of these people, either personally or through their co-habitants, receive assistance from any official aid programs shows that there is no situation of avoidance in general terms. A small portion of the interviewees migrated from the East (2 persons) stated that they had not applied for any aid from the office of the mukhtar due to their belief that the funds were not distributed equitably These people avoided seeking assistance mostly due to political considerations (e.g., he/she did not vote for the current mukhtar). However, the fact that the poor feel free to send a letter to the prime minister shows that there is generally little avoidance in contacting official state institutions:

> "I applied to the sub-governor, but they replied that "your husband is insured, we can not give aid to you"; I wrote a letter to the prime minister and told my situation, saying "we are in a tight squeeze and need assistance". He read my letter and instructed the office of the governor, they visited me but then they learnt that my husband is insured; they rejected to give aid". Leyla (30)

Another characteristic of the poverty culture (i.e., the opinion that the poor have a feeling of self-unworthiness and believe that they would be neglected by anyone other than their close relations) was not recorded as one of the research findings. On the contrary, it is understood that most of the interviewees had strong feelings of self-worth as evidenced by their common expressions such as *"we do not beg from anyone, we do not want anything"*. Their expectation is that job opportunities should be increased if possible, and if not, aid should be available to those who are really in need in an equitable manner to suffice to maintain a basic standard of living. Most of the interviewees stated they get assistance from people they do not know or knew at a later time, but not from their near relatives. This serves to prevent the emergence of a marginalization perception relating to general community, albeit in a limited scope.

The last hypothesis regarding poverty culture is that the poor are only interested in their own situation or near relations. Conversely they are ignorant of general actual events, which do not directly relate to them. For the people in Bursa, this is not the case. For example, one of the interviewees said he was even aware of the poor in the USA who, he believed, were living in worse conditions than them:

> "Poverty is everywhere, I heard that there are poor people even in the US, and they are worse than us, they sleep on the roads; there is no better place than Turkey in the world." Sabri (68)

As for Murray's opinion relating to the misguided/imprudent state aid, to tell the truth, there is no state aid to provide a better standard of living for people not working in Turkey. For example, the newly introduced practice of unemployment insurance is conditional upon prior work experience and is far from being an amount that can ensure a comfortable standard of living for the person and his/her family members.

The hypothesis espoused by Murray suggests that illegitimate child bearing among teenager increases especially among black groups and the official aid intended for such people encourages dependency rather than working. This argument is not valid in Turkey because, illegitimate children are not entitled to any kind of official aid. In fact, there are no special welfare programs for illegitimate children.

A general conclusion from the field survey data is that different groups have different profiles of poverty and hold different causes of poverty. Considering the differences among the groups of the poor is crucial in attaining proper results from the social policy-making intended for them. In the Bursa example, one of the poor groups is *poor emigrants from Bulgaria*. The poverty with respect to emigrants from Bulgaria is a result of old-age and solitude. In fact, an overwhelming majority of the interviewees in this group are too old to work and suffer various health problems due to their old-age. The status of an immigrant is therefore already a direct or indirect reason of poverty for this class of people having immigrated to Turkey from abroad. In immigrating to Turkey and leaving their established order abroad they could not continue to work in Turkey due to their old-age, which prevented them from saving money for the future. Some of these people are not entitled to retirement benefits because they did not work long enough in Turkey to receive a guaranteed income. Likewise, some people are entitled to retirement benefits as a result of their work in Bulgaria. However, they could not convert such entitlement to actual pension payments due to various inabilities. Those who are entitled for retirement benefits and are already receiving pensions are not able to

subsist on such amounts. The pensions ranging between €30.00 and €50.00 are far from sufficient in providing a basic standard of living in Turkey.

Under the law No 2022[24], a certain income support is provided for the people over 65 years of age in Turkey. The quarterly payments are inadequate in satisfying all social requirements of the poor. Although these people are entitled to receive free treatment under this law, they are required to pay for medication expenses. While it seems possible in theoretical terms that medication expenses would be reimbursed from other funds serving the poor, it is not possible in practice to apply to such funds for each prescription. However, it should be added that the establishment dates of public social benefit programs such as the Green Card[25], Fund for Encouragement of Social Assistance and Solidarity[26], 2022 and Unemployment Insurance are not older than 20 years. With each passing day, the allowance appropriated for such programs are increased and the number of persons applying to such programs is also increasing. Accordingly, it is hardly possible to claim a reduction in social transfers for the countries such as the USA and England. In fact, it is asserted that the withdrawal of income support for the poor by the state after the 1980s was a substantial factor in the expansion of poverty in those countries. In view

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[24] The Law No 2022 of 1977 on protection of Needy Old-Aged and Disabled People covers the needy old-aged people over 65 who has nobody liable to take care of him/her as well as those over 65 who are disabled or incapable of living without the help of others. As at the end of 2002, a total of 991,576 persons were provided with social benefits pursuant to the Law No 2022, these being 746,468 persons receiving old-age pension, 68,598 persons receiving invalidity pension and 193,780 persons receiving disability pension, who are Turkish citizens over 65 years of age evidenced to be needy, incapable and desolate. As of January 1, 2003, the amount of monthly benefits rose to TL 51 million and 450 thousand by an increase of benchmark figure by two times. *Sekizinci Beş Yıllık Kalkınma Planı (2001-2005) – 2003 Yılı Programı Destek Çalışmaları 'Ekonomik ve Sosyal Sektörlerdeki Gelişmeler* ("Eighth Five-Year Development Plan (2001-2005) - Supportive Efforts for the Year 2003 Program 'Developments in Economic and Social Sectors"), Ankara: SPO Publications, 2003, p.241.

[25] Pursuant to 'Law No 3816 of 1992 on Payment of Treatment Costs of Citizens without an Ability to Pay by Issue of Green Cards', a health card called "Green Card" is issued upon request to the needy Turkish citizens who have no insurance from any of the social security authorities and whose monthly income is lower than one third of the minimum wage. The Green Card is not a direct income transfer, but an indirect benefit to bear the treatment costs.

[26] This fund was established under the Law No 3294 of 1986 on Encouragement of Social Assistance and Solidarity and provides benefits in cash or in kind once or a few times a year or on a regular basis based on requirements of needy people who are not entitled for a pension. While the benefits in kind consist of items such as food, clothing and fuel, the benefits in cash are provided in the form of grants or reimbursement of medication and treatment costs.

of the fact that social benefit programs in Turkey were mostly established after 1980, it seems that such a result may not be realized for Turkey. However, the increasing number of applications to such programs serves as a warning that the poverty issue has already reached an alarming level.

Apart from the emigrants from Bulgaria, the Meskhetian Turks immigrating to Turkey after the collapse of the former Soviet Russia are another group of the poor. These are usually young people with several children living together with a few other families mostly in the basements of apartment buildings. For example, Aslan (35) was living in a basement of 50 square meters with his 4 children in Osmangazi and trying to earn a living from construction work. Koçi (30) was living in a house together with 9 people, including his own family and his sister's family. Koçi could not speak Turkish well yet and had the opportunity to work at a minimum-wage job for the last 6 months though he had been in Turkey for 3 years.

Another group of the poor covered by this study is *migrants from Eastern Anatolia and the Black Sea regions*. The common reasons of migration for the people in this group are mostly associated with their reasons for poverty. The findings obtained from the research show that these people were already living in poverty before their arrival in Bursa. In this case, rural poverty was relocated to the city. Consequently, migration is not solely a reason for poverty for this group, unlike that experienced by the emigrants from Bulgaria. This means that these people struggling to make a living without a job in their localities migrated to the urban areas with the expectation of finding a job and building a better future. *These people were already in poverty where they had been living earlier. The considerable difference is that their poverty in the city becomes more apparent when compared to the average standard of living in the city.* Thus, the poor migrating to the city have a reduced absolute poverty but an increased relative poverty. None of the persons in such a situation is willing to return back to their localities despite all the current difficulties they encounter. They even say that there is still a demand for migration to cities in their localities:

> "Now we are here, they call us by phone from our villages and ask us to find a job for them in the city". (Ayten, 38)

The most important reason for these people's failure to keep up with the urban life is their weak involvement with the labor market, verifying Wilson's hypothesis in part. Their weak involvement with the labor market is due to their low education and employment skills. Those trying to work as self-employed seem to be unsuccessful owing to

competitive disadvantages in addition to their lack of professional knowledge and experience.

Another difference for the poor after migration to the city is the change in traditional solidarity relations. The poor living in primary communities earlier were subject to social control which in a sense urged solidarity in such places. After migration to the city, the influence of social control enabling solidarity with close relatives became weaker and even disappeared. Thus, the traditional bonds of the social solidarity established among the blood relatives were broken. In fact, the poor interviewed in this study asserted that they do not receive support from their relatives for various reasons, with such expressions as *"everybody is living on their own here; nobody helps another, even siblings don't support each other"*.

On the other hand, having several children (common characteristic of such people) serves as a factor in the persistence of their poverty. The relation being poor and having high number of children are not directly linked. However, if there is an imbalance between the pecuniary possibilities of the family and number of dependent individuals, then having several children serves to exacerbate poverty. In fact, these households have either no member working or have only one member working for low wages with or without insurance. The revenue gained by a single worker on low wage is inadequate in satisfying the minimum requirements of the family. *As the healthcare, education and similar expenditures for the children present a considerable load on the family, it becomes impossible for such children --as potential savers to escape poverty-- to maintain education and have a job, and no pecuniary accumulation can be made for the future since the household exhausts all earnings on a daily basis.*

The children of poor families feel obligated to contribute to the families' budget. However, this has negative impacts on their success in school. This reproduces poverty from one generation to the next[27].

For example, the 15-year-old elder son of a family migrated from the Black Sea with 6 children left the school to contribute to the livelihood of the household. Regarding her second elder son's demand for education, the mother's response follows:

> "I am illiterate; I have never gone to school; both of us
> are illiterate; my village was established on a mountain and

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[27] A study conducted by SHÇEK (Social Services and Child Protection Society of Turkey) in Bursa on children living and working on the streets revealed results similar to our study results with regard to family profiles of the poor children. See http://www.shcek.gov.tr/portal/dosyalar/shcek/kuruluslar/krl_list/cgmerk/bursa.asp.28.11.2006

there was no school; actually I was willing to attend school; illiteracy is still a source of great frustration for me; therefore I want to let my children attend school but they are not so willing to do so; they are just unwilling to continue after secondary school". (Döndü, 36)

Additionally, since child bearing takes place during almost the whole productive period of the women, it is not possible for the women to enter the labor market contribute to the family income. Due to cultural reasons, it may be asserted that these women are not willing to work even if they did not have large families. This assertion is applicable only if the financial condition of the family is satisfactory. Although it seems that their uneducated and unskilled background –-like their husbands–- presents a reason for unemployment irrespective of their having several children, these factors are not a greater constraint than that caused by the number of children. In fact, there are sectors demanding unskilled female labor areas such as cleaning, child care, catering, food and drink service, etc. The fact that many of the poor women who emigrated from Bulgaria had fewer (2, 3) children was a contributing factor to their labor market participation. The number of children of the poor women who migrated from the Black Sea and Eastern Anatolia regions (average 4.5) is sufficiently high to prevent them from even attempting to work.

In addition to the aforesaid groups of the poor, it would be proper to mention the *"Native Poor"* as a final item. During the field survey, 3 poor people were interviewed, out of which one was born and raised in Bursa and the other two were from nearby towns of Bursa. Probably, the **"new poor"** of Turkey will be these indigenous poor. According to Halit (56) who is one of the mentioned representatives of the charitable society, *while the number of Eastern families provided with aid is still in the majority, there is an increase in the number of poor who are born and raised in Bursa.* These persons are typically women heads of household abandoned by their husbands or widowed due to the death of their husbands. These families have no possibility of getting support from their parents. For example, Nermin (46) who was born and raised in Bursa has four children –-two living with her and two in a foster home– who subsist on a pension of YTL 140.00 from her father and pays a rent of YTL 150.00 for her home.

Such people who were not originally impoverished due to the support of family and relatives now find themselves in poverty because of both the transfer of poverty from one generation to another and because of the weakening of social bonds affecting the absorption of the poverty.

This article has examined the social-cultural reasons of urban poverty based on some existing hypotheses. It is revealed that the experience of poverty referred to generally as "social isolation" is relatively rare in the Bursa example. Expressing the common view of many other poor people, Mahmut (25) –-a migrant from the Eastern Anatolia region-- states the following:

> "There is no isolation, we have already overcome isolation times; that is over; isolation is over; there was just some turmoil during PKK terror; we therefore..."

In conclusion, it is evident that the hypotheses of Lewis on poverty culture and Murray on misguided state aid are applicable only within a very limited scope in the case of the Bursa, Turkey example. Consequently, although the poverty problem may be ascribed to cultural reasons to a certain extent as is the case in all countries, elimination of this issue seems possible only through finding solutions to the structural problems relating to uneducated and unskilled population, insufficient income, unequal distribution of income and inter-regional differences in terms of development.

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