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The Politics of 2011 Riots in North London: How Riots did not Culminate into Inter-Ethnic Conflict?

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Abstract

While there has been a considerable research study into the causes and consequences of the 2011 riots and rioters' composition in terms of their class, ethnic origin and gender, there is much less on the shop-keeper's perspectives on the August, 2011 riots in London. One of the consequence of this under-research area is little is known about how riots affect relationships between communities in multi-ethnic London. Based on forty interviews conducted with Kurdish and Turkish (KT) shop-owners and key persons from community organizations in North London, the findings of this study state that the theory of middleman minorities does not provide conceptual insight to explain the events. Rather, utilization of theory of framing sheds light upon the perceptions and actions of migrants from Turkey and inter-ethnic relationships in North London. This article argues that KT shopkeepers, community organizations and rioters managed to generate a shared consciousness during face-to-face encounters on the streets. The conscious efforts of shopkeepers and rioters constructed an interest alignment against government policy for cutting social programmes, economic deprivation, and police misconduct. To this end, members of ethnic groups prevented inter-ethnic conflict.

Keywords: Economic crises; Turkish shopkeepers; community organizations; 2011 riots; framing; London; middleman-minorities; policing.

Introduction

For four days in August 2011, several streets of England have seen extensive property damage, mass looting, and attacks against the police. The shooting and killing of Mark Duggan in Tottenham Hale on the evening of Thursday August 4th is viewed as the fuel for the subsequent riots (9 August 2011, Guardian). However, collective violence was not an immediate response. The collective violence broke out on the 6th of August, after a peaceful crowd of no more than 100 people, made up of friends, and family of Mark Duggan. They gathered in front of Tottenham police station demanded explanation from the senior police officers, which never arrived and a 16-year-old girl was pushed to the ground, and hit with batons and shields by police. This was the spark, which ignited four days of riots, which were to

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spread very quickly throughout London's most socially deprived neighbourhoods.

While the police were highly visible elsewhere across the city, they were keeping a low profile in the northern boroughs of London, namely Enfield, Haringey and Hackney, where the majority of Kurds and Turks own their businesses in these areas. According to the 2011 UK Census, London accommodates over 64% of Turkish and Kurdish populations in the UK (Sirkeci et al., 2016).

Table 1. Resident population born in Turkey by areas and boroughs of London, 2011 UK Census.

	Born in Turkey	% of Turkish born in total	% of Turkish born among foreign born	% of Turkish born among non-EU foreign born	% of foreign born in total
London	59,596	0.73	1.99	2.98	36.68
Inner London	31,717	0.98	2.32	3.61	42.21
Outer London	27,879	0.56	1.71	2.48	33.07
Top 10 London Boroughs					
Enfield	13,968	4.47	12.74	25.17	35.08
Haringey	10,096	3.96	8.88	17.92	44.60
Hackney	8,982	3.65	9.33	15.42	39.08
Islington	3,777	1.83	5.17	9.23	35.43

Source: Sirkeci et al. (2016)

Unlike many high streets in the capital, where businesses brought down the shutters in the early afternoon to minimise the risk of looting, many of the restaurants and shops owned by KT people in those areas were defiantly open.

People were forced to take the law into their own hands to defend homes and businesses in North London. During the riots, men armed with baseball bats vowing to defend the shops from attack protected most of the premises. The Met Police in their "4 Days in August: Strategic Review into the Disorder of August 2011" report admits that they were not able to protect local residents and business community (Metropolitan Police Service, 2012: 40-41). The lack of security measures protecting lives, homes and businesses of the local communities paved the way for situational KT



collective mobilisation. The social networks had to be utilised to counter disadvantage and discrimination in the provision of security services.

Guardian reporter Paul Lewis described the scenes on Kingsland Road, Hackney, as Turkish men clashed with youths, tweeting: 'Kingsland Road chaotic as Turkish men attack other, predominantly black, youths with sticks, metal barricades and bricks' (9 August 2011, Daily Mail). In a similar vein, Home Secretary Theresa May commented on policing in Britain and said: the way we police in Britain is not through use of water cannon. The way we police in Britain is through consent of communities (ibid). Both of these comments on the riots postulate that the events were related to the conflict between communities, more specifically between blacks on the one side and KT business owners on the other side. These allegations are going to be discussed in the further sections, i.e., can we view the events as race riots? One of the consequence of this under-research area is little is known about how riots affect relationships between communities in multi-ethnic London. Did it lead to tension between communities as it was portrayed by the pundits? Could riots be viewed as an inter-ethnic conflict between communities? While streets of North London have seen extensive property damage, mass looting, and attacks against the police, how can we explain the fact that the riots did not culminate into inter-ethnic conflict between black communities and Turkish-Kurdish store owners? Do KT shop-keepers view rioters as mindless criminals or consider the riot as a reaction to the government policy for cutting social programmes, economic deprivation, police misconduct, and unemployment? Is there a conflict-ridden relationship between KT small business owners and the economically deprived customers before the riots? Do KT shopkeepers experience hatred and racism by the customers in everyday transactions?

Methods and Data Collection

In order to assess on aforementioned questions forty interviews were conducted with KT shop-owners and key persons from community organizations in North London such as Hackney and Haringey. Interviews were held during the months of September and October 2011. The selection criteria used for the inclusion of business owners to be interviewed could be summarized as follows: First, two ethnic groups such as KT business owners were chosen to be interviewed. The reason for focusing solely on KT business owners is that, most of the small businesses in North London are owned by KT merchants who formed "protection units" to prevent their businesses being looted and/or damaged. KT communities were the only ethnic groups that took to the streets to defend



their shops and businesses in North London (see 9 August 2011, Hackney Citizen; 10 August 2011, Guardian). The boundaries of this study limit itself to the London Boroughs of Hackney and Haringey where no other entrepreneurial ethnic group took to the streets apart from KT small business owners. Inclusion of other entrepreneurial ethnic groups would require an expansion of the geographical boundaries of the field study. For instance, Bengali community in Whitechapel, further into East London, took to the streets to protect their businesses. However, other entrepreneurial groups and locations are beyond the limits of the study. Second, specific sectors identified to represent two broad KT business owners, namely, retail and catering. More particularly, off-license, supermarket, coffee shop, wholesale, restaurant owners were chosen to be interviewed. The reason to choose those sectors was that most of the people from KT communities find employment in those sectors. In addition, I used multiple entry points to the communities.

In order to gain research access to conduct interviews with the focus groups, I adopted several methods including snowball technique, visiting the business owners at their workplaces and usage of personal contacts. Snowballing technique is actually driven by the referral of one participant to another. Turkish Business Guides published by London Turkish Gazette, which cover the business world of the Turkish communities in London, were very helpful to get in touch with the interviewees, including off-license, supermarket, café-shop, restaurant, wholesale owners, and members from community organisations. I also visited businesses as a customer to set-up an interview at later date.

Theoretical Discussion and Findings

The following sections discuss two theoretical frameworks. In order to answer the aforementioned questions, one long-standing analytical model of ethnic minority business that is employed to analyse conflict-ridden intergroup relationships, particularly between customers and merchants of different ethnic backgrounds is the middleman minority theory (Bonacich and Modell, 1980; Gold, 2010; Light and Bonacich, 1988; Light and Karageorgis, 1994; Min, 1996, 2008; Sowell, 1993; Zenner, 1991).

Middleman Minorities and Conflict-ridden Inter-Ethnic Relationships

The concept of middleman minorities provides an analysis of ethnic business owners in terms of their occupied position between masses and elites (McEvoy and Hafeez, 2007: 5). They play a buffer role between the ruling classes and the mass population (Bonacich and Modell, 1980). As



Pyong Gap Min (2008: 69) argues, “middleman minorities concentrate in trading and usually distribute merchandise produced by members of the dominant group to minority customers”. In the classic version, they tend to be viewed as the middle class between the capitalist class and the working class.

Middle minorities in urban societies distribute the products of elites in poor neighbourhoods where means of survival are scarce, police protection is scant, income levels are low and local services provided by municipal authorities are weak.

The middleman minority hypothesis posits that inner-city poor groups facing economic, social and political exclusion, frustrated with inequality and unemployment can orientate their grievances and fury on their nearest targets. They channel their frustration toward the middleman merchants “whose capital stock, when stolen or looted, represents to them the forcible restitution of material value the social system lawfully but unjustly denied them” (Light et al., 1994: 73). In such circumstances, middleman minority stores become an easy target for poor people who are in need of the products they sell (Gold, 2010). Historically speaking, Jews before the II World War in Germany, Armenians in the Ottomon Empire, Asians in Uganda, Chinese in Southeast Asian countries, Indians in West and South Africa has often viewed as typical communities of middleman minorities (Min, 2013). As Min (2008:70) looks at Korean owned retail businesses in minority neighbourhoods of New York and Los Angeles, which depend on white suppliers, and notes numerous conflicts with both white suppliers and black customers.

Middleman minorities could be useful for analysing intergroup relations such as conflicts between ethnic communities (e.g. Min, 2008). In their 1994 article Ivan Light, Hadas Har-Chvi and Kenneth Kan mention a deficiency of existing middleman theory on its lack of focus to the anti-middleman ideologies such as economic nationalism of different ethnic backgrounds which leads conflict-ridden relationships between customers and merchants.

Conflict of interest between the merchants and the customers of different ethnic backgrounds could arise due to claims that first middleman minorities impoverish the already impoverished communities. Second, accusations of middleman trading group for overcharging customers. Third, not hiring workers from members of other ethnic groups and finally, failure to invest back into the community (Light et al., 1994; Min, 1996, 2008). Economic nationalism further insists that consumer ethnic group must own the businesses in their communities in order to generate self-help toward empowerment through economic development.



When an anti-middleman ideology comes into existence, it justifies various forms of collective action such as boycotts, attacks upon merchants, damage to merchant's business premises and looting. Middleman minority theory, for instance, is used to explain conflict between Koreans merchants and Black customers in the US, particularly the events in the 1992 Los Angeles riots, also known as Rodney King riots (e.g. Kim, 1999; Light et al., 1994; Min, 1996, 2008).

The 1992 Los Angeles riots and the 2011 riots in North London offer similar cases where both sparked by police violence targeting blacks and similar lack of police response to the urgent requests for help by Korean store owners in Los Angeles and KT store owners in North London. To this end, one of the main aims of this paper is to analyse the applicability of widely utilised middleman-minority hypothesis in answering the aforementioned questions.

Did Anti-Middleman Ideology play a role in 2011 Riots?

Accordingly, it is vital to look at whether anti-middleman minority ideology played a role in economic criticism of KT stores by the wider community. If it played a role inter-group atmosphere, burglaries, burning of KT owned stores and attacks to the KT business owners could then be legitimated by the anti-middleman minority ideology. In order to test this hypothesis, I asked whether there is a conflict of interest between KT merchants on the one side and rioters on the other side, arising due to accusations of KT merchants for not providing employment to the members of local community, overcharging customers, impoverishing the already impoverished North London neighbourhoods. Second, I looked for any form of collective action directed by the members of the local community against the KT merchants, implying hostility and rejection in the form of boycotts.

I found no evidence for local community boycott of KT merchants in any period in North London. Local community should not buy from KT owned firms was not endorsed by the members of the Black community. Local community hostility and rejection of commercial activities of KT merchants was not an issue in North London. As one of my interviewees, Portakal explains, one of the main customers of KT merchants in North London are Blacks. Moreover, according to him, the eruption of violence was not a consequence of ethnic tension between communities, but rather of injustices in the society. Police misconduct was the major cause of the intensification of violence. In his own words:

The police force did not want to prevent the riot, and paved the way for looting. It was all planned and conscious. Thus, several shopkeepers who I



had chatted with were left alone to protect their shops. They were not racist against any community. Their main customers are blacks as well. I do not think that shopkeepers' reaction was racist. For instance, there are right wing Turkish people in London. Even, those people did not react in racist terms. Turkish shopkeepers' reaction to the rioters was right. If the political establishment continues with austerity measures, the consequences of such incidents will be worse. It is going to repeat itself, for sure. This was not the first time and it is not going to be the last. People are getting poorer. No one can blame them as they lost someone from their community. They, the blacks have the right to riot. Yet, they have been oppressed throughout history. If they had been submissive, things could get worse (Portakal, coffee shop owner).

In addition, according to the findings of this study, the demand to find employment in KT owned firms by the local community in North London could not be validated. Poor educational qualifications and lack of English skills and available paid employment became a major push towards self-employment for the KT communities. The development and operation of the KT ethnic economy in London is based on strong social ties (Dedeoğlu, 2014, Kesici, 2015; Karan, 2017). The problems related to capital, information, security, labour, skills, dispute resolution and claim making are resolved by the utilisation of strong social ties. The dire financial conditions of the KT shopkeepers paves the way for mobilisation of family members as employees. The working lives of the business owners do not differ from those of employees working in the shop. The shopkeepers participate in every step of the shop-keeping business. Social isolation, imprisonment, and alienation stemming from long working hours characterise the working life of shopkeepers. Most of the shop-owners in this study stated that the contribution of their family in the form of labour support is essential. They had limited financial resources. Labour support from the family may include immediate family members: siblings, aunts and uncles, nephews and grandparents. Family members and co-ethnics have to engage in long working hours in order to remain competitive. Co-ethnics work for less than market wages as there are no other jobs available to them and they have to accept the wage that is offered by the shopkeeper. Most of the shopkeepers in this study were not able to hire workers for the reasons listed above. Moreover, if they are able to hire workers, interviews with KT shop-owners in North London confirm that recent migrants to the UK such as co-ethnics, East Europeans, and short-term residents in London such as students demand to work in KT small businesses. Blacks do not consider employment in KT owned small businesses attractive. I find no evidence



that anti-middleman ideology targeting KT merchants played an important role in provoking inter-ethnic conflict between the locals on the one side and KT merchants on the other side in multi-ethnic North London.

In this respect, in order to understand the perceptions and actions of Kurdish and Turkish shop-keepers, I propose framing theory coined by Erving Goffman (1974) is useful to gather empirical evidence on the store owner's patterns of interpretation of the riots and the British politics in general. In so doing, we can evidence the action-guiding reasons of KT communities.

Framing Theory

The concept of frame as utilised by various disciplines in social science is derived from the work of Erving Goffman (1974). For Goffman, frames refer to "schemata of interpretation" (1974: 21) which focus on people's cognition of situations and occurrences. Frames enable individuals to "locate, perceive, identify, and label... occurrences" (Goffman, 1974: 21) within their daily life and the world at large. Frames provide interpretations of events, occurrences and experiences with respect to people's lives. They answer the question, "what is going on here?". Frames denote how a particular event is perceived and contextualised and how meanings related to them are produced. In this study, there are two core framing tasks. The first one is "*diagnostic framing*" in which individuals and collectives identify problems in discursive processes and make attributions regarding what and who is to blame. At this stage, they negotiate what or who is to blame. It entails the identification of the source(s) of causality (Benford and Snow, 2000: 216). This attributional component of diagnostic framing attends to this function by focusing blame or responsibility.

The second core task, "*prognostic framing*", involves the articulation of a proposed solution to the problem, or at least carrying out a plan and/or of a strategy for solution. It entails the Lenin-esque question of what is to be done, as well as the problems of consensus and action mobilization. Accordingly, it is vital to re-search upon how KT shop owners and community organisations contextualised and framed the 2011 riots in England and the British politics in general. Such work is essential in the sense that their attitudes, actions toward the rioters and face to face interactions with the rioters are shaped and guided by aforementioned framing processes.



KT Framing of Rioters and British Politics

In the following sections, I am going to first elaborate on the KT community organisations' and shopkeepers' framing of government policy on retrenchment of welfare and British institutions, such as the police, the media, and the government. Then, I focus on the socio-economic class position of KT small business owners and their embeddedness in the wider socio-economic structures that shapes their class interests and their attitudes towards rioters. Accordingly, it is worth mentioning the fierce competition with chain stores impacting on the prospects for KT small business development. In so doing, I assess on the ways and the methods by which shopkeepers and rioters managed to generate a shared consciousness during face-to-face encounters on the streets, where London riots in 2011 did not expand into inter-ethnic race riots.

KT Framing of Government Policy on Retrenchment of Welfare

The main aim of this section is to assess on the shopkeepers' and KT civil society organisations' view on the government's policies. More specifically, it aims to assess whether KT shopkeepers perceive a link between government policies and the causes of the riots. According to the KT shopkeepers in North London, there are injustices in the society. One of my informants, Elma states,

The events were an expression of feelings against the unjust system. The rioters have explained themselves against the unjust system in this way. They could not buy new sneakers and leisurewear. That is why they mostly loot such kind of things. New phones, new LCD's (Elma, chair at a refugee organisation).

The austerity measures adapted by the coalition government had caused the events according to Papatya: "Unemployment, increase in tuition fees, cuts, all has caused unrest, and reaction in the society. The widening gap between poor and rich because of the government policies played a role in the riots" (Papatya, off-license owner)

In impoverished communities, the only symbols of wealth and the sole representatives of the economic life of the larger society are big chain stores. One of my interviewee states, the riots were a consequence of articulated social problems. The intersection of social problems such as police brutality and deprivation in Hackney and Haringey caused the events, as my interviewee, Yumurta explains:

The riot had started because of the death of a black person who was shot by the police. Thus, the level of income in the black community is low, and



they are living in deprived areas. The riot was a reaction to the system. In essence, it was a social explosion (Yumurta, restaurant owner).

Economic inequalities coupled with the promotion of consumerism have been criticised by my interviewee, Mandalina as such:

The policies of the government increase the inequality between rich and poor, while they have been promoting consumer culture at the same time. However, they do not show them any alternatives. The system pumps-out consumer culture. There is anger in people right now as well. The next riot will be much bigger. The pressure on people at the bottom of the ladder is increasing. Yet, the rich is getting richer in this crisis period. In addition, the big heads, like banks do not want to be touched. Initially, the crisis has started at banks. Then, the government has deflected it to the public purse. The policies of the coalition government continue to increase the inequality between rich and poor (Mandalina, mini-market owner).

Moreover, KT Civil Society Organisations' response to the riots highlight the low profile of the police during the riots. This has been explained by the assumed police intention to bring communities face to face. At their press meeting, the KT community organisations focused on the socio-economic frustrations of migrant communities due to the government policies for cutting social programmes, police misconduct, increase in tuition fees and unemployment rates.

*The youth are one of the worst affected sections of society from the crisis in the world and the cuts that have been made as a result of the crisis. As a result of these cuts, 8 out of 13 Youth Services have been closed. And such cuts are not unique to Haringey. The removal or tightening of the conditions for being granted Education Maintenance Allowance (**EMA**), tuition fees going up to 9 thousand pounds, the low level of educational attainment in deprived areas, the removal of support from students who are experiencing problems in secondary schools or referring these students to other institutions are just some of the problems that are experienced by the youth. According to official figures the number of unemployed youths is 1 million. Youth unemployment in deprived areas, such as Haringey and Hackney, is higher. As a result of the cuts not only has there been an increase in the level of redundancies but there has also been an increase in unemployment levels and poverty levels. The stop and search practice by the police is very high in deprived areas and in areas where the migrants live. A black or ethnic youth is times more likely to be stopped and searched than a white youth. An egocentric and consumerist lifestyle has thus far been imposed on the youth. At a time when: poverty and unemployment have risen, the dream*



of educational achievement has vanished, the closure of youth services where the youth express themselves socially and culturally has occurred, a rise in the level of police oppression has taken place, the vision for a better future has vanished. Such outbursts do take place and their social outbursts. Let's not forget that the Turkish and Kurdish youth are also a part of the youth in this country and therefore Turkish and Kurdish youth and their future are also at stake as a result of such cuts.

Turkish and Kurdish Labourers and Traders Are Being Pitted Against the Black People

The members of our community, all of whom have been forced to flee from their homeland for economic or political reasons, are being pushed to oppose waves of riots. We are witnessing the development of an instinctive tendency to protect their small shops and, at times, to attack the youths. Surely the traders have the right to protect their shops. But such events should not be used to pit the Turkish and Kurdish community against the black community. Such an event should not be used to strengthen the prejudices that the oppressed and migrant communities have against each other. We, the people of Turkey and Kurdistan, should act in a prudent way and not fall for the trap of migrant communities being pitted against each other. Moreover, we should demand that those who killed Mark Duggan are found and held to account via the completion of the inquiry into his death (KT Community Organisations).

In sum, according to the narratives gathered from KT shop-keepers and community organisations in this study, the riot was a result of increasing inequality between rich and poor. Without exception, all KT shopkeepers from different political spectrums told me that the riots were legitimate in essence. Their idea was that few people are getting richer; on the other hand, masses are getting poorer. However, they made a distinction between rioting and looting. Almost none of them approved the ways in which riots expressed itself, i.e., looting (For similar accounts see Jeffery and Tuffail, 2015). According to the narratives gathered from KT shop-keepers in this study, the rioters had legitimate demands. The government instigated urban violence as inequalities are getting deeper and their lives, KT shop-keeper's and rioter's alike adversely affected by the government policy. They do not have any future. Because of this, they reacted to the political establishment.



KT Framing of Policing

All of my interviewees were told by the police that they could not provide any protection against possible attacks. It was up to shopkeepers to decide whether to close their shops or stay open. They were left completely alone and they were aware of the fact that no protection would be provided by the police. They were in a self-help situation. Several respondents stated that there was a conscious decision for police non-intervention. It was asserted that, by keeping a low profile, the establishment aimed to change the public debate and divert attention from the causes of the riots. Biber expressed his idea about the police misconduct as follows:

The police could control the riot in the beginning. However, they did not do so deliberately. They wanted to create the image that there was a bunch of criminals behind the incident. Thus, it was a way to cover up the social causes underlying the events. It was said that no one in the government evaluated the incident in a way that placed its root cause in the policies of the government. The Turkish people tried to protect their businesses, but I did not like one BBC speaker saying 'I want to be Turkish'. We are migrants here. This country was built by blacks in reality. The political establishment wanted migrant communities to be pitted against each other. They wanted communities against each other (Biber, mini-market owner).

What is clear in these narratives is that KT communities had to take matters into their own hands. Business owners experience constant insecurity at their business premises. The social networks within the KT communities is utilised for the provision of a security network within the neighbourhood. Such an emergent product is due to the lack of security services provided by the government bodies. Thus, strong ethnic ties are a consequence of the structural discrimination they experience in their daily lives. The findings of this study suggest that there was an overall lack of confidence in police conduct during the riots. A 37 years old shopkeeper, Limon, expressed this as follows:

I said this to the police officer's face. They could suppress such events in two or three days with their 16,000 police force. They have the necessary equipment. If they cannot stop rioters, then there is something else behind it. They want to issue new suppressive laws (Limon, mini-market owner).

One of my interviewees, Çilek, a restaurant and a mini-market owner states:



The police officers are racists. They have double standards. When a white British does something to them or steal something from their shop, they just close their eyes and release the thief (Çilek, restaurant owner).

Mavi from Haringey further supports Çilek's views and expressed his experience as such:

Recently, our van full of products had been emptied, robed in 15 minutes. The material robed inside the van costs £2000. My camera recorded everything. Besides, there is another camera on the highway. We called the police. We cannot come, they said. What kind of security provider you are, my friend? According to my mind, police means security. I handed over a CD to the police. One week later, I went to the police department. The CD I gave to them has been lost, they said. Then, they called me and said we found the CD. I gave another CD to them. I shouted at them. I said, I am paying your monthly salary. If I pay £10.000 in a year, if I pay garbage fees, if I rescue 10 people from job centres and offer them a job, and pay their wages, if I am an employer here, then you should provide my security here. If you do not do this, leave it to us. They did not do anything (Mavi, mini-market owner).

According to the most shopkeepers, riots were legitimate in essence, as the government intensifies the austerity measures. But, it was wrong to target small businesses as the owners of them are originated from working class background. They were aware of the fact that rioters do not targeting their shops. One shopkeeper, Marul states:

Even though rioters mostly targeted big businesses there was conceived threat coming from rioters. Thus, big businesses such as Tesco have also benefited from the Turkish mobilisation (Marul, mini-market owner).

It was the whole neighbourhood, living space that was protected by the shopkeepers and the community, not just their individual shops. It is their common perception that KT communities alike mobilised hand in hand to protect their neighbourhood and businesses.

In Dalston, KT people took to the streets with sticks. It was not necessary, as rioters did not aim to attack KT shops; but rather targeted big companies. However, they were ready to safeguard their livelihoods in case of an attack due to the lack of police presence on the streets and conceived threat coming from the rioters generated by the media. Only a few shops of KT origin were looted. The majority of the rioters did not attack the KT shops.



One off-license owner, Domates from Haringey asserted that the reason for the lack of ability of the police to control the riots was that they intended to set communities against each other. He expressed his view as follows:

The political establishment wanted migrant communities to pit against each other. They wanted to set communities against each other (Domates, off-license owner).

It should also be noted that while some people were rioters, involved in violent actions and/or acted against the police, some were looters, involved in stealing goods either for their own consumption or for selling to maximise 'profits'. Some were just watchers happened to be there or deliberately choose to be at the area events (Morrell et al., 2011) These different types of involvement in the August 2011 riots must not mean that social actors played fixed roles during the incidences, rather they might also be shifting positions (Dona and Taylor, 2015). KT shopkeepers in North London encountered crowds who took off the streets for various reasons. They managed to negotiate their concerns about the probability of destruction and looting of their stores by the groups who took off to the streets. This issue is discussed in the following sections.

KT Framing of Media

There was a largely shared idea that the media coverage of the rioters was biased. The media pick up black people's images as the rioters. This view was expressed by Yoğurt from Dalston as follows:

Kurds and Turks did not go on to the streets because they were against black people. Our community thinks that blacks are right in rioting. There were white and KT people rioting. Nevertheless, coverage of media used black peoples' images as rioters (Yoğurt, mini-market owner).

As it was mentioned earlier, shopkeepers assess the low profile of police in Haringey and Hackney as a way of bringing shop-keepers and rioters against each other. Likewise, the media has played a similar role, according to one of my informants. The rioters were targeting big chain stores, which represent wealth. As Biber contends,

They wanted to bring Turks and Kurds communities against blacks. The British media wanted this. However, society, neither blacks nor Turks buy this. Blacks made this country and they specifically did not attack Turkish shops. They targeted big chain stores (Biber, mini-market owner).

According to another shopkeeper, the media coverage aimed to criminalise the riots and the rioters. The causes of riots turned into



something originated from mindless, criminal people and a shopkeeper, Kabak explained this view as such:

While they were initially right to riot, they fell into a position where they lost ground. Thus, the media coverage aimed to criminalise the riots. The logic behind it was to cut support-off to the rioters. They just showed the looted places. Thus, TV audience did not like it. The footage was only stating these people are looting, burning, and damaging people's possessions. These people are criminal thieves, mindless people they said. This media coverage just let people to cut their support to the rioters (Kabak, mini-market owner).

According to the perceptions of the shopkeepers, both police and media aimed to criminalise the rioters and aimed to divert the root cause of the riots. It was the police that kept low profile in Hackney and Haringey who have been responsible in bringing rioters face to face with shopkeepers. Likewise, shopkeepers perceive the media coverage during the riots as biased in a way that they populated images of blacks attacking small businesses.

Socio-Economic Embeddedness of KT Communities in British Economy and Interest Alignment with Rioters

As discussed in previous sections, the retrenchment of welfare in poor neighbourhoods, cutting social programmes such as in Hackney and Haringey affected blacks and KT communities alike. This is one of the crucial factors that led to interest alignment between communities and the KT framing of the riots as legitimate in essence.

This section, moreover, takes into account KT shopkeepers' specific embeddedness in the wider socio-economic and institutional structures which generates hostility against government policy and chain stores. It focuses on the legal regulatory framework regarding tax policy and competition between KT shop owners and chain stores as well as competition within KT business owners and chain stores. In so doing, I assess on the additional grounds for interest alignment between KT shopkeepers and the rioters during face to face encounters on the streets in North London.

The pressures of over-competition within the KT communities and with chain stores have been identified as one of the big problems. As one of the interviewee states, concentration in the catering and retail sectors has also intensified competition between KT business owners. Start-ups in the catering and retail sectors next to a co-ethnic shop diminish the margins of



profit, and sometimes lead bankruptcy. As chair of a consulting firm, Nar states:

What happened is that our businesses mushroomed everywhere. Shops are opening next to each other. Thus, rates of profit are diminishing. If someone is doing good business in a neighbourhood in London we open a shop next to it rather than setting up a new one in another part of the UK. It is like this in the take-away business as well. On the other hand, the number of customers in the area is not increasing. We are making the cake much smaller. No one is making money right now. There are only a few places making a profit (Nar, chair of a consulting firm).

The increases in competition and decreases in profit has led to independent shop owners having to consume more family labour and work longer hours and they are less able to hire workers as they need to reduce expenditures. The intensification of work emerges as an inevitable outcome of competition between Turkish speaking shop owners and chain stores as well as within Turkish speaking business owners. In order to survive, they are no longer able to hire workers. Self-exploitation within the family and exploitation within ethnic networks reduces labour costs, which enables them to survive against competition.

Sometimes KT community associations play a role in preventing co-ethnics establishing businesses in direct competition with each other. A potential dispute that may arise due to competition between co-ethnics is prevented by the associations. My interviewee Esnaf contends:

Our people cannot find employment in mainstream jobs. As a consequence, they try to set-up businesses in the service industry like restaurants, off-licenses and so on. If there is a need for such a business in the district it is right to set-it up. If there is no need, then owners will share the existing potential. They cannot earn the same amount as before. The share of the cake will get smaller. This became a common problem. There are no regulations related to business premises. Then, the craftsmen's union or community organisations have to say no (Esnaf, chair of a craftsmen's union).

In addition, other community organisations also provide dispute resolution services. As Cem explains,

I was the one who formulated the "peace assembly" in Halkevi. I registered it with the community legal service. It was based on the Jewish community's arbitration assemblies. It provides a service for finding a solution to a dispute. The decision made by the community organizations have to be respected. It is not possible to question the decision of the



assembly as shopkeepers are dependent on the organization for support provided regarding daily welfare issues. Yet, they open the shop with the financial help of the community organizations' cooperative. The peace assembly operates within the legal framework. Enforcement involves banishment, exclusion from the community in general. It shames the guilty party. He cannot return to his village in Turkey. He becomes a swindler, liar, and thief in the eyes of the community (Cem, chair of a community organization).

Kinship networks also play a role in dispute resolution. The peace assembly of the community organization can inform the relatives and co-villagers of the defendant who can have the greatest impact on him or her.

Community organisations emerge as intermediaries between the parties in the dispute. They are reliable and respected by the community. In addition, the involvement of community elders in dispute resolution is another influential community resource. This type of dispute resolution entails bonding capital (Putnam, 1993). It reduces the risk of helping a co-ethnic and sustains future solidarity. It underpins trust between co-ethnics. Bonding capital guarantees compensation of any loss to a co-ethnic from cheating. Without such institutions, reciprocity and future collective collaboration would be impossible.

Moreover, the reproduction of KT village-scale collaboration, practices and values to deal with adverse circumstances appears in a post-industrial London after de-industrialisation. Village scale dispositions are transposed to post-industrial London. One of the most crucial traditions that has been re-enacted after immigration was *imece/zibare*. *Imece/Zibare* is a Turkish/Kurdish "tradition", which is village-scale collaboration based on the need for human power or economic capital. Collaboration could be for harvesting, constructing a water pipeline, providing security for village grazing borders with neighbouring villages (Erginkaya, 2012). It denotes the collective action of the villagers. The transposition of *imece* to the new context entails capital acquisition, providing information, protection of business premises, providing free labour, gaining skills and training. The unwritten rule of *imece* is mutuality, reciprocity and underpinned by the threat of sanctions.

It is important to note that KT shop owners compete with each other within the catering and retail sectors. They are fragmented and on some occasions have tense relationships because of the armed conflict in Turkey. However, individual self-interests in protecting their business premises were welded together into a higher level of consciousness that paved the way for shopkeepers taking to the streets. This is also a clear example of



reactivation of the imece/zibare originated village boundary defense. The territory of the neighbourhoods is more than an administrative area. It symbolises the identity of the KT communities where economic interests are realised. The economic interests of the shop owners are dependent on the land. Any attack by the rioters on the businesses is an implicit attack on the economic interests and identity of the KT communities.

The mechanism at work in this case could be labelled bounded solidarity (Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993). Bounded solidarity depends on the emerging feelings of “we-ness” among those facing a similar challenging issue (Ibid). It points to a process rather than a given, fixed embeddedness. As a source of social capital, bounded solidarity derives from the situational reaction of a group of people experiencing common problems.

According to the narratives gathered from KT shop-keepers in this study, the government policy favours banks and big chain stores at their expense. For instance, several interviewees have also mentioned the negative effects of economic crisis. It was argued that the government, in order to bail out banks, raised the price of electricity, gas and increased the business rates of small businesses. I was told that the price of the economic crisis has been paid by the poor people, who did not contribute to it. Due to economic crisis many businesses had to close down. As Brokoli, a mini-market owner states:

Lot of businesses had to close down because of the economic crisis. The expenditures have increased too much. The business rates, electricity, gas, etc. Small businesses cannot survive (Brokoli, mini-market owner).

Moreover, Patlican, a coffee shop owner mentions that the economic hardship in running his business is not limited to the increase in expenditures, but also, as mentioned, related to the fierce competition between KT retail business owners and chain stores.

Many independent shops were closed down. They still continue to close down. You do not have any chance to compete with Tesco and Sainsbury's. Yet, the state has started to bailout banks. Banks are owned by big businesses. Big businesses started to open local stores everywhere. There is government support behind them. Shop owners like us had to close down. We expanded our business three years ago. We made lot of expenditure. Maybe, if you come back in two months, these two shops will be closed down. We had to close one of our shops. How long we can survive is another issue. Even though we support campaigns against Tesco and Sainsbury's development at street level, the government supports them. I support campaigns like “Say no to Sainsbury”. Chain stores used to be open until five, at the latest until 7 or 8. Now they are open until 11, some of them 24



hours. They want to kill all independent shops that provide a livelihood. These are Tesco, Sainsbury's and ASDA (Patlican, mini-market owner).

In 2011, Sainsbury's opened its first fresh kitchen shop offering cold and hot food. At the time, the Guardian reported that several others are also determined to take on the nation's sandwich shops and fast food chains head on. In other words, the competitive pressures of chain store on the KT business owners are not only limited to retail businesses, but also to the catering businesses, such kebab shops and restaurants.

According to Esnaf, chair of a craftsmen association, the regulation for chain retail businesses is unfair:

Tesco, Sainsbury and other chain stores should be located in the outskirts of London. It is unfair because, they do not pay any tax at all. Their head office is abroad. They are exempt from tax. On the other hand, there is no chance for us to carry our head office abroad. We pay tax. Secondly, they were not able open local stores before. They have changed the regulations. Now, they are everywhere (Esnaf, chair of a craftsmen organisation).

New developments of chain stores have had an impact upon existing independent Turkish and Kurdish shops. The pressures of over-competition with chain stores and within the KT communities have been identified as one of the big problems. Supermarkets such as Tesco, Sainsbury, Asda, Aldi and Lidl are big players. The effects of the chain stores are enormous. As Thomson (2006: 20) states that "competition has tightened margins with the effect that the work is increasingly casual, low-paid and subject to long hours".

According to my informants, the facelessness of supermarket retailers has an enormous impact on local communities in two ways. First, while independent shop owners are residents of the neighbourhood, where they run their businesses, they argue that the chain stores' headquarters are generally out of the country. In other words, independent shops contribute to the local economy. The money spent in them stays in the community. Chain stores do not have any responsibility to the community and all the profit they make is moved away from the borough. Accordingly, Tesco and Sainsbury's were both criticised for having subsidiaries based in low-tax countries and also for not fully acknowledging their UK profits (Campbell, 2013). According to the narratives of Kurdish and Turkish business owners, there are two distinct facets of chain and independent. Esnaf, who is a chair of a craftsmen association, explains my interviewees' concerns:

Why did we not call ourselves a business association, but craftsmen's association? Because being craftsmen entails an important culture. You



cannot put businessmen and craftsmen into the same box. Craftsmen have close ties with the community; we personally know our customers. Customers tell us their problems. If they do not have enough money on them they can postpone payment until a later date. There are emotional and social ties between shop owners and customers. It is a totally different mentality from how Tesco and other big chain stores operate. The customers of Tesco and others do not personally know the bosses. However, our craftsmen culture is not like this. It's not like this in Anatolia either. For instance, the customers can pay for their shopping on a monthly basis; the shop owner can open a pass book. This is solidarity. He can be unemployed, and the shop owner provides him with the necessary produce. On the other hand, a businessman can cut down a tree if he can't sell the shadow. This is the mentality of a businessman. Being a businessman is not moral. We prefer to be craftsmen. We should not become savage (Esnaf, chair of craftsmen organisation).

What is clear from the quote above is that my interviewee draws a distinction between ethnic businesses and mainstream chain stores. In his view, while chain stores' only purpose is to make a profit with no personal relationships with the customers, the relationships that characterise ethnic shops could be defined by such features as social networks, cooperation, trust and mutual benefit. Ethnic shops have the potential to generate social capital in neighbourhoods. It is a relationship of mutual benefit as the shop owners can open a pass book and the customer can keep on shopping at the same shop. The shop becomes a public space where social networks has been reproduced.

Another consequence of the expansion of chain stores is the intensification of the labour process in the independent shops. Intensification of work emerges as seemingly inevitable outcome of pressures of over-competition with chain stores and within KT shop owners. In order to survive, many are no longer able to employ non family workers. As Tuz, a mini-supermarket owner mentions,

Nowadays, we do not employ any workers, only family members are working in the shop. Competition has intensified. Have a walk in this district. You can see that we are surrounded by businesses like ours. Things were not like this before. I have been in this shop for more than ten years. I used to employ workers. New chain stores were built next to already established shops (Tuz, mini-market owner).

The long working hours in the shop leads to 'imprisonment' and isolation from the outside world. Imprisonment and isolation, thus, contribute to the



inability to participate in the wider issues of society and to relate to them (Dedeoğlu, 2014:62-63; Kesici, 2015: 219; Karan, 2017). For instance, it is difficult to leave their shops or reserve time for matters related to them like campaigning against chain stores. The power differential between the KT shop keepers and chain stores implies that the chain store directors have greater potential influence than the Turkish speaking shop keepers, through which they were able to bypass regulations on chain stores. Thus, they were able to lower barriers for setting up local chain stores. As Nar, shop consultant, comments:

Of course it's a free market economy. Everyone can open a shop everywhere. But, the government has to protect small businesses. Actually, the development of chain stores in every neighbourhood will kill small independent craftsmen. As we said, it's a free market economy. We cannot prevent this. But, there must be a control. If they would allow two or three chain stores in every neighbourhood this could be a solution, maybe. Indeed, this is a black hole. It doesn't matter how many people march on the street, whether they gather 10 thousand people, it doesn't change anything. The big business is going to open their store. They have a very strong lobby. The chain stores could not open any stores if Hackney council would not give plan permission and license. But, who runs the Hackney council? Labour. It doesn't matter whether the conservatives are in the council. These companies such as Tesco and Sainsbury donate to those parties. They are very strong. When the people who run the lobby campaign call the council for the development of a chain store in the neighbourhood, it is impossible to oppose this. It is important to know key people in the bureaucracy (Nar, chair of a consulting firm).

There are some groups like Hackney Unites and Stokey Local campaigning against the development of chain stores. Stokey Local is largely a white middle class British community response to the proposed development of a supermarket in Wilmer Place N16. The activities of middle class white British people involved in the campaign entail leafleting, deciding further steps of protest, joining the consultations and giving press interviews, however, could not form links with KT shop-keepers. For instance, my informant, Tütün, who owns an off-licence on the same street states:

The development of a Sainsbury's is going to affect our business. They are going to set-up their store next to us. They are going to sell the same products. Their offer is going to be better than ours. There is already one Sainsbury's a bit further away up the road and they are going to open another one. When we set-up this off-licence that Sainsbury's was not there.



That Sainsbury's has affected our business, Iceland as well. In this area, just in front of us, a newsagent had to close down. Journalists from a TV channel came recently. They wanted to record an interview about the Sainsbury's. I cannot talk as such. It is hard. I refused and they went (Tütün, off-license owner).

The Kurdish and Turkish individuals' prospect for business development and even chance of survival is highly determined by the council policy and market pressures. The opportunity to survive is shaped by the competitive market conditions. The lack of elite allies, which could issue safeguards in order to protect local, small independent shops, is one of the factors impacting on the opportunity structure of the KT small business owners. KT shop-keepers have to compete with chain stores in order to survive. Because of unfair competition and unfair tax policy KT shop-keepers have developed antipathy toward chain stores. These issues were reflected during face to face encounters with rioters.

One of my interviewees, Sirke, who was present at the KT mobilisation to defend the Dalston neighbourhood from attacks, chatted with some of the rioters. The rioters told him that they did not have any problems with Turkish shops. As he explains:

I told to the rioters that we (rioters and KT shopkeepers) are all from working class background. We (KT people) are also exploited and discriminated in this system. The system treats all in the same way. It is wrong to attack Turkish shops. They said they have nothing to do with Turkish shops (Sirke, coffee shop owner).

Similarly, Esnaf, chair of the British Anatolian Craftsmen Union mentions that,

The riots were started next to us. They were talking next to us, saying, let's go to Haringey and Hackney and smash the shops up. In the meantime, we told them not to do so as we also have shops there. They did not touch the Turkish shops. A few Turkish shops were damaged. They mainly targeted the big companies. (Esnaf, chair of a KT Craftsmen Union).

Another shopkeeper, Gül who had a chat with rioters as such:

The rioters also come to this area, but no one here reacted against them and they did not do any harm to our shops. We had a chat with a few of them. We said, the shopkeepers are also residents of this area who are also discriminated in this society. We are all excluded in this system. If you want to react to the injustices in this society in a righteous way there are multi-



national companies, which do not pay their taxes. You cannot attack those shopkeeper's livelihoods in order to have revenge (Gül, mini-market owner).

KT shop-keepers have to compete with chain stores in order to survive. Because of unfair competition and unfair tax policy KT shop-keepers have developed hostility toward chain stores. These issues were reflected during face to face encounters with rioters.

Conclusion

This study highlights that socio-economic frustrations of impoverished communities in North London were not directed into anti-middleman hatred. The middleman minority analytical model is a typological model that could be utilised to evaluate the convergence and divergence of a phenomenon to the typology. According to the model, ethnic stores supposed to be an easy target for poor people. The actors in this model have predefined, pre-existing set of roles, interests and reactions. The middleman minority hypothesis in explaining the violence between Koreans and Blacks during the Los Angeles riots in the US could not be validated in British context. While Black rioters in Los Angeles directed their systemic grievances to Koreans, rioters in London projected their grievances largely upon big companies. The accumulated economic, social frustrations of impoverished communities were not projected upon the KT merchants in North London. They specifically targeted big chain stores.

KT shop-keeper's feelings of antipathy toward big businesses were negotiated with rioters during face to face encounters on the streets of North London. Shopkeepers' face to face interactions with the rioters are shaped and guided not by anti-middleman hatred, but by framing processes discussed above.

According to the perceptions of the KT shopkeepers, the media and politicians have tried to create tension and conflict between communities. The low profile of police during the riots has been explained by the police intension to bring communities face to face. Tensions between communities were prevented by backing the rioters, but not looters. The Turkish and Kurdish community organisations stated at a press meeting that the British institutions are the major cause for the riots. The conscious efforts of shopkeepers and rioters on the streets constructed an interest alignment against government policy for cutting social programmes, economic deprivation, and police misconduct. To this end, members of ethnic groups prevented inter-ethnic conflict. Shopkeepers instead of blaming rioters for the destruction of the stores, they mostly focused on



British institutions, such as the media, police, and the government — for inciting tensions, reinforcing economic and political inequalities, and indirectly instigating urban violence. Disputes were generally elaborated as a product of the larger society's structure of opportunity, not of racial, cultural, or ethnic conflicts between communities per se. The KT shopkeepers and rioters managed to generate a shared consciousness during face-to-face encounters on the streets. To this end, riots in North London in 2011 did not expand into inter-ethnic race riots.

While KT migration to continental European countries such as Germany, Holland and Austria was a result of invited migrants to make up for shortages in the labor market after the Second World War, KT migrants in London have a political migration background. It was a consequence of military coups in 1971 and 1980 and violence imposed on certain groups such as Alevites, Kurds and political leftists who found refuge mostly in London. Their class-conscious framing of the riots could have been influenced by their history of political migration. This leads to the question that if similar riots happen in other countries of Europe, would non-political KT migrants frame the events and act similarly? Second, how other ethnic entrepreneurial groups in other regions of Britain have framed the instances. In order to answer those questions one has to consider, first, the ethnic groups' socio-economic embeddedness to the wider socio-economic structure, second, their internal structure and finally, focus on the framing processes of the events.

Finally, it should be noted that there is a lack of research on immigrant entrepreneurs' actions and perceptions about the 2011 riots in England. How other regions have framed the instances. This study, to a certain extent, is an attempt to fill this gap with its limitations. It focuses on London boroughs of Hackney and Haringey. More research has to be done on the August 2011 riots to elicit the actions and perceptions of entrepreneurial ethnic groups in England and its consequences on inter-ethnic relations.

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