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**Differentiating irregularity
and solidarity:**

**Turkish Immigrants at work
in London**

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Abstract

Two key concepts, irregularity and solidarity, are examined based on the preliminary findings of the Immigrant Work Strategies and Networks project at COMPAS. Irregularity can refer to immigration status or to the position of immigrants within the labour market. A significant finding of the project is the flexibility or fluidity with which immigrants move between regularity and irregularity. The various ways in which solidarity allows immigrants to accommodate irregularity are illustrated through a discussion of how collective social relations operate for Turkish immigrants in the process of developing work strategies in London. Collective social relations within the compatriot community enable immigrants to accommodate various kinds of irregular status, yet the outcomes are positive for some while exploitative for others. The state can also undermine solidarity through policies and regulations. Ultimately, the development of viable work strategies includes a process of accommodation and resistance to global and local labour market conditions, to the enabling and restricting state, and to the constructive and exploitative nature of social networks. In this paper, we introduce a more differentiated analysis of solidarity and of immigrant and labour market statuses. We introduce a notion of *irregular formality* to help us understand this complex social process.

Keywords: irregular immigration status; informal employment; work strategies; solidarity; Turkish immigrants in London.

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Introduction

In recent times numerous western democratic nation-states have closed or protected their borders, creating tighter controls around those who are in the country, through surveillance and deportation. In London, irregular immigration status is now a fact of life for many immigrants. Many intend to return to their home country and do so, while others become caught up in the web of London life, seeking employment and a reasonable quality of life. These immigrants are frequently trapped in deregulated labour markets which lead to flexible and casualized labour and, in turn, can lead to high- and low-wage sectors, unregulated work and an informal sector. However, the public perception is that immigrants and other ethnic minorities are the direct cause of these effects. There is a common perception that asylum seekers and immigrants generally, are driving the growth of a hitherto non-existent informal economy. These groups are seen to be hiding from the law – through tax evasion, through circumvention of labour laws, by being instrumental in lowering wages and by defrauding the public purse through social security scams.

While there seems to be a moral panic about asylum seekers and the asylum process, the 'pull' factors in the UK economy and policies that attract irregular migrants and undocumented workers have been, until recently, conveniently ignored. Some national governments have chosen to ignore parts of the informal sector in order to allow some industries to compete in international markets and to subdue protest about inadequate delivery of services and jobs. In some countries, such as Spain, the undocumented or the irregular are given the opportunity to regularize. In the UK, the undocumented or irregular are criminalized. Until recently, the UK government has turned a blind eye to the flourishing informal economy in London, aware that certain industries such as construction and hospitality would collapse without migrant labour. At the same time it punishes asylum seekers and irregular immigrants by providing little or no protection.

Nevertheless, many immigrants, in the course of pursuing work and life strategies for themselves and their families, take risks they would never have imagined. They find themselves labelled as outsiders, stripped of their identities as people with multiple subjectivities, who are capable of managing their lives. But just as the 'normal' society creates the conditions for irregularity, so too do migrants develop work strategies that accommodate both regularity and irregularity. For some, the process is

dramatic. Immigrant networks and communities mediate between the individual and broader structural, social and cultural contexts. Thus immigrant networks are frequently concerned with the actual movement of people, family units and chain migrations. Networks can also be conceived of as relationships where social capital or solidarity circulates among immigrants in their new place of settlement. How people are able to mobilise social, economic and political resources depends on the characteristics of networks and people's embeddedness within them and beyond national boundaries.

Based on the broader questions of the COMPAS project on Immigrant Work Strategies and Networks (see below) this study aims to explore two key questions. The first is concerned with immigrant work strategies in a de-regularised and casualized labour market. We interviewed immigrants who worked in both the formal and informal economy. Some only worked in one or the other; others worked in both. Given the enormous risks immigrants take (not only when they enter the UK but also in the labour market) in order to develop viable life strategies, one key question examines how immigrants go about developing work strategies and how are these managed. For those who have irregular immigration status, how do they manage this status in terms of work? Those who have regular immigration status, what are their work strategies, and do they work in both the formal and informal sectors?

Our second key question involves the problematization of the dichotomous understandings of regularity and irregularity, and the presence or absence of solidarity. While in terms of immigration and labour market regulations there is a clear demarcation between what constitutes a 'legal' and 'illegal' status, in the process of developing work strategies, immigrants create an ambivalent space or relationship between what is considered regular and irregular immigration and labour market status. We aim to differentiate 'irregularity' by drawing attention to the diverse ways in which it is conceptualized and experienced by Turkish immigrants in the process of developing viable work strategies. Since networks tend to mediate between immigrants and their broader socio-economic, cultural and political context, we also illustrate how collective social relations vary for Turkish immigrants as they develop work strategies in London. Thus, we look at how various types of solidaristic relations allow Turkish immigrants to accommodate irregularity. Overall, we offer differentiated conceptualizations of irregularity and of solidarity.

In this paper, after a general outline of the Immigrant Work Strategies and Networks project, we provide brief background information on Turkish immigrants in London. This is followed by definitions and the problematization of regular and irregular

immigrant and labour market statuses. We then provide the findings of our research concerning the work experiences of Turkish immigrants to demonstrate the fluidity between irregular and regular statuses, and also the flexibility of solidarity. We conclude by exploring the ways in which our differentiated conceptualizations of irregularity and solidarity shed light on the taken-for-granted perceptions of immigrant settlement in London.

The Project – Immigrant Work Strategies and Networks

The aim of this project is to investigate the ways in which immigrant work strategies (in both formal and informal employment) are shaped or mediated by their social networks in the process of settlement of immigrants in London, a multi-ethnic city with many recent arrivals from all over the globe, particularly in the past 10-15 years. Although much research has been carried out among ethnic minorities in the informal economy (Phizacklea and Wolkowitz 1995) little has been carried out among recent immigrant groups.

Five groups were selected in order to provide us with a picture of how work and socio-cultural strategies are shaped by economic and political issues as well as by their networks and communities. The five groups, all neglected in studies of immigration to the UK, include: Ghanaians – a black immigrant group mainly from southern Ghana, who has a significant presence in some London boroughs; Portuguese – EU citizens who have numerous rights that many in the other three immigrant groups do not posses as non-EU citizens in terms of work strategies and access to the labour market and to services; Romanians – Eastern Europeans, expecting to enter the EU in 2007; Turks – a mixed community with several cohorts of immigrants, varying immigrant status, and expecting to join the EU; British-born – included in order to provide us with a control group or as a point of comparison where relevant.

Qualitative research methods were used, beginning with the snowball sampling technique to find respondents. We surveyed 30 people in each group – divided equally by gender. Several interviewers for each language group were employed in order to provide us with several entry points into the communities, in an attempt to avoid sample and interviewer bias. One hundred and fifty-five semi-structured questionnaires were completed and up to 12 in-depth interviews were conducted with respondents from each of the surveyed samples. In addition, we consulted with and interviewed a number

of 'experts' and 'gate-keepers' ranging from academics to immigrant community-leaders *and* immigrant organizations (e.g. NGOs, trade unions, churches etc.) to local authority officials. The data in this work are based on some preliminary results, concentrating mainly on the Turkish sample.

Turkish immigrants in London

Overall, there is little scholarly work on Turkish immigrants in London, though this is rapidly changing.[1] The work of Jordan and Duvell (2002) provides some of the most up-to-date research on irregular migration and irregular immigrants in London's labour market particularly in relation to Turkish immigrants. They concentrate on migrants from Brazil, Poland and Turkey and are particularly concerned with immigration status, with the organisations that support immigrants and refugees, on immigrant control agencies and with the relevant public services. In comparison to other groups, they found that their Turkish sample (mainly asylum seekers) experienced more problems with unemployment, psychological distress, and poverty (Jordan and Duvell 2002: 136):

> This was despite the fact that the majority, as asylum seekers, had eventually gained permission to work legally. It seems that, although they had the support of their communities and organisations, their positions in UK society, and in those communities, trapped them in disadvantage, in comparison to their mobile (and, perhaps most important, white European) Poles.

Our sample differs from theirs in that asylum seekers/refugees constituted only about a third of our interviewees. Nonetheless, as shall be discussed later, our sample reveals specific variations in work and life circumstances and in collective social relations.

London's Turkish immigrants consist of a rather diverse group of people where categorization is not co-terminus with ethnicity or nationality. For example, in the 2001 Census (for England and Wales), those in the group of 'people born in Turkey' can include people who identify themselves as Turks or Kurds.[2] The most popular way of self-identification among our respondents was the Turkish neologism '*Türkiyeli*', literally meaning 'someone from Turkey'. Some of our respondents are Kurmanji-speaking (Kurdish dialect) and Alevi (a more liberal branch of Islam in Turkey), many of whom have arrived in London over the past fifteen years.[3] They have a very different demographic composition in comparison to Turkey's current population, which is predominantly Turkish-speaking and Sunni. Nevertheless, a majority of the Kurdish

nationalists whom we encountered in London, for example, also preferred to use the term '*Türkiyeli*' to identify their community.[4]

According to the Greater London Authority's (GLA) *Labour Force Survey and Census Data,* based on the 2001 census, there were 52,893 people born in Turkey in England and Wales (Spence 2005). Of these, 39,128 (74 per cent) were living in Greater London, comprising 0.55 per cent of the 7,172,101 residents of the metropolis. The Turkish consulate website, on the other hand, provides an estimate of 150,000 Turkish 'nationals' living in the UK, noting they mostly reside in 'London (Islington, Hackney, Haringey, Stoke Newington, Turnpike Lane, Newington Green in the North as well as Peckham and Lewisham in the South), Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool, and Leeds' (Consulate General for the Republic of Turkey in London 2006). The consulate's estimate, which is almost three times the official figure, is rather dubious though it most likely includes the children of all those settled in the UK who were born in Turkey, as well as a number of 'illegal immigrants' as stated by the consulate website. This figure, however, is probably very small according to official calculations (see below).

Based on the London Borough of Hackney's Directorate of Social Services, Hoggart et al. estimate that there are 20,000 to 25,000 Turkish speakers in Hackney alone (2000: 2). Alternatively, Cook et al. (2001: 14), suggest that the Turkish speaking population in Hackney is between 25,000 and 35,000. Because these figures refer to 'Turkish speakers', they are certain to include the second and (possibly) later generations born in the UK as well as Turkish Cypriots, who are not included in our sample. In the 2001 Census, on the other hand, Hackney is reported to have 7,729 residents who were born in Turkey.[5]

It is also difficult to obtain accurate figures for the numbers of Turkish nationals granted British citizenship in the past fifty years.[6] Nevertheless, according to the data we compiled from Home Office Statistical Bulletins, between 1984 and 2005 alone, the numbers granted citizenship amounted to 47,008 (Home Office, 2005). The Home Office records also show that between 1986 and 2005, there were 36,569 Turkish nationals applying for asylum in the UK (see Table 1). As of December 2004, however, the National Asylum Support Service provided accommodation and/or subsistence to only 4,750 asylum seekers (and their dependents) of Turkish nationality in Britain. Of these, 2,105 (44.3 per cent) were living in Greater London (Heath and Jeffries 2005: 69).

Table 1: Number of Turkish Nationals Applying for Asylum in the UK between 1986 and 2005	
Years	**#**
1986-1990	4,549
1991-1995	9,320
1996-2000	11,795
2001-2005	10,905
TOTAL (1986-2005)	**36,569**
Source: Data aggregated from Kümbetoğlu and Karagöz (1998: 66); Heath and Jeffries (2005: 35); Home Office (2005).	

Regular and irregular immigrant and labour market status

Before moving on to our results, we need to clarify our meanings and usage of the term 'irregular'. The expressions 'irregular' and 'informal' are often used to avoid the normative language implicated with ethnocentrism and prejudice. There is, however, no clear consensus on what these terms denote since they might imply a set of meanings ranging from an emphasis on the method of border-crossing to a focus on current employment conditions. Nevertheless, the terms 'irregular' or 'informal' are frequently used by researchers in an effort to shift away from normative and legal language such as the term 'illegal'. For example, Jordan and Duvell define irregular migration as the 'crossing of borders without proper authority, or violating conditions for entering another country' (2002: 15). For the purpose of this study, irregular migrants comprise not only those who cross borders 'without proper authority', but may also include those who overstay their visa, or who rent, borrow or buy identity papers such as passports (see Vasta 2006). Some immigrants live irregular lives either through their irregular immigration status or by working in the informal economy. Government policies can encourage both forms of irregularity. The EU, for example, prides itself in its development of non-discriminatory immigration polices. Yet many countries, including Britain, have immigration policies that discriminate at the point of entry, that deport some nationals while turning a blind eye to others, and that discriminate against asylum

seekers to the point of placing their lives in danger by forbidding them to work (see Flynn 2005; Morris 2002).

According to Morris (2002) in the UK, there is a system of 'civic stratification' that provides new arrivals with different levels of rights. Morris suggests this leads to a 'hierarchy of statuses' with a close relationship between rights and controls. Furthermore, she suggests there are informal deficits when accessing rights. For example, some may have various rights on paper, but when it comes to claiming these rights, they experience great difficulties when they discover that access to rights is conditional. In addition, different value is given to rights in the system of civic stratification. Our research reveals there is also a hierarchy of statuses among those who can claim regular or documented status and those pushed into irregularity. For example, some nationalities who enter on a tourist visa intending to work, may find it easier than others to gain self-employment visas, while others who do not have such an opportunity possibly because they come from Africa, for example, end up over-staying.

In a similar vein to definitions of irregular immigration status, reference to unregistered or undeclared work, the informal sector or the informal economy, can be confusing as these terms; for example, do not distinguish between paid and unpaid informal work. Informal employment can be highly paid and autonomous work or low-paid, exploitative work. Further, informal employment is heterogeneous and 'ranges from "organised" informal employment undertaken by employees for a business that conducts some or all of its activity informally to more "individual" forms of informality' (Williams and Windebank 1998: 30-32). There are many degrees of informality in the labour market ranging from not declaring paid work to taking exploitative unpaid work.

A number of authors prefer to use the term 'informal employment' to denote a relationship where labour is paid by a wage or a fee (Pfau-Effinger 2003; Williams and Windebank 1998). Although they are linked, this distinction places the emphasis on employment, which is more the focus of this project, rather than on the informal economy itself. Furthermore, in order to avoid the danger that the 'informal' becomes the 'other' to formal employment or to the formal economy, or where the informal economy is seen as a sphere outside of the activities and regulations of the formal, organized economy, many now understand that the formal and informal economies are intimately linked and are shaped by each other in a complex process of economic, social, and political relations (Mingione and Qassoli 2000; Portes, et al. 1989). In this project, informal employment appeared in a number of guises – as unpaid or underpaid work in a family business, an undeclared job or second job; work that has not been declared by the

employer even though the worker is paying National Insurance. Finally, some immigrants will be working informally by virtue of the fact that they have irregular immigration status.

From the state's point of view, these phenomena are defined as 'illegality'. From the migrant point of view, it might be seen as a form of resistance to draconian state policies in wealthy countries. Although resistance might provide immigrants with a sense of agency, many would rather have regular or legal status. Thus, the tensions between immigrants and immigration policies extend to tensions between workers and state policies. Over the past fifty years, one of the main goals in many advanced economies was to achieve full employment and universal welfare provision. This clearly has not occurred in the UK, and given the visibility of irregular migrants in certain industries, the prevalent view has been, until recently, that migrants are providing the 'push' factor that creates an informal sector. Yet we can safely say that in none of the advanced economies and western democracies are social needs met solely by the formal economy and formal institutions.

In the UK in 2004, of the 144,550 persons granted settlement, 42,265 (29 per cent) were in the employment-related category (Dudley, et al. 2005: 40). Both in government and in the public arena there is a strong push to quantify and criminalise immigrants who have irregular status. However, given the nature of irregularity, it is difficult to gain precise figures about the extent of the phenomenon. The figures we do have can only provide a tentative hint. One recent estimate of the unauthorised population living in the UK in 2001 was 430,000 which constituted 0.7 per cent of the UK's population of 59 million (Woodbridge 2005: 5). There are problems with the various methods used to calculate numbers of people who are resident illegally in Europe (see Pinkerton, et al. 2004). Salt (2005: 33) suggests that 'due to the clandestine nature of the illegally resident population, all data types are substantially uncertain'.

Similar problems arise with attempts to calculate the extent of 'underground activity' in the informal economy. While self-reporting is not an accurate method for calculating undocumented employment, in a survey conducted in several EU countries, the proportion of UK people aged 18-74 who reported being involved in 'black activities' in 2000 was 7.8 per cent (compared with 20.3 per cent in Denmark in 2001 and 10.4 per cent in Germany in 2001) (Pedersen 2003: 243). As noted earlier, there is a common mistaken belief that irregular migrants and asylum seekers form the largest constituent of the underground economy (Farrant, et al. 2006). Williams and Windebank suggest that citizens perform the bulk of undocumented work (1998). Samers, on the other

hand, suggests that since the early 1990s this may be changing in the EU because citizen workers 'are less available…or less willing (because of poor work condition and/or low pay) to work in *particular sectors*…because they have found more attractive employment elsewhere' (2005: 40). Informal employment increasingly plays a contradictory role in advanced economies for, while it may be seen as a way of circumventing state regulations, it clearly provides people with work strategies that ensure reasonable living conditions. It can also contribute to 'social cohesion' through the social capital that circulates within and across networks and communities (see Pfau-Effinger 2003: 7).

Turkish Immigrants at work

Among our sample of 125 immigrants from four groups, there are three main reasons for migrating (Table 2). The majority came for economic and educational reasons, mainly to work and to provide a better life for themselves and their families. Many respondents were concerned with developing life strategies based on 'quality of life' as opposed to survival strategies. In some cases, educational reasons are the pretext for economic reasons, for coming to work. Some come to study but also end up working and disappearing into a life of irregularity. Others who come to visit family or friends may also disappear into irregularity by overstaying their visas. Asylum seekers appear only in the Turkish sample. The hierarchy of statuses applies especially to asylum seekers who, until recently, found they could not legally work. This often pushed them into a life of irregular work.

Table 2: Reasons for migrating			
	Economic and Educational Reasons	Family and Personal Reasons	Political Reasons
Other samples (Ghanaian, Portuguese, and Romanian)	65%	35%	0%
Turkish sample	45%	23%	**32%**
Source: WSN[7] Survey Results, 2004/5.			

Current immigration statuses of our immigrant samples range from having a work permit visa, self-employed/business visa, au pair, students, family reunification to asylum seekers. Some already have refugee status and 'leave to remain' while others await a decision about their applications. There are over-stayers on tourist and student visas.

From the project survey data, it is possible to build up a picture of employment and mobility by firstly ascertaining the level of qualifications of our sample group in London and compare it with the data collected by the Labour Force Survey (LFS) during the last Census in 2001 (see Table 3). Although there is a slight time discrepancy between the times the data were collected, this table provides a picture of how representative our sample is with the broader population in terms of their qualifications. Although we interviewed a similar proportion of people with 'lower level qualifications', we interviewed twice as many of those with higher qualifications and far fewer with lower qualifications in comparison to the LFS. Part of the discrepancy between LFS results and our data stems from the fact that while LFS presents a general overview of the Turkish labour force in London we have been particularly interested in a subsection of Turkish immigrants, i.e. those who have immigrated to London within the last twenty years and had irregular immigration or labour market status. The discrepancy between the LFS and our data, therefore, might simply be a reflection of the different characteristics of the specific group of Turkish immigrants we targeted.

Table 3: Qualifications of Turkish immigrants in London			
Qualifications	WSN sample (WSN Survey Results, 2004/5)		Labour Force Survey (Spence 2005)
	N (31)	%	%
Higher level qualifications	13	42%	18.1%
Lower level qualifications	9	29%	23.6%
No qualifications	9	29%	58.3%

According to the GLA's *Labour Force Survey and Census Data*, 14,473 (44.4 per cent of the 39,128 Turkish immigrants in London) are economically active (see Table 4). Of these, 10,649 (32.7 per cent) are employed and 3,824 (11.7 percent) are unemployed compared with the London unemployment rate of 7.3 per cent (Spence 2005: 41, 52). Compared with the LFS, more than twice as many of our sample are actively employed and only one is unemployed. In our study, the majority are in paid employment, while all four employers run their own businesses as shopkeepers and two of our respondents carry out unpaid volunteer work for their community.

Table 4: Economic position of Greater London residents born in Turkey					
			WSN sample (WSN Survey Results, 2004/5)		Labour Force Survey (Spence 2005: 118)
Economic Position			N (31)	%	%
Active	In employment	Paid employment	21	87%	32.7%
		Unpaid family labour	-		
		Unpaid labour outside the family	2		
		Self-employed	-		
		Employer	4		
	Unemployed		1	3%	11.7%
Inactive	Retired		2	7%	0.9%
	Student		-	-	12.1%
	Caring home or family		-	-	17.1%
	Permanently sick or disabled		1	3%	6.3%
	Other		-	-	19.1%

It is also possible to build up a picture of employment mobility of immigrants by establishing the last job they undertook in their home country, the first job they did here in the UK, and finally, their current job (see Table 5). The Labour Force Survey data are also included to provide a comparison of our sample population with the broader Turkish population in London. The main sites of employment for the Turkish immigrants appeared to be restaurants, grocers and off-licence shops, cafes, hairdressers, photo studios, music stores and bookshops. Turkish immigrants also work as au pairs, drivers, or as professionals in firms.

The Labour Force Survey records that 41.1 per cent of Turkish-born immigrants in London work in elementary employment which includes personal and administrative services, sales, process and elementary jobs (see Table 5). Although there were half as many of this category in our sample compared to the LFS, the numbers in this category remained stable in our sample from last job in Turkey to the current job. There are however, two notable changes in our sample. First, while providing a picture of upward mobility in the managerial/senior official positions (from 2 respondents in Turkey to 10 in their current UK job), this mobility is not as convincing as it appears at first glance (see Table 5). Of these 10, with the exception of two respondents, one of whom is a chief of construction and the other a sales manager, the remainder work in the food and hospitality sector as restaurant managers/owners or as shopkeepers in an ethnic business niche. These respondents work long, hard hours, involving their own and family labour, and often using exploited compatriot labour to succeed slowly in their business. This will be discussed more fully in the section on 'flexible solidarity' below. One of the initial reasons for moving into the ethnic business niche was the unavailability of factory work as labour-intensive manufacturing moved out of developed economies. Although seven of the Turkish immigrants initially took process/plant employment upon their arrival in London, there is now only one left in that line of work. Our respondents told us the way in which many Turkish factory workers rushed in early 1990s to establish shops with their savings following the collapse of textile work in London. Several Turkish immigrants indicated their scepticism concerning the upward mobility of shopkeepers by saying that factory work where one works regular hours and receives regular pay is superior to ethnic businesses where fierce intra-communal competition reduces profit margins considerably.

Type of Employment	Last job in Turkey		First job in UK		Current job in UK		Labour Force Survey	
	N	**%**	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**	**%**	**sub-total %**
1. Manager/senior official	2		1		10		21	
2. Professional	8	36	2	13	4	48	7.2	37.7
3. Assoc. Prof	1		1		1		9.5	
4. Administrative	-	26	-	13	-	10	6.9	21.2
5. Skilled Trades	8		4		3		14	
6. Personal service/admin	3		4		3		6.4	
7. Sales	2	19	1	64	2	23	11	41.1
8. Process/plant	1		7		1		10	
9. Elementary	-		8		1		14	
Student	2	19	-	10	-	19	-	-
Housewife/don't work/sick	4		3		6		-	-
Total	**31**	**100**	**31**	**100**	**31**	**100**	**100**	**100**
Source: WSN Survey Results, 2004/5; Labour Force Survey, Spence 2005: 133.								

Table 5: Turkish Sample: job mobility

Secondly, four respondents with professional qualifications and five with trade skills have become de-skilled. Doctors and engineers, teachers and accountants have lost their skills either through non-acceptance of their qualifications in the UK, through the long wait for refugee status and through irregular immigration status. One medical doctor who has since retrained in the UK has been waiting for a year to be placed in a hospital in order to finish the final requirements for his degree. Understandably, he is concerned that the long wait will render his retraining invalid. Nevertheless, one main work strategy for the de-skilled has been to move into the ethnic business niche.

The fluidity between regular and irregular status

Some form of irregularity exists in all our samples, including informal employment among the British-born. The picture becomes complicated for immigrants who have irregular immigration status for, whatever they do, they will always be perceived as illegal. Thus, irregularity begets irregularity. This is especially the case in the labour market – if you are an irregular immigrant worker, your work is perceived as illegal, even if you are paying National Insurance, as many do. Howard Becker's famous study of 'deviance' and labelling theory sums up this problem squarely: 'The question of what rules are to be enforced, what behaviour regarded as deviant, and which people labelled as outsiders must also be regarded as political' (Becker 1963: 7).

In the case of Turkish immigrants, for example, some are able to regularize their immigration status first by applying for asylum, and then, for some, by receiving refugee status. Asylum seekers might continue to be involved in irregular work, which ensures them bearable living conditions during the lengthy and uncertain asylum hearings. On the other hand, Turkish immigrants who arrive initially on student, au pair, or self-employed visas (emerging from the Ankara Treaty, a bilateral agreement between UK and Turkey), and therefore, have regular immigration status, might overstay their visas, or get involved in irregular work besides or alongside the regular work they are entitled to, working at two, and sometimes more, jobs. Other work strategies include working long, arduous hours for low pay; accepting poor work conditions; changing jobs to find better pay and work conditions (May, et al. 2006) due to de-skilling, opening up their own business and all the risks that it entails. Although we do not have data on the length of time that Turkish immigrants were involved in irregularity, only 10 out of 31 respondents indicated that their National Insurance was paid (WSN Survey Results 2004/5).

One of the aims of this project has been to explore immigrant work strategies and, in the process, we have discovered how people engage with and accommodate irregularity. One significant result of our project is the fluidity, or the flexibility, with which people handle the relationship between irregular and regular status. Our results indicate that immigrants and non-immigrants alike accommodate irregularity by developing flexible or fluid life and work strategies in order to deal with new economic and socio-political contexts. Our results reveal that immigrants develop what Levitt calls a 'dual consciousness' or 'dual competence' around regularity/irregularity. She suggests,

that in their quest to develop relevant work and life strategies, people will find ways to mentally accommodate the two (Levitt 2001).

One of our respondents, for example, developed a 'dual consciousness' because he didn't quite trust the outcome of regular status. For this respondent, who had finally obtained British citizenship, stability was not an end-game. This Turkish immigrant stated that he lived in a constant state of unease since he believed there was always the possibility that his British citizenship could be revoked and that he could be deported one day. This state of uncertainty, a sense of never fully belonging to the British nation, was shaping his life and work strategies. Although over time, as a former asylum seeker, he regularized his status by obtaining British citizenship, he did not feel 'regularized' enough to stabilize his labour market status. Despite working at what appears to be a well-paying and secure job, he continued to 'moonlight' and sustain his compatriot networks that provide him with irregular work. He continued to move in and out of regularity not out of necessity, but out of precaution.

Thus, people move in and out of irregularity and regularity according to the political and socio-economic context.[8] Many of our respondents feel they have a right to live a reasonable life, so are prepared to challenge and contest the law, to cross spatial, institutional and cultural boundaries – the boundaries are very fluid. There is both local accommodation and resistance to authority power structures as well as to global conditions. One way of resisting the power of the state's gaze is by becoming invisible. Yet while it appears to be happening off-stage (Goffman 1959), it also occurs right under the surveillance of the state.

Finally, although immigrants have developed flexible ways of weaving in and out of regularity, nearly all we spoke to would prefer to have formal immigration and labour market status. Our research reveals a notable phenomenon which we argue is best explained by the concept *irregular formality* – the attempt to regularize one's status within the constraints of irregular immigration and/or labour market status. For example, overstayers, those without National Insurance numbers, and those who do not declare a second job or whose employer does not declare an employee's job, continually attempt to find ways to 'regularize' themselves. One respondent who came on a 'work permit' was threatened by his employer that if he didn't accept his exploitative work conditions he would report him to the Home Office. The respondent's work permit was attached to that specific work place. He shifted job, thereby becoming irregular, but later switched to a student visa, returning to regular immigration status. It was important to him to maintain a formal status. Nevertheless, he had to work in order to support

himself, so now has an arrangement where he works on a 'voluntary' basis but is paid a low-taxed wage. He has created himself a more 'just', though irregular, work/tax arrangement. Thus, if it is not possible to arrange one's immigration status and work life through legal means, *irregular formality* is the next best strategy.[9]

The Turkish sample – flexible solidarity

Immigrant communities and networks are important sources of information and assistance for compatriot newcomers. Just as migrants develop flexible ways to deal with their immigration and labour market status, as we shall see below, the meaning of community solidarity also becomes more flexible, and is sometimes stretched to its limits, in the migration context. On arrival, the sense of helplessness or feeling lost is palpable for some.

For many immigrants, and especially for asylum seekers, the first few months, if not years, in London are when one needs compatriot community support the most. Cook et al. state that 'Turkish/Kurdish people walk on the streets of London, and they feel as if they are on another planet' (2001: 25). One of our Turkish respondents expressed her feelings of disorientation in London:

> When I first came to this country… There are such memories that one is disturbed even as one tells it. In my first day, I got lost in this small district. And I was able to find my way after an hour. There is a [tall] building which we keep our eyes on as we walk. We can find our way home only if we don't lose track of that building. One day, as we were strolling around we lost sight of that building. And I couldn't ask people where that building was. (#529)

Our Turkish respondents also reported the need for constant assistance and guidance from fellow Kurds, Turks, Alevis, comrades, co-villagers, tribesmen, and others in London. One asylum seeker who turned to assistance from his friends who share his political conviction described the hardships of his first few months as follows:

> There is no work permit. The state has provided the apartment. They also give 35 pounds a month. That is not good for anything, just for some food. I brought some money from Turkey and used that… I borrowed from friends lately. (#512)

Through community solidarity, immigrants, for instance, not only learn to use public transport, but also find temporary housing, borrow money, have access to trusted

translators, scrounge for cigarettes (which are prohibitively expensive), and find informal jobs.[10] For asylum seekers waiting for their cases to be heard, they prefer to work within the community in order to avoid loss of legal status and, thereby, deportation.

One of the most intense forms of community solidarity we observed was the case of one Turkish refugee, who works in a restaurant owned by one of his 5,000 co-villagers in London. This refugee's co-villagers have established a coffeehouse, which is where they spend most of their free time. They have recreated a particular village atmosphere in the coffeehouse where many daily transactions take place. Even the institution of village headmanship (*muhtar*) was brought to London, and official announcements and news concerning the village were posted on the coffeehouse bulletin board just as they would be posted in the village by the village headman. Thus, there are times when people forget that they are in London:

> Right now, we live here as if we are in Turkey. We see this place as Turkey. Everything is Turkish. Sometimes, when I go out, I feel as if I am in my own neighbourhood. We forget that we are in London. Really! Really! (#509)

This example might mislead one to think in stereotypical and romanticised ways about immigrant solidarity. Victor Greene, for example, finds the source of immigrant solidarity in what he calls the solidarity of the 'patch' (in Carsten 1988: 434). Such depictions of 'tightly knit communal entities in close communication with each other' (quoted in Carsten 1988: 434-435) not only give the impression that solidarity is a natural outcome of immigrant experience but also downplay immigrant agency and the possibility of discord. Oftentimes, the romanticised portrayal of immigrant solidarity could also be an off-handed complaint about the failure of immigrants to integrate with the society at large. Thus, just as different communities have different reasons for migrating to London, immigrant solidarity is both differentiated and also works through different kinds of networks (Vasta 2004). While some communities depend heavily on the use of face-to-face realm of the intimate circle, others predominantly work through the impersonal realm. We have classified three distinct types of social relations and networks that are at the disposal of immigrants. *Primary social relations* are at the smaller, affective, and face-to-face realm of family, friends, and acquaintances. *Secondary social relations*, on the other hand, are at the formal and non-affective level of societal organizations, associations, and bureaucracies. Finally, *tertiary social relations*, i.e. relations without co-presence, are at the impersonal realm of the internet, bulletin boards, and newspapers.

For the Turkish immigrants, solidarity works mainly through primary and secondary social relations. Similar to the Portuguese and Ghanaian immigrants, they rarely use tertiary social relations. In contrast, when work-related information is needed, our Romanian and the British-born respondents use the internet first. Turkish immigrants, for example, use primary social relations to set up their own businesses, to gather information on economic opportunities and information about wages and work conditions, to attain business and skills training, and to find out information about rights at work. They turn to secondary social relations, when it comes to finding information about health services, sending money home, legal issues, schools, bringing family or friends to UK, or to find adequate accommodation (see Table 6).

Table 6: Social Relations of Turkish immigrants: the number and percentage of Turkish immigrants utilizing primary or secondary relations for various goals					
PRIMARY RELATIONS	**N (31)**	**%**	**SECONDARY RELATIONS**	**N (31)**	**%**
To set up my own business	20	65	Info about health services	27	87
Info on economic opportunities	18	58	Info about sending money home	26	84
Info about wages and work conditions	17	55	Legal information	24	77
Business and skills training	16	52	Info about schools	21	68
Info about rights at work	16	52	Bringing family/friends to UK	17	55
			Help finding adequate accommodation	17	55
Source: WSN Survey Results, 2004/5.					

Although Turkish immigrants take care of most socio-cultural issues via secondary relations, that is, through societal organisations, when it comes to work and business, it is primary relations that take precedence. The primary relations provide the trust, security, protection, and secrecy that the Turkish immigrant workers need. Jordan

and Duvell (2002: 180), for example, found that the Turks and Kurds in London had higher levels of trust than the Poles and Brazilians. Immigrant solidarity at the level of primary relations, however, is not simply about reciprocity and benevolence. In fact, solidarity takes many forms. Levitt (2001) found that 'mistrustful solidarity' is a notable component of the community solidarity in her work among Dominican immigrants in the US. She defines this as a situation where family and community ties are strong but are accompanied by a high degree of scepticism (Levitt 2001: 118).

We found that 'mistrustful solidarity' is also at work among Turkish communities, as our examples below reveal. However, our results indicate that the view of solidarity among the Turkish immigrants needs to be more differentiated. For example, one respondent claimed:

> There is community solidarity only in the direst of conditions. Not in all instances. Solidarity used to be stronger in Turkey. Here there is a certain point. If it is beyond that point, then solidarity takes place, at the very last instance. (#509)

The respondent went on to point out that what is left of a more intense understanding of solidarity in the village is a simple safety net in London which is only in place if one is destitute or in great trouble – creating what we call *flexible solidarity*. There is not only a growing feeling of individualism but also a greater tolerance of inequalities and status differences among co-villagers. Thus, whilst this may be a form of 'mistrustful solidarity', there is awareness that solidarity has its limits yet remains flexible.

On the other hand, one respondent (#514) was even more critical of the notion of solidarity in London. For him, an uncle who pays smugglers for his refugee nephew's transit from a Kurdish village to London, and who subsequently provides room and board and an informal job, is not necessarily altruistic. What appeared to be solidarity to an outsider was outright exploitation for this Marxist. He explained that in London, the ability to draw on as many close and trusted male relatives from Turkey as possible was the key to getting rich. The main business strategy that would help the uncle to establish multiple shops is drawing on relatives who can work twelve to eighteen hours a day and can be trusted with the cash register. The poor nephew, the Marxist sceptic argued, would realize the level of exploitation, sometimes, only years later when he realizes that the pocket money or wage he receives is only a small percentage of what documented workers earn elsewhere.

This phenomenon of a persistent socio-economic relationship in which ostensibly altruistic acts are undertaken in expectation of employing the labour of the recipient for personal benefit, profit, or gain without adequate compensation can be defined as *exploitative solidarity*. Some of our interviewees, who were critical of exploitative forms of solidarity and the excessive greed and ambition of their compatriots, ridiculed them by saying that their motto was: '*Şop da şop, şop da şop!'* which can be roughly translated as 'Shops and more shops, shops and more shops!'[11] Nevertheless, Gazioglu argues that self-employment might offer an alternative to discrimination for the immigrants (2002: 3). In our case, exploitative solidarity seems to offer an alternative to discrimination in the labour market and other potential threats, such as deportation.

The concept of solidarity and the implication of reciprocity with one's compatriot boss who has provided the newcomer with an informal job when s/he had no one else to turn to, might entail unquestioned obedience and loyalty even when the work conditions are unbearable. The main benefits of solidarity are the payment for transit, free food and room upon arrival, pocket money for cigarettes and other immediate needs, and a 'safe' job, that is, a boss who will never turn you in to the authorities to be deported. On the other hand, the drawbacks of *exploitative solidarity* are 12 to 18 hour workdays and seven day workweeks, being underpaid, working under very difficult work conditions (e.g. 12 hours by the hot grill), and having almost no time-off from work (see Table 7).

Table 7: Benefits and Downside of Solidarity	
Benefits of Solidarity	**Exploitative Character of Solidarity**
Pay for transit	12 to 18 hour workdays
Free food	Underpaid
Free room	Difficult work (e.g. 12 hours by the hot grill)
"Safe" job	No time-off from work
Pocket money	
Source: WSN Survey Results, 2004/5.	

One respondent (#509), who has been working for 12 to18 hours per day before a hot grill for the last five years, has bought his way to becoming the owner of his workplace, not officially on paper but informally, and again an arrangement based on

trust and *community solidarity*, which we define as a contradictory process where help and support is given to the benefit of the community member with certain expectations in return. There is, however, not much change in his work conditions. He is no longer exploited by his boss but he is now exploiting himself. Then the day will arrive when he will provide an informal job for a fellow co-villager or a relative, passing on the exploitative work to the newcomer. He will also provide room and board, all within the framework of *community solidarity*.

The image of taking turns in first receiving and then providing community support is a much more favourable one to the image of former exploited workers becoming exploiting bosses. The idiom of solidarity provides a comfortable framework for Turkish immigrants to adapt to conditions of savage capitalism where, according to them, unacceptable levels of exploitation, inequality, individualism, and alienation exist. In some instances, the solidarity softens the exploitation; in others, solidarity is withering away:

> Work is work. It is more tiring here. It is emotionally tiring. When your mind is tired, automatically your body gets tired. There is nothing else. There is just work. Nothing else! You don't have any other chance. There is no '*encoyink*' [enjoying]. Just work... Back in the village, one could stop working whenever one wanted. It depended on how one felt. Here, there is no such opportunity. Here you don't have opportunity. You have to work. (#509)

Conclusion

Our findings indicate that most Turkish immigrants manage to regularize their immigration status over the years. A parallel regularization, however, is not observed concerning their labour market status. Only one third of our respondents stated that their National Insurance was being paid at the time of the interview. Another important finding is that there appears to be an overall upward mobility of Turkish immigrants which mainly resulted from their 'success' in the ethnic business niche. There is, nevertheless, considerable de-skilling for those immigrants who were in professional occupations and skilled trades in Turkey. Consequently, many of them ended up opening their own businesses in the ethnic business niche or taking voluntary work.

Our research also reveals a more flexible understanding of irregularity and solidarity. Turkish immigrants move in and out of irregularity and regularity, and some

hold regular and irregular employment simultaneously. They maintain a 'dual competence' which enables them to pursue fluid life and work strategies. Such attempts to manage immigration and labour market irregularity go hand in hand with flexible solidarity. Solidarity has become an ambivalent social process for many immigrants who rely on compatriots to help them in time 'make it' in their adopted country. Solidarity is based on the idea that extensive networks, the circulation of social capital and strong community ties will promote the best possible means for immigrant work strategies and ultimately for immigrant integration. This, however, goes hand in hand with exploitative forms of solidarity as immigrants develop new understandings and practices of 'solidarity' in their settlement process. One asylum seeker pointed out the resemblance between a refugee and a baby – 'to be a refugee is to be born again'. The gradual, but not necessarily complete, regularization of immigration status and labour market status of immigrants was compared to the pains of growing up. The Turkish immigrant's community networks were crucial as he developed life strategies and competencies.

In conclusion, immigrants construct cultural meanings around work strategies as part of a process of accommodation and resistance to dominant modes of power relations, resulting from immigrant agency. Our results indicate that immigrants move in and out of regularity, some with ease and others with difficulty; some out of choice and others through circumstance. Old compatriot transnational networks operate alongside emergent solidarity structures, operating as constructive and productive processes. Collective social relations within the compatriot community enable immigrants to accommodate various kinds of irregular status, yet the outcomes are positive for some while exploitative for others. The state can also undermine solidarity through state policies and regulations. The development of viable work strategies includes a process of accommodation and resistance to global and local labour market conditions, to the enabling and restricting state, and to the constructive and exploitative nature of social networks.

Acknowledgments

Notes

[1] There are various works on Turkish immigrants in the UK. For example, see Geaves's (2003) study on community formation among the British. Atay (2006) and Erbaş (1997, 2002, 2004) deal with issues of class, ethnicity, and gender in London. While Sloane and Gazioglu (1996) survey Turkish fathers and sons in London, Hoggart et al. (2000) concentrate on Turkish-speaking mothers. Two of the social services oriented studies are Cook et al.'s (2001) discussion of marriage and relationship support in North London and Enneli et al.'s (2005) detailed portrait of the Turkish and Kurdish youth. Pattison and Tavsanoglu (2002) alternatively, concentrate on identity issues of Kurdish, Turkish and Turkish Cypriot communities in North London. While Griffiths (2002) presents the case of London's Kurdish refugees, Kümbetoğlu and Karagöz (1998) focus on political refugee women who arrived in London during the 1980s. There is a rich array of popular works in Turkish that provide informative insight into immigrant life (e.g. Aydınoğlu 1996; Bilmez 2005; Makal 1965; Sevimli 1993; Tütengil 1985). The contributions of Ali Keskin to the *Birgün* daily deserve specific attention since they present weekly snapshots of London's Turkish immigrants since 2004. Finally, for comparison of Turkish communities across other European countries see Böcker (2004) and Thranhardt (2004).

[2] Cypriot Turks appear in the census data as people born in Cyprus. They are not included in our sample.

[3] Kurmanji is the most widely spoken Kurdish dialect in Turkey, particularly in the south-eastern part of the country. Although a vast majority of Kurmanji speakers in Turkey are Sunni, there is a small minority, as can be seen in the example of immigrants from Turkey in London, who are Alevi. See Committee for the Defence of Democratic Rights in Turkey (1989) for the political background of the Alevi immigration to Britain.

[4] See Erdemir (2005), Enneli et al. (2005: 38-43), and Griffiths (2002: 128-165) for an account of the complex ways in which Kurdish and Turkish identities are negotiated in London.

[5] The table of Hackney residents classified by country of birth are available as part of *the Hackney Facts and Figures - Census 2001* <http://www.map.hackney.gov.uk/Mapgallery/Census%202001/May%207%202003%20releases/Supplementary%20Tables/UV08_Country%20of%20Birth.xls> accessed on 1 April 2006.

[6] The Home Office Statistical Bulletins provide naturalization figures since 1984. For the latest available report, see Mensah (2006).

[7] WSN refers to the Work Strategies and Networks project.

[8] See Jordan, B. and Duvell, F. (2002) for specific ways in which Turkish immigrants/refugees accommodate these issues, e.g. pp.98-99.

[9] See Vasta (2006) for a more in-depth discussion of this process.

[10] Community solidarity has a very important spatial aspect since it is often based on relations within the immigrant neighbourhood, what Enneli et al. call 'Little Turkey' (2005: 2). For a critical discussion of the Turkish neighbourhood and solidarity in London, see Erdemir et al. (2004).

[11] Compatriot exploitation was a recurring theme for all our sample groups. Similarly Gryzmala-Kazlowska argues that 'Poles who have regular status in Belgium have been deriving substantial benefits from the presence of undocumented Polish workers' (2005: 687).

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