Living in an ethnically-mixed neighbourhood in Dubai: The Greens

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Abstract

Dubai is a unique global city where migrant workers/expatriates constitute more than 85 percent of its population. Contrary to the cities in Europe, immigrants in Dubai altogether do not only form the majority population but mostly live in ethnically-mixed neighbourhoods, mostly work for transnational organizations, and frequently use same shopping centres or restaurants. This unique characteristic of Dubai provides a highly relevant geographical space to study ‘Mixité’.

This paper presents the preliminary findings of a qualitative research project on transnational lives of expatriates in Dubai. The Greens, one of the oldest neighbourhoods in the new Dubai is selected for the study. The research project on which the paper is based aims to understand and explain the relevance of different factors in establishing a meaningful interaction among different ethnic/national/religious groups. Therefore-although the study is limited to The Greens- the analyses include the perceptions of expatriates about their neighbourhood but go beyond where they actually live in. Thus, the study also focuses on their daily lives and practices (both spatially and virtually) outside the neighbourhood to understand how and where do they develop and expand their social contacts, and also their willingness or reluctance to develop intercultural social contacts.
Introduction

Van Kempen (2010) has recently called attention saying that “without the qualitative descriptions of how, where and with whom individuals develop and maintain social contacts we would hardly know the relative importance of the residential environment for their lives”. This paper is a response to this call by providing explanations based on the analyses of the qualitative data obtained through in depth interviews from expatriates living in Dubai.

This paper also aims to extend the discussion of transnational living by deriving lenses from the existing research on minority ethnic/racial/religious groups to understand better lives, aspirations and perceptions of expatriates about the foreign environment.

The interview sample of expatriates is limited to households living in one residential area/neighbourhood in Dubai; The Greens. The qualitative data obtained, however, cover other sources of information, including interviews with contact persons, several expatriate forums on the internet and news reports about UAE, Dubai. Few numbers of existing studies on Dubai expatriates-regardless of whether they are directly linked to this study or not- have also been consulted to gain a better understanding on the population in question. Although the study is limited to The Greens- the analyses include the perceptions of expatriates about their neighbourhood but go beyond where they actually live in, the study also focuses on their daily lives and practices (both spatially and virtually) outside the neighbourhood to understand how and where do they develop and expand their social contacts, and also their willingness or reluctance to develop intercultural social contacts within or outside the neighbourhood.

More specifically, the study attempts to find answers for the following questions:

1. Which characteristics of expatriates affect the relative importance they attach to the neighbourhood they live in?
2. Which characteristics of neighbourhood affect expatriates’ satisfaction with the neighbourhood they live in?
3. How and where expatriates develop social contacts?
4. What is the role of ICT in developing and maintaining meaningful social contacts among expatriates?
5. Are there any specific factors affecting the attitudes of expatriates for socialising with others from a different ethnicity/nationality/religion, including the locals?

The objectives of the presented study are therefore; (a) to contribute neighbourhood studies with qualitative data on the meaning and role of social contacts (b) to have a better understanding of neighbourhood characteristics affecting social contacts among the inhabitants, and (c) to understand better the group in question i.e. "expatriates", with respect to the reasons behind their migration, future prospects and belongings.

Research questions that helped to shape this study are derived from the existing literature on ethnic/racial/religious groups with particular reference to their housing and social relations with other ethnic groups and nationals in the western world.

Theoretical Background

While a great deal of research has focused on expatriates it is surprising to see that as a concept it is still confusing. An expatriate is generally defined as a person who lives or works outside of his/ her own home country on a non-permanent basis (e.g., Gatti, 2009; McGinley, 2008). In other words, an expatriate is a guest worker in the country he/she is working, and expected to leave for his/her or
another country at the end of the contract signed with the firm/institution in the host country. In some cases, however, expatriates may decide to put down their roots in the countries they work (e.g. Harvey, 2010) like, for example, guest workers of European countries during the 1960s and 1970s (Ozuekren, and Van Kempen, 1997).

Nevertheless, expatriates are not considered as immigrants - at least by definition - but they may also form different ethnic communities living outside of their own countries like immigrants. Some authors tend to make the distinction between immigrant/foreigner and expatriate on the basis of skill levels where the latter is generally considered as high-skilled. There are cases, however, painting a completely different picture where many of the expatriates are low-skilled. The reason behind the employment of low-skilled expatriates is generally connected to the scarcity of local labour to meet the needs of expatriate or local communities. This may vary from construction works to service sectors or domestic works like employment of nannies or maids in expatriates'/natives’ homes. The usage of concepts of “expatriate” or “immigrant” also reveals a certain double standard as appears in the debates on the internet (e.g. Kureth, 2007) whether a person is an expatriate or immigrant depends not on the residency plans, but on the relative wealth of his/her native country. The proponents of this view claim that if the person is from a developed country he/she is automatically considered as an expatriate, particularly in Western Europe. The reason behind this interpretation is likely takes its roots from the fact that researchers mostly focused on skilled-migrant flows (e.g. Yeoeh, Huang and Willis, 2000, Linehan and Scullion 2004) or heavily discussed the role of high-skilled transnational elite/business class expatriates in global or globalizing cities (e.g. Sassen 2001; Beaverstock 2002), and accordingly both the middle and low-income expatriates have been missed in transnationalism debate.

Indeed, the focused debate on transnational elites has been extended towards the changing meaning of space at the age of ICT (information and communication technologies). The improvements in the transportation systems, and equally important the growing influences of the communication technologies on social relationships shed some doubts on the assumptions regarding the influential role of neighbourhoods on social relationships among their inhabitants (Waldinger 1987; Zelinsky and Lee, 1998; Wright and Ellis 2000; Van Kempen, 2010). Could neighbourhood or more generally physical space be still as important as was before while some people are living in a city but working in another one? Moreover, as there are now people who work at home taking the unique advantage of the developments in the ICT, how could we expect that the meaning of a neighbourhood would be the same for people who consume it differently? Could the influence of a neighbourhood be the same for living alone, households with or without children, and for elderly? Would the meaning of a neighbourhood for a native who live in his/her country and another one who is an immigrant still be so different in the age of ICT?

It may be true that that a community spirit may not exist in many of today’s’ neighbourhoods. But the fact remains that people still need housing to meet their requirements as human beings, a number of facilities in the place/neighbourhood where they live or at least nearby. This is also true for expatriates regardless of whether they form a transnational business class or middle class communities. As some authors have recently drawn our attention that (e.g. Ley 2004; Scott 2004; Conradson and Latham 2005) even the talented, highly-skilled highly-paid elite expatriates have to “survive" the rigors of everyday life experiences in a foreign city (Beaverstock 2008, Linehan and Scullion (2004). Similarly, the growing body of literature in the field of Human Resource Management which focuses on expatriates’ adjustments in their new working environments is clearly a response to their need of survival (e.g Scullionn and Brewster 2001; Waxin and Panaccio, 2005; Olsen and Martins, 2009; Van Oudenhoven, Mol and Van der Zee 2003), and housing is generally considered as only one of the elements of their adjustment processes. Moreover, by surfing on the internet, it can easily be seen that how expatriates ask advice from expat forums in several matters, including the question of where to live. There are even blogs prepared by expatriates to help the new comers by transferring their own experiences.
The fact remains however that we are still quite less informed where expatriates live in global cities, and there seems to be a rather weak interest among housing and urban researchers to study either the residential patterns of expatriates or their lives in the neighbourhoods they ‘temporarily ‘settled. What we know already is more or less limited to the fact that the number of luxurious residential developments has been rising in many places in order to host upper class transnational professionals. We do not know, however, in what types of neighbourhoods expatriates live in practice except a few cases studied (e.g. Glasze, 2006 and for a study on immigrants from industrialised countries see Aalbers and Deurloo, 2003). Accordingly, we do not know their social relationships with other nationalities including those of natives where they live.

The accumulated body of knowledge obtained from the studies on ethnic/ ‘racial’/religious groups or immigrants provides an important background for studies on housing of expatriates. This holds true also for neighbourhood studies which have been mostly designed to test the assumption that residential environment play an important role in shaping the relationships among its residents. Nonetheless this is not an easy task for a number of reasons.

First, as stated above, an expatriate is not necessarily an immigrant, implying that the differences need to be taken into account during the transfer of knowledge and/or experience.

Second, the societal and political expectations from immigrants and expatriates are not likely the same. A general expectation from immigrants is their integration to host societies (Bolt , Ozuekren and Phillips (2010). Accordingly the expectation from the academic studies on immigrants is their potential contribution to the integration of the groups in question to host countries by providing evidences for factors affecting the integration process positively or negatively. On the contrary, there is no reason for such an expectation from expatriates due to their expected temporary situations in the host countries. Nevertheless, we can assume that expatriates will also be tolerated by the host country according to the deviation allowed from the average culture including values, norms and behaviours. In other words, host country’s receptivity for expatriates as foreigners will be shaped by the existed degree of openness towards different cultures in the host country (Kim 1988. quoted from Haslberger 2005)

Third neither the existing studies on ethnic/’racial’/religious residential segregation nor neighbourhood studies are problem free. This, on its own, shows that there is a need to pay attention on problematic issues with these studies before deriving lens from these studies to understand expatriates better. Among the others, an important problem is that the majority of existing studies are quantitative, and due to the nature of data analyses are based on broadly based categories.

Quantitative studies without doubt added on our understanding of how different types of households consume the urban space by mapping rather different residential patterns for natives and immigrants in many countries. These studies showed that most ethnic minorities lived in neighbourhoods where co-ethnics also lived in large numbers. This finding prepared reasons for designing other studies to understand better the role of different factors behind the existing residential patterns like income differences, housing market conditions, and discrimination. Then, the possible outcomes of living in ethnically concentrated neighbourhoods were on the research agenda. In this context, studies on neighbourhood effects provided a number of assumptions to be tested by quantitative statistics (Friedrichs 1994). The results changed one study to another mainly due to the fact that they are mostly based on broadly defined data. Despite the small effects that could be proved, these studies with their assumptions among other reasons provided impetus especially for policy makers to pursue new policies for the development of residential areas for mixed-use particularly with respects to income, ethnicity and tenure (see for example Bolt, Phillips,and Van Kempen (2010). Thus by making an existing neighbourhood also attractive for natives, it has been assumed that some of the immigrants (people with lower incomes) would be replaced with those of higher incomes and accordingly the natives. Therefore it has been expected that, on the one hand some of the immigrants would have been...
re-distributed over the space and the created mixed-use would facilitate the integration of immigrants in the host society.

Moreover, although the integration of immigrants is a two-way process involving immigrants and natives, the expectation for a change has been heavily placed on immigrants. In this context, just a few studies focused on natives to define a number of factors that might be affecting their decisions for living in an ethnically-mixed neighbourhood (e.g. Drever and Clark 2006).

Neighbourhoods have also been placed very central in the studies of sociologists testing hypotheses derived from the social contact theory which, since the early work of Allport (1954), postulated that contacts lead to a reduction in prejudice and the development of more positive attitudes about other ethnic groups. As Connolly (2010 p. 172) referring to Pettigrew (1971) puts it “there appears to be general agreement among supporters of the Hypothesis that four core conditions are required. These are: (1) there must be equal status between the groups who meet; (2) they must be involved in a cooperative venture with common goals; (3) competition between the groups must be avoided; and (4) the contact must be given legitimacy by having institutional support”. Nevertheless, most researchers, particularly those looking inside the neighbourhood as a place where social contacts may develop, paid less attention on core conditions necessary for the success of contacts between different ethnic groups.

It is important to note here that the uniqueness of each individual has not also received its deserved attention in most of the studies testing hypotheses derived from the social contact theory despite the fact individual attributes may affect the formation of relationships with others. We may expect, for example, that a person’s tendency to approach others by making the first move, open-mindedness including unprejudiced attitudes towards others, his/her cultural empathy and interest to understand others who are different may increase the number of his/her friends (Brouwer and Boros 2010). Similarly, in most cases scholars limited the neighbourhood characteristics to a few number of variables such as type of tenure, share of ethnic groups etc. (e.g. Martinovic et. al. 2009; Vervoort et.al. 2010), despite the fact that there might be other factors at work shaping or affecting the formation of contacts. In this context, design characteristics of neighbourhoods, totally excluded from the analyses although most architects would think that availability of specific spaces for socialising would likely have important consequences for social contacts in a neighbourhood that, for example, a playground may give a chance to parents to getting acquainted with other parents. Similarly, organisation of the outdoor space and the relationships among different buildings may increase contact opportunities among the residents. Indeed, we may expect differences between low-rise and high-rise developments regarding their impacts on social relations. Another important but broadly defined, and accordingly missing issue from the neighbourhood studies is the meaning of social contact. Is it just an eye-contact implying greetings, chatting, visiting each other or providing support? Indeed, in some cases contacts can be superficial.

Altogether this background provided grounds for the formulation of the research questions stated in the introduction of this paper and for choosing qualitative research methods in a search for finding answers.

**A Field Study in Dubai: The Greens**

**UAE and Dubai**

United Arab Emirates have been receiving populations from all over the world since the mid 1980s. The facts that living standards and economic opportunities in the UAE are better than almost anywhere else in the Middle East and South Asia, have made the country an attractive destination for many transnational workers. Thus, many people from neighbouring countries came to UAE for better life opportunities. The UAE has also received very affluent expatriates mainly from developed
countries who are attracted to a very warm climate, scenic views (beaches, golf courses, man-made islands and lucrative housing tracts in Abu Dhabi and Dubai), the nation's comparably low cost of living and tax-free incentives for their business or residency in the UAE.

In the UAE, it is commonly said that the first contract workers came to build up the country, while the migrants of today maintain it (Suter 2005 p.4). Today an estimated 85 percent of its population is comprised of non-citizens meaning that UAE is one of the world's highest percentages of foreign-born in any nation. The UAE's expatriate population was 7.266 million in mid-2009, just before the economic meltdown happened, which rose to 7.31 million in mid-2010, showing an increase of 49,458 despite the fact that thousands of jobs were eaten up by the economic crisis (UAE interact 2011).

Transnational workers in the UAE are considered temporary migrants, and the Emirati citizenship is not offered to foreigners no matter the length of residence in this country.

Dubai, one of the seven states making up the UAE, has been built very fast and today it is one of the most populated city in the country with an approximately 1.8 million people. It has emerged as a global city, and a business hub during the last twenty years. The Dubai's economy was built not on oil revenues alone but tourism, real estate, and financial services. Central to this planned urban growth is the construction of a series of mega-projects that sometimes described as 'cities within the city' (Kubat et al.2009 ). However, Dubai's property market experienced a major deterioration in 2008 and 2009 as a result of the worldwide economic downturn following the financial crisis of 2007-2010. Rents fell by 50% in 2009. In early 2009, it was reported that half of all construction projects in the UAE, worth US $335 billion, had been delayed or cancelled (Bloch 2010). Recent data from Dubai Statistics Centre (DSC) is in stark contrast with earlier estimates by external agencies that Dubai's population would shrink as the emirate's real estate and construction sectors suffered a slowdown. However, some respondents still claim that the increasing affordability and availability of residential accommodation in Dubai might mean that the population has continued to swell.

About 168 000 nationals live in Dubai according to the recent available data from the DCS meaning that expatriates take up more than 90 percent share in this city. This makes Dubai a highly unique city where the natives comprise only the minority population in their own city. This also makes Dubai a unique city to study the concept of ‘Mixité’, and to search answers for our research questions.

Renting was the only option for foreigners working in Dubai until 2002, when they were allowed to own property on freehold ownership. The purchase of property on freehold basis means that the property will be registered in the owner's name for life, and the owner has the right to sell, lease or rent his/her property at their his/her discretion. Property owners and their immediate family will also obtain renewable Dubai residence visas for life, which can cost Dhs. 5,000 per person. Freehold property in Dubai is limited to some areas in Bur Dubai, closest to the end of Dubai, where Dubai connects with Abu Dabi. Some of these areas include Sheikh Zayed Road, Jumeirah, Jebel Ali, and Dubailand. (Figure1).
As Data are not accessible in Dubai even for academic researchers we are not in a position to illustrate the distribution of foreigners by type of tenure. However, as our informants report many foreigners are still in rental tenure although no relevant data exist about the distribution of the housing investments by nationalities. For similar reasons, we have no possibility to draw a map showing how ethnic groups are distributed over the city. Nevertheless, as our informants report and the information obtained from various expatriate forums shows, foreigners and Nationals of UAE live in different neighbourhoods. Indeed, the both groups see each other only in shopping malls and governmental offices where nationals work. It is worth to note here that Dubai is probably the only city in the world, where the locals can hardly use their own language (Arabic) even in shopping as sales personnel are mostly foreigners and speak English. In this context schools are also segregated except universities where it is possible to see more nationals. As we understand the Nationals of Dubai are quite traditional and would like to preserve their own culture which shows by their tendency to live in less ethnically-mixed communities.

The Greens

The Greens, where we have carried out the field study, is the first freehold project completed in Dubai, comprising 36 buildings set over 65 acres. It is located next to Emirates Golf Club, close to Dubai Media and Internet Cities, Dubai Marina, American University of Dubai and Sheikh Zayed Road (Figure 2). The complex has 3,500 residential units and four office buildings. The Greens is part of the Emirates Living Community which consists of six freehold sub developments. Apartments at the Greens are set in four residential buildings positioned to enclose a private courtyard for all residents to enjoy with swimming pool, play ground, gym, basketball court and barbecue areas. There are walking paths between the buildings, a unique characteristic which is missing in most other residential developments in Dubai.

The Greens Apartments are available as studio, one, two and three bedrooms, with the floor space ranging from 424 to 1060 square feet, providing alternatives to different types of households. What makes particularly different the Greens from other residential developments in Dubai is the fact that The Greens has no high-rise buildings as most of the apartment blocks have four to seven floors. The complex also includes 230 serviced apartments in another building called Nuran Greens residences.
This building generally provides a temporary accommodation for new arrivals before they settled in Dubai.

Figure 2. The Greens: General view and the inner courtyard

The complex also has a shopping centre which can be reached in only a 5 or 10 minute walk from any of the buildings in the area and offers a supermarket, restaurants, coffee shops, dry cleaners, bookstore, DVD rental and a beauty salon. As we have observed, the Greens is now well established and gives signs of a community feel to the neighbourhood. Cafes comes alive in the evenings and weekends, while children from different nationalities meet each other at the play grounds at the private courtyards of the each four buildings.

Figure 3. The Greens and neighbouring developments
The Greens is Emaar's fastest selling development, as it implemented a rent-to-own scheme, where tenants had the option of buying their homes after a rental period of two years, with 50% of the rental payment used as a down payment on the property. As our informants report it was difficult to find a vacant apartment in the Greens during the 2007s and 2008s. And equally important rents were higher than today even if one finds an apartment to rent. The rapid increase in the number of new residential units and the economic crises prepared reasons for dropping rents dramatically in a quite short period of time. According to our informants, some households left the Greens for living in villas which became affordable for them following the changes in the housing market. The vacancies they left behind helped others to find affordable apartments to rent in the Greens. This might mean that the population structure has been also changed in our study area during the last years. Despite the fact that income data are not accessible we can assume that people who could be considered middle-income in their native countries now live in the Greens.

We have no data to report here about the ethnic composition of the neighbourhood. What we could say here is mainly based on our field observations and information obtained from our informants. As we have reported earlier the neighbourhood population lacks UAE citizens but is a mixture of quite a large number of different ethnic groups from all continents. Indians, not only from India but also from the UK and Canada seem a group having a relatively large number. The other quite easily visible groups are from the Middle Eastern Countries, UK, the Netherlands, Turkey, Australia, South Africa, Pakistan, Egypt and Palestine. According to our informants they are all well educated and mostly employed by the IT companies nearby.

The Interview Sample

The interview sample has been shaped by paying attention to cover different types of households from different countries as well as to include both females and males living in the Greens. All interviews are made in English and are recorded to be able to make a content analysis later. It was a good chance for the study that one of authors- Ela Oney Yazici- has also been living in the Greens for one year, and made the interviews. The other authors have also visited the area and listened to the records of interviews to gain insight for the follow up analyses.

The interview sample covered 23 individuals from 14 countries (Table 1). Their stay in Dubai ranged between 6 months and 5 years with an exception of a Palestinian who has been living in Dubai for 30 years. She was a Palestinian holding a Lebanon citizenship and had no chance to go to Palestine.

Most of the individuals interviewed were below 40 years old confirming the findings of earlier studies on transnational migrants that the population in question was rather young. All individuals interviewed were high skilled mostly having MSc degrees, including those of females who were not employed at the time of interviews. The interviews showed that they not all but many lost or took a break of their existing jobs in their native countries when they decided to follow their husbands to Dubai. Since their husbands earned much more in Dubai, and in most cases, the firms their husbands work for provided several advantages also for their children they decided to raise their children in better conditions and in many cases gave birth to a second or a third child.

"After moving in Dubai I had my first daughter, and then the second one. I want a third child soon....We love the life in Dubai. The weather is fine, kids can play out during the winter like in Australia they are able to swim all year long...” Case 16, Australian

“I was working before we came to Dubai. But since we came here I’ve decided I’ll stay at home. I’m taking a little break. I’m home schooling my son, 4,5 years old...” Case 20, Finnish
But this does not to say that all previously working women became housewives in Dubai. It is likely that native English speakers had more chances to find a job in Dubai.

“First of all my wife can work here. She already found a position as I said.. I thought Middle East was not safe to live but after seeing here I changed my mind. It is all convenient...”
Case 23, British

Table 1. Main characteristics of the interview sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case No</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Household Type</th>
<th>Working Status</th>
<th>Years in Dubai</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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<td>35</td>
<td>Married with one child</td>
<td>Not working</td>
<td>2 years</td>
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<td>1 year</td>
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<td>38</td>
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<td>Working</td>
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<tr>
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<td>33</td>
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<td>Working</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
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<td>Married with one child</td>
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<td>2 years</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<td>27</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Not working</td>
<td>6 months</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Working</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Working</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
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<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
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<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>32</td>
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<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Married, no child</td>
<td>Working</td>
<td>2.5 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Interview Study

Reasons for working in Dubai and future prospects

‘Why people migrate?’ is a question researchers have been trying to a answer since long. There are indeed a number theories developed to explain the reasons for migration.

In our case the main factor shaping their decisions to work abroad was economic and all of them earning more than they could in their native countries. They mostly also had additional job-tied allowances to cover certain expenses like their housing costs –rents-, cars, health insurances and school fees of their children. In most cases their contracts also included their relocation cost to and back from Dubai. Regardless of whether from which country they are; they all had better and indeed luxurious living conditions in Dubai. They found affordable to send their children to private swimming courses, having live-in maids, playing golf or diving in the Arabian Gulf. In addition, their earnings were enabling them to save for their future life.
“Because you are earning better (laughs)... I think it is the main reason. And for us, we are (her husband and herself) in the construction industry..... here projects are bigger.... My husbands and my backgrounds are mostly in planning and cost control. In big projects you have the chance to work as a planning and cost control engineer...”

Case 1, Turkish

“Monetary reasons as well as looking for different experiences... It wasn’t me to decide where to go... My company offered me Dubai... It is all convenient... You don’t suffer from heavy traffic... We are enjoying the weather, which you cannot find back in London.... The sun and the beach... I know that it is hot during the summer time, but it is always possible to take a break and visit different places during these times... Other than, we can afford a better living in here... Being an expat gives you more opportunities, like I can go to diving whenever I want... Also the golf courses are perfect... Things like this... One more thing: I wished there were more theatres, museums etc. which we could enjoy... But these kinds of things take time... Dubai is a new city... This is the missing part.”. Case 22, British

For some of them it was not an unexpected development to receive an offer to work in Dubai as she/he had been working for a global company being aware of that this might have been the case one day. The interviewees in this group perceived this offer as a promotion. Indeed, many of the respondents perceived working in Dubai as an important step in their careers not only because of having better living conditions but for gaining an international experience.

“I wanted to have more international exposure....Dubai because I already had China and India...all multinational companies where I prefer to work have headquarters in Dubai...I do not think that I’d like go back to India. Dubai, I’d like to continue for another 3 to 4 years. Then if I’ve to move, I’ve move towards west, Europe or America....” Case 3, Indian

Some of them had also quite specific reasons for living and working in Dubai like a female interviewee who had almost escaped from India as it was too conservative. On the contrary, another woman had no option to live in her own country she had never been to.

“I wanted to be home, close to home, and not living in such a conservative society which India is like. You know as a single woman, if you’re not married until 30, like, it's an issue. Dubai is a mix of both the cultures, Europe and Asia, you really have this kind of life you want for yourself, safe, which is the most important thing, and at the same time you end up with meeting people from such a diverse nationalities, it's really nice, I love the atmosphere and I'm close to home at the end of the day...” Case 15, Indian

“I’m 33 years old, married, having 3 kids. I’ve been in UAE for 30 years, when I got married, I came to Dubai, let’s say 18 years in Abu Dhabi, 12 years in Dubai. I’m Palestinian, my mum is Palestinian also but her family lives in Syria, and my parents were in Algeria, my dad was an engineer there, so when my mum was pregnant, she had delivered us in Syria. Then after they delivered me they came to Abu Dhabi, my father came for a very famous oil company in Abu Dhabi, back 30 years ago, they were asking a lot of Arab engineers, so he applied, and we came to Abu Dhabi. I don’t know if you know how Abu Dhabi was, nothing. It was little bit growing.....”

Case 13, Palestinian woman holding Jordanian passport

Some of the interviewees mostly from Asian or Middle Eastern countries implied the geographical proximity of Dubai since they prefer working in a foreign country which is close to their home. Besides some of them indicated their willingness to work in a Muslim country.
“So as I said, I got this option, it’s a Muslim country, so I definitely opted for that. It’s much closer to my homeland (Pakistan); I can go back at any convenient time.” Case 6, Pakistani

“Here it’s close to my country (Lebanon); I can go home within 3 hours.” Case 9, Lebanese

“And Dubai is connected to my place; at least there are 2 flights daily… (.) It’s just like, even if I make up my mind today to go to my place, I can go in the evening. And seats are always there, well attached. And you must have seen around, there are a lot of South Indians around, so we don’t feel like we’re missing our home. So all these combined made us to relocate to Dubai. Because previously I was in the north of India, so again with the same company but north of India, and from north to my place, it’s like 3 hours, and then I’ve to change 2 flights. Plus it’s not necessarily that I’m going to get a ticket. So in Dubai, even if it’s different country, it’s faster to go back. All you need is your passport, that’s it, nothing else.” Case 11, Indian

It is worth underlying that without the pressure of the relatives or the political environment back in their home country, expatriates from different political backgrounds- sometimes with mixed marriages- have a chance to live in a peaceful environment in Dubai.

“... here we’ve two ladies from Lebanon, they come from Sunni and Shea background, in their country, they’re fighting, here, they’re friends, so you don’t know who is who, and when you say a comment like “yes we like Nasrullah” for example, she turned yellow, because she’s a Sunni. ... They can (be friends here) because there is no pressure, the pressure is on. Because they know each other, and if you have a friend from a different political view, or, I don’t know what to call them, party, it’ll backfire at you. You’ll be considered a traitor…. (…) My Tunisian friend marries a Libyan, they met in Malta when they were studying, and they got married, even though she’s a Christian, and he’s a Muslim. When they went back to Tunisia of course; her family did not accept him, because he’s a Muslim. And she was treated like a traitor, by her own people, because her people fought war against Libyans, again, she was looking for a country that tolerates mixed marriages. And that’s why she chose Dubai.. (…)Dubai is tolerant with that, and the absence of the relatives, relatives, they create the pressure.” Case 21, Jordanian

Detailed analysis on data showed that the interviewees in the sample did not form a homogenous group from the standpoint of their future prospects. We found mainly four groups as the following:

Globals: UAE was not the first foreign country they lived in for majority of the people interviewed. Some of them had short term employment on project basis in several countries before they came to Dubai. Some of them had a previous experience of working in a number of countries for one year or more. They had no plans to return their home countries but were open to new proposals for living and working in other countries in the future. They were generally not interested in politics, and seemed as if they did not belong anywhere.

Potential Globals: UAE was the first foreign country they worked, and they enjoyed their experience. They all had the potential to become globals if they received another proposal for working in another country. They had no clear plans for returning their own countries and/or a defined amount of money expected to be saved by working abroad.

Temporary Globals: UAE was the first foreign country they worked, and they enjoyed their experience similar to interviewees in potential globalists group. They were in Dubai to earn more to guarantee their future life expectations in their own countries and/or to have a job as they could not find appropriate jobs in their home countries. They could
have been work in another country if they lost their existing jobs but this could still be temporary. They were rooted in their home countries.

**Potential Immigrants:** They were in Dubai because they were not happy about their own countries or they had no chance to live there. Some of them would like to settle in Dubai if existing laws and regulations permitted them to become citizens. For some of them employment in Dubai was expected to increase their possibilities in a third country in the Western World where they could raise their children in better conditions for their future life.

We could not find any differences among the individuals forming the first three groups in the sample with respect to ethnicity or religion. Potential immigrants however were mostly from the developing countries.

Nevertheless, the analysis of the interviews also reveals that mixed-marriages existed particularly among the *Globals*, and their long-term future plans included but not limited to settle in one of the two countries, meaning that some of them could have been considered as *Potential Immigrants* in the long-term.

“I worked for three years at the sales department of an electronics company. After completed my post graduate studies I was offered a position in Sydney, moved there and met my prospective wife. We lived there three more years. When decided to get married, I was offered a promotion. We accepted the package, relocated in Dubai, got married on the way, in Hong Kong...At the end we are planning to run a bed and breakfast place, on the Mediterranean cost of somewhere, may be in Turkey?...It is like a dream for us.” Case 23, British

We could not similarly find any differences among the globals, potential globals, temporary globals and prospective immigrants in our sample with respect to their tenure patterns (Table 2). As the data illustrates they were mostly tenants of landlords who were from several countries. According to our interviewees, some of the landlords were also living in the Greens or in another neighbourhood while some of them were not living in Dubai. Tenant interviewees mostly stated that they had no reason to invest in a country without having a chance of holding its citizenship. Having said that, two of the interviewees own the apartments that they live in, who either does not have any other chance to invest in another country (Case 13) or find it more profitable to invest in a house in Dubai rather than in his country (Case 11).

“Because I can’t buy a house anywhere else, and we’ve been here all our life and we want to stay here, so when this decision came, we were one of the people who said, yes we’ve to do this. But we were very scared because it wasn’t clear and they gave us this thing if you know no permanent visa, it’s only 90 years, and we said okay, who’ll live for 90 years, let’s do it. We won’t give it to our kids, okay, let’s see what happens, we’ve to buy.” Case 13, Palestinian

“*The main reason was, rather than giving your allowance to the rent, we wanted to invest something on our own, and then stay there. Because during those days, the house rates were also increasing drastically, rents were also high. Yes. And not only that, the interest (rate) was also 7%. But in India it's 14%.*” Case 11, Indian

Detailed analysis of the qualitative data also showed that the interviewees did not also form a homogenous group from the standpoints of income and their life standards. In this context, we obtained adequate evidence implying that native English speakers and people who are educated in Western World had a better position on the labour market with respect to income and/or advantages their contract package covered. Some interviewees stated many firms in Dubai tend to replace their western employees from the Western World with their more or less counterparts from developing countries to cut their costs due to the economic crisis.
“We will be moving back to Australia in three weeks time... Because of my husband’s position. They offered him a new position in Australia, and they kindly asked him to move back. I think our cost is not acceptable anymore. They hired a new HR manager, I think, from India. A talented guy still, but asking less money...” Case 16, Australian

“Why we prefer sometimes (moving to) Canada, because here in Dubai they prefer the western educated, so if we have the chance to give our children this western education, their life will be much easier than mine and my husband’s. They can find job easily, they can find anything easily. So this is what we’re thinking. For my children, their future will be easier if they have Canada education and passport. Because we see yani, if you apply for a job, they prefer western educated.” Case 9, Lebanese

Qualitative data we obtained and the small sample size do not allow drawing conclusions whether interviewees’ varied positions on the labour market are reflected in their housing conditions or not. However, Table 2 shows that some of the households living in The Greens could clearly be classified as overcrowded households (Case 12 and Case 13). It is interesting to note here that they had live-in maids, even the maids slipping in the kitchen were happy as their lives were much better than their previous lives.

The study also reveals that one year ago The Greens had a more balanced structure with respects to both income and ethnicity. Rapid drop in rents due to the Global economic crisis and also to the vacancies in the housing stock due to the production of housing more than need, enabled some of the westerners to move in other residential areas while the apartments they left behind rapidly filled by mostly those of Middle Easterners. Accordingly, as will be elaborated in the next part of the paper, we found in the neighbourhood studied preliminary signs of ‘white flight’ drawing a highly similar picture to immigrant neighbourhoods in Western Europe.

Table 2: Interviewees by main housing characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case No</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Households Size</th>
<th>Apartment type</th>
<th>Tenure</th>
<th>Landlord</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>2+1 kid</td>
<td>1+2 bedrooms + Study Room</td>
<td>Tenant</td>
<td>British-Indian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>2+1 kid</td>
<td>1+2 bedrooms</td>
<td>Tenant</td>
<td>Indian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 + 1 bedroom</td>
<td>Tenant</td>
<td>Indian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>2 + 2 kids + maid</td>
<td>1+2 bedrooms + Study Room</td>
<td>Tenant</td>
<td>Emirati</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Romanian</td>
<td>2+1 kid</td>
<td>1 + 1 bedroom</td>
<td>Tenant</td>
<td>Iranian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 + 1 bedroom</td>
<td>Tenant</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>South African</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 + 1 bedroom</td>
<td>Tenant</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Finnish</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1 + 1 bedroom</td>
<td>Tenant</td>
<td>Saudi Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Lebanese</td>
<td>2 + 2 kids + maid</td>
<td>1+2 bedrooms + Study Room</td>
<td>Tenant</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>2 + 2 kids</td>
<td>1+2 bedrooms</td>
<td>Tenant</td>
<td>British Lebanese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>2+1 kid</td>
<td>1+2 bedrooms + Study Room</td>
<td>Owner</td>
<td>Afghani</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Egyptian</td>
<td>2 + 2 kids + maid</td>
<td>1 + 1 bedroom</td>
<td>Tenant</td>
<td>Afghani</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Living in the Greens and Social Contacts

It was interesting to learn that almost all interviewees were quite satisfied of living in the Greens. The analysis pointed out the Architectural characteristics of the neighbourhood as the most important factor influencing their satisfaction. It was not about the appearance of buildings or the quality of finishings but was the organisation of communal space among the buildings, its location and easily accessible amenities nearby. Equally important the buildings were not high rise like in many other residential developments in Dubai. We are not able to report all comments about the Greens due to space restrictions; however, the following selection may help us to explain their satisfaction with their own wordings better.

“As far as infrastructure is concerned, the roads, the buildings, and the way it's structured, it's way ahead of India. I love living here.. I don't like high rise buildings, you know. You miss out on the greenery, somehow I feel suffocated on living very high rise buildings, you just don't have any access to people. Greens is like, it's a huge villa, many people are living at the same house. And the best part is like every 4 buildings have this common area, (courtyard), it's very nice. I don't have family here, I live alone but I have my boyfriend who lives in Greens as well. It's really nice, you just come and sit next to the pool and you talk to people, almost around the same age, there are lots of single people living as well. We meet, we do barbeques together…” Case 15, Indian

“...when we were living in Jumeriah Lakes Towers, we were on 26th floor, and I was not happy living that high... Coming to Springs, (a villa neighbourhood) ok you have a private garden but you cannot see anybody. Because, you are separated with a high garden wall... Here in Greens, you can see your inner play ground (mentioning the courtyard in the middle of the building groups) You can interact with other people... You can see other children playing... or somebody is going, somebody is coming... So you are attracted with the social life... I prefer that…” Case 1, Turkish

“(...the reason why I like this community is the play ground, you meet a lot of people, you can socialise with people.” Case 20, Finnish
“...Life is easy for kids in Greens. It is nice to stay, easy to socialise. Everything is at walking distance, shops, some leisure, parks, playground. It is convenient.” Case 17, German

“The layout is very comfortable and very easy for the kids to go around. I see them from every place and I think some people take it as disadvantage, that all the balconies are open and you can see other neighbours, but you can see also your kids playing, so I feel no, it’s not a disadvantage. ... Because everyone else, they have the right also, to see the layout, and to see their kids, and enjoy the sun and the weather... (...) (I don’t meet with new people) Unless I meet someone in downstairs (play ground) in Greens, because Greens is a small city by itself, not even a village, it’s a city, every now and then new comers are coming from different cultures. I’ve Indian friends, Pakistani friends, Turkish friends; I’ve British, Australian…” Case 21, Jordanian

Some of the interviewees, especially living alone or child-free households would likely prefer to live in high rise buildings but they were still satisfied of living in the Greens as their following explanations imply:

“Greens is a place where you feel you’re home and safe... We are using the pool and gym free of charge where we used to pay for them in JBR (Skyscraper area). Also no parking problem... Sometimes it is a little bit noisy when all kids are in the play ground, but other than that it is fine... Also the market area is a place where you can find anything you need... And we love jogging next to the small lake...” Case 22, British

“... I looked at to some other places like Jumeirah Beach, but I decided on the Greens because I liked the scale of the Greens. The community, I like this. The facilities in the Greens are good... There’s a small shopping centre there, but it’s convenient... It’s very pleasant that I walk in the park connecting Greens ponds to the buildings. You can see a lot of not only people from various countries but also from various ages, from very small children to the old people. So this is good. It shows this; there is a healthy mix of people in this area. ...you feel like you want to go outside, if the weather is not too hot...” Case 7, South African

Our analysis show that neighbourhood still matters not only for households with children also for the other types of households, and their satisfaction of the neighbourhood is not only related to the facilities or amenities provided but also connected to its Architectural characteristics. Indeed, the latter seems as an important factor shaping social relations towards building a community spirit in the neighbourhood.

The play ground in the inner courtyard was the place especially for mothers in the sample. They all reported that they expanded their social contacts from different nationalities during hours they were in the playground with their children. As the interviewees reported, the community room in the courtyard was another place for meeting especially for birthday parties of children from different nationalities. Indeed the community room was a place for farewell parties organised for women who leave the Dubai, like the one for our Case 16, who left the Greens three weeks after the interviews for Australia.

Market and/or cafes at the centre were other areas where people learned about each other. For mothers schools were another place for expanding their social networks. Some of them met other people from their own countries at parties organised by embassies. We found that they all used internet but not to make new friends. It was a basic tool used to connect with their families, friends and learn about Dubai and/or their native countries. Some of the interviewees knew some other people living in the Greens from their job places.
"As such, I've some colleagues from previous companies. And when I was working in China, I had some friends, who are here now; Chinese guys. We meet sometimes, once in a every 2-3 months, they are not in Greens, they're in Dubai but. In Greens, other than colleagues, I've not other friends. So all my colleagues are my friends." Case 3, Indian

"In Greens, as I said, I’m lonely kind of a guy, you’ll be disappointed to hear, I’m not a social guy at all, and the amount of socialism I’ve right now, on 6th of April 2011, because I’m in Dubai. And that happened because the people I used to work along, or get along, in 2006-2007 years back in Pakistan are no more here, I met new people altogether here in my new company, all from different nationalities, and I tend to sit with them and talk about, their culture, my culture, and suddenly I came to know that it’s happening, I can work alone with different people also. I can get along; I can sit and spend some time with them also, especially with the people from some other nationalities.... (...) I think nine people I know already (from Pakistan), living in Greens, and I meet them very often. Five or six of them are already working with us in the same company." Case 6, Pakistani

"Most of the people that work with me. We’re a lot of people living in Greens (from the same company); from Pakistan, from India, from Germany, there are quite a few people living in Greens. This is what I’m saying, outside of work environment, I know very little, almost no people outside the work environment. Those (colleagues) are the people which I’ll associate after work also, socialize." Case 7, South African

"Sometimes, we invite people for barbeque here on Fridays. Otherwise we are home... (...) Some of them are my friends from work or some of them from Egypt. Some from my husbands work, also I know their wives… They come here for barbeque… " Case 12, Egyptian

Interviewees mostly reported that they knew around three households living in the same building like the following person from the UK;

“We have two British close friends living in Dubai, they are also my classmates. We frequently spend the weekends together..... Other? We have an Indian neighbour living next door. We met them in the parking area. We invited them for dinner and that is it... Also I met a Romanian guy when I was playing basketball with my colleagues in the courtyard... He joined the match. Now every Saturday we are playing together...” Case 23, British

Nevertheless, we have noticed that people were coming together in the market area, at the playground but other than these people seemed that they preferred people from their own cultures. In depth interviews help us to report here a number of different opinions about this. Let us start with opinions of males;

“….Basically the thing is related to multiple things. We may live in one (same) floor, but we mainly have different timings. May be we’ve come from different industries, people are occupied. But whenever we’ve a chance like we know who’s parking next to me, whenever we’ve a chance to say hello to each other, we normally do that. So whether it’s parking, lift, we know who’s living where. That’s something we recognize each other. Now going further, is something not happening for both the sides…” Case 10, Indian
“...I’d say it depends on the topic of discussion and the place. It depends on what agenda we’re having together, and it depends on where we are... If it’s happening in clubs or discos kind of stuff, so that’s not my place. I’d not go with somebody there. I don’t drink, so I’ll not go with somebody who drinks. So I’m around with the people who are closer to my values.” Case 6, Pakistani

“...Only one Lebanese guy, we sometimes invite him for barbeque... And also we have a South African couple, both of them are colleagues. We go out for dinner or drink sometimes... You know, with Muslim people you cannot do this... We face an alcohol problem... Almost all of the places we prefer to go serve alcohol... We cannot invite them to this kind of places... And we don’t want to limit ourselves in our spare times...” Case 22, British

The first quotation is from a male interviewee, who himself does not clearly know why inter-ethnic friendships are difficult, or who does not mention religion as a factor. The other two examples, however, clearly show that the differences in religion can be an important factor limiting inter-friendships.

We have received somewhat wider explanations from some of the female interviewees implying that barriers limiting the development of inter-ethnic friendships included but not limited to the difference in religion. For example, we have noticed that all ‘westerners’ were ‘foreigners’ among some of the Muslim women from the Middle Eastern countries despite the fact that they were not also ‘locals’. An in-depth conversation with one of them helped us to clarify the issue as follows:

“...We use the word foreigners for Christians (westerners). Arabic people, I feel like we’re all brothers, but foreigners, they’re different, but again their culture is different, their food is different, but for me I don’t know, they’re not foreigners...” Case 21, Jordanian

It is interesting to note here that what she told about the behavioural difference was also an important issue for another woman from Germany, who disliked China for similar reasons:

“...We could go back to China but we didn’t want...When I was there (in China) it was ok but difficult. But when D (her daughter) was come (born) it was difficult with the people. It was all pollution... ... And we were like aliens... It was a little bit weird. Chinese people are very friendly but when coming to children, they are touching; they
come closer... You know they don’t keep space... Now I don’t want to go back for that reason, for pollution, too far from Germany...” Case 17, Germany

The same woman had a few more opinions which helped us to understand that behavioural distance could cover issues beyond keeping the space between an adult and a child. Of one can be understood from the following complaint:

“...Actually I am not specifically interested in meeting German people. Language is no problem. I don’t even notice that this people are from this country and this one from that... All people are here; we become a group and become friends... We know the stories...But it was even better, for me it was better... I had three girl friends (Europeans) and they moved to ....(...) ...Arabic speaking people are good and they are very close... I speak to them and I join them... But sometimes you see them talking in Arabic and I cannot understand Arabic. When I speak German, when somebody comes speaking any other language, I start to speak English. It is a little bit different with them.” Case 17, Germany

Our field observations confirm what the German interviewee complains about as when Arabic speaking women gathered they did choose speaking in their native languages, which makes language a barrier for developing social contact with people from other countries who cannot speak Arabic.

Another issue regarding behavioural differences points out the differences in the use of common spaces. Indeed interviews show that this could be an important reason for leaving a neighbourhood for another one. The following quotation is an example to this:

“ When we moved to Discovery Gardens, it was a very nice place but some people didn’t know how to keep the maintenance, residents, it was garbage almost everywhere, people didn’t throw the garbage to the chute, they were coming outside and throwing in the building, and I preferred to go, and all the illuminators were down, nothing. When we had arrived, it was beautiful, buildings were empty, and since people started moving... In Greens...of course, I see more Europeans, a lot of white people, but also Indians, because they’re everywhere. The reason why I left, I’m not racist, I’m not, but that is the reason why I left Discovery Gardens, because of them...I don’t hate them, I’m very social, some of them are very nice, they’re talking nice, they’ve a good character, but some of them, I don’t know what their problem, how they can live in this mess they’re doing....” Case 5, Romanian

The findings of this study indicate that language, religion and behavioural differences were barriers limiting the possibilities to develop close friendships among the people from different nationalities even for the women who frequently meet at the play ground. This does not to say that the level of their English was inadequate to develop close friendships with people from other nationalities but to point out the reality we found that not all but many preferred speaking in their native languages and also to be together with people- in their private lives- at least with those close to their culture.

Altogether this also shows that the Greens is a neighbourhood where people from different countries live next to each other, respect to each other, now and then chat or come together but it hard to say that a multicultural social life exists as one of our interviewees explains as follows:

“Indians, Middle Eastern people, British, Europeans... But I think it doesn’t matter... I mean if you have friends from different nationalities and come together for dinner or garden parties let’s say, then you have a multicultural social life... But if not it is not different than living in Turkey, other than speaking in English in the market place, or ordering your food in another language... But here, since everybody is expat, I think
people are more kind and open to each other.... and nobody is at their home country, so life is easier...” Case 1, Turkish

**Concluding Remarks**

At this stage it may be useful to recall the main objectives of the study;

1. Which characteristics of expatriates affect the relative importance they attach to the neighbourhood they live in?
2. Which characteristics of neighbourhood affect expatriates’ satisfaction with the neighbourhood they live in?
3. How and where expatriates develop social contacts?
4. What is the role of ICT in developing and maintaining meaningful social contacts among expatriates?
5. Are there any specific factors affecting the attitudes of expatriates for socialising with others from a different ethnicity/nationality/religion, including the locals?

With these objectives in mind, a large amount of qualitative data has been collected, analysed and presented. We have also left, however, some of the data collected and analysed outside of this paper due to space restrictions, like the use of ICT and daily lives of expatriates. Nevertheless, impacts of data and analyses left outside have also been considered thoroughly at the organisation of this paper.

Concerning the first question we saw that *household type* is a major characteristic affecting the relative importance they attach to the neighbourhood they live in. In this context we found that neighbourhood still matters for everyone but particularly for households with small children regardless of whether where they came from.

Analyses for the second question show that *household type* is also a major determinant of neighbourhood characteristics affecting expatriates’ satisfaction with the neighbourhood they live in despite the fact that they have some common concerns regardless of ethnicity and household type; among which. the location of neighbourhood vis a vis the area they work, daily shopping facilities, green areas for jogging, facilities for gym and swimming can be listed. For households with small children, particularly for not-working mums playground was significantly important for socialising of their children and also developing and expanding their own social contacts, again for regardless of whether which country they came.

Answers we found to the second question also show that *Architectural characteristics* of the neighbourhood play an important role not only households satisfaction of the neighbourhood they live in but also for developing social contacts within the neighbourhood. In this context, it seems that only some of the living alone or households without small children can be satisfied of living in high-rise housing and/or sky scrapers. The rest however, would like to live in not only low-rise buildings but also in buildings designed in a way that they can have visual contacts with their children as well as their neighbours using the common areas of the neighbourhood from their own apartments.

Answers we found to the second question altogether, confirming our earlier arguments, implies that *Architectural characteristics* of neighbourhoods should be taken into account also in quantitative studies comparing different neighbourhoods from the standpoint of social contacts. It is important to note here that this is valid for all housing types including multi-family buildings and villas as concerning the latter we have already found that a villa could not be the most preferred type of housing especially for households with children because villas, as in the Dubai case, surrounded by high garden walls despite the privacy they provided were limiting social contacts within the neighbourhood.
Regarding our third and fourth questions our analyses reveal that the neighbourhood still matters in developing inter-ethnic social contacts especially for both mothers and their children. As we have already illustrated this was true for all of the interviewed mothers in the study regardless of whether from which country they came to Dubai. At this point, it is important to refer the contact theory which postulates that interethnic contact should lead to improved interethnic attitudes when the contact occurs in a favourable environment and on an equal-status basis. In our case none of the inhabitants were locals, and as we have quoted earlier from the case 1, everyone was expat; nobody was in his/her home country. Indeed, nobody was taking the jobs of each and/or of other locals and accordingly people were more open to each other., and the neighbourhood they lived in had a number of important architectural characteristics affecting the favourable environment necessary to develop inter-ethnic social contacts.

Nevertheless, we found that it was hard to upgrade an inter-ethnic social contact towards an inter-ethnic friendship because people preferred those, who are closer to them with respect to language, religion, life-style, as friends in their private lives. Moreover for the working interviewees, the relations developed at work are another way of socialising, who prefer spending their private time also with their colleagues. But still, they give the priority to the colleagues who share the same culture, language and/or religion.

The study also showed that expatriates did not form a homogenous group with respect to their incomes and future prospects. Excluding the people we named as ‘‘Globals’, we found that the other three groups had quite similar intentions to the immigrants in Western Europe. It seems that the most important similarity is the strong preference to live in residential areas where they can find people similar to themselves.

References

To be completed...


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