

Problems and Potentials in Housing Settlements in Istanbul's Periphery in the Context of Diversity

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Abstract

The concept of "diversity" in housing settlements was firstly examined within the scope of the study, and the issue of "diversity" in city/housing was discussed. As a research area, one of the periphery neighbourhoods of Istanbul, comprising housing groups with different characteristics, extending from slums to low-rise detached housing sites thus providing a rich research environment on "diversity" in housing environments, was chosen. The area work was conducted through on-site monitoring, questionnaires and interviews at this neighbourhood. With all these data, the behaviours of people with different profiles, living side by side in settlements with different features within the neighbourhood; the relationships that settlements established/couldn't establish within themselves, between each other, and with the rest of the city, were attempted to understand. In the study, the position of these relations continuing in the periphery of Istanbul, which is one of the world's most important metropolises, within the development routes of the city was discussed, this diversity in the neighbourhood scale was presented with resulting problems and potentials, and future suggestions were made.

1. Introduction

"A city consists of different kinds of people, similar people cannot create a city" Aristoteles

The study focuses on the diversity of housing in the city and the different dimensions of this diversity. The city has many diversities by its nature. People with different characteristics such as rich-poor, married-single, young-old, Muslim-Christian, etc. (family structure, lifestyle, cultural structures, socio-economic status, ...) live together (?) in cities, However, today, new living environments in cities are being planned to be disconnected from the whole of the city, even from their immediate surroundings, as well as having various worries due to being in city. For instance, the new settlements in Istanbul are usually made up of housing estates that came side by side, but not having relation with each other. The people in these housing estate live in a different "world, together with those who have similar worldviews, but live separated from others.

Istanbul is also the region of contrasts rather than uniformity, like all cosmopolitan cities with a heterogeneous population and those in which various cultures mixed to each other. Just like the hard-edged pieces of a mosaic, it is a plurality in which social groups and cultures which have been separated from each other coexist [1].

Whether the diversity existing in the city, with various dimensions is reflected on the physical space, and accordingly, resulting problems and potentials were discussed in this study.

2. Diversity / Diversity in the context city

Biodiversity is used to mean the differentiation between living organisms of all sources, including land, sea and other aquatic ecosystems and ecological structures that are part of these ecosystems. Moreover, "biological diversity" evokes the concept of biological wealth, and

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express the distinctness and variability of living creatures, their interactions with complex ecological structures they live in, with each other and their surroundings. Biodiversity balances ecosystems, makes planet liveable, supports people's health, the environment and ecosystems.

Diversity is a concept that we encounter almost every day in social life. The big, especially the multinational companies, even in word, put their vision and mission on this concept, they speak highly of an inclusive business environment and life with diversity. The fashion world attempts to appeal to everyone, be inclusive and accessible for everyone, including young-old, black-and-white, fat-poor, poor-rich; and diversity is used with equality, justice, tolerance and dynamism together in social and political discourses.

The diversity in the city suggests pluralism, and moreover, diversity is pointed out as one of the essential factors of a city. (containing all advantages that a large city should have, such as culture, history, entertainment and transportation...) Diversity in a city means tolerance and dynamism. (Diversity is the spice of life). That is to say, it is to respect people who are not the same as you, and regard differences as one each wealth. Individuals with different languages, beliefs, identities, cultures and worldviews live together in cities, and these different elements can live together and in company in the framework of tolerance, empathy, and respect others. The existence of elements such as different beliefs, identities, cultures and languages within the society should be considered as "cultural diversity" and "cultural wealth". Successful cities value diversity as an essential component of community identity, political culture and economic well-being. When managed successfully, local governments help shape a rich environment within the city that celebrates this diversity and provides a sense of belonging for residents of all backgrounds [2]. Overall the claims for diversity are important. Diversity underlies the appeal of the urban, it fosters creativity, it can encourage tolerance, and it leads city officials to see the value in previously underappreciated lifestyles [3].

Diversity in city is also on city planner's agenda. For example, diversity in land use can be regarded as an

indispensable element of sustainable urban development (Diversity is good.). Diversity in city is mentioned together with many concepts (Figure 1). On the other hand, diversities can result in danger, chaos, and confusion if not properly managed within the city life. For example, different instruments in an orchestra must be in compliance with each other. Without the right guide, even the diversity consisting of the world's great talents can turn into nothing. Differences may also cause to disintegrate, break the city/citizen off while it can make them rich. The people who live separately within the same city, for example in Istanbul, even in the same neighbourhood can easily be distinguished. Actually, this is a result of the disparities, socioeconomic imbalances, injustice, making people marginalised according to their ethnic or cultural roots in society, and yes, it contains diversities in itself. However, diversities get disconnected from each other, and this disconnectedness comes with spatial disintegration / fragmentation, and also creates borders. The regions that best exemplify this situation in the city are generally the new living environments formed in the surroundings/periphery of city.

In other words, diversity can lead to both positive (inclusive) and negative (exclusive) situations in the context of urban or housing settlements (Figure 2). New housing settlements created in the in the periphery of city due to the reasons such as migration (urban and interurban mobility) and population growth offers a rich research platform that can allow for the creation of alternative strategies and experience of these strategies, both to enable observing these situations and to be integrated with each diversity, city and city life. One of the periphery neighbourhoods of Istanbul was chosen for the area work in this study, which focused on the dimensions of diversity in housing settlements by this point of view.

3. Area work: Housing diversification in periphery

The living quarters where diversity in both social and spatial sense is mostly encountered are no doubt metropolises. Many lives and correspondingly many



Figure 1. Concepts related to diversity

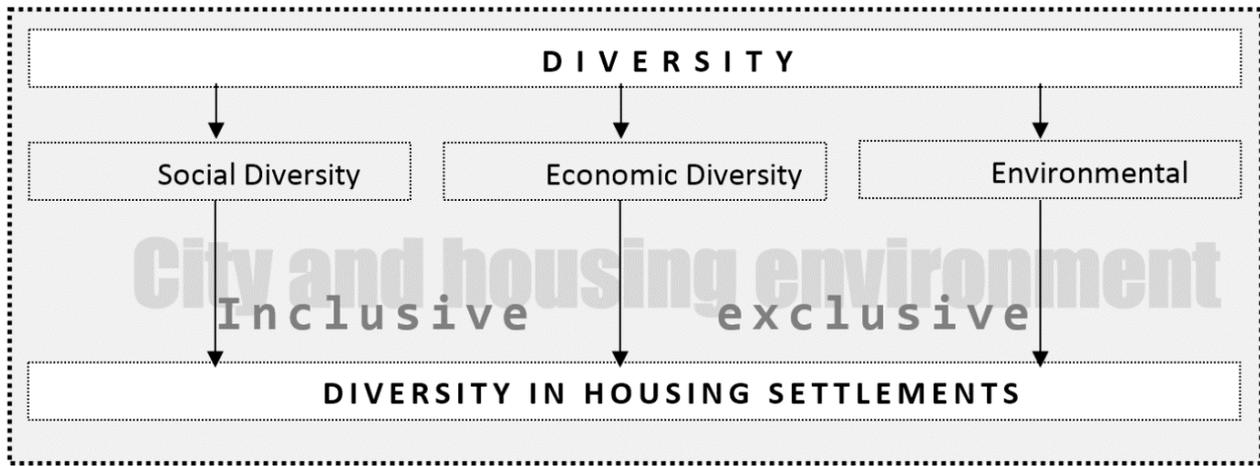


Figure 2 Dimensions of diversity



Figure 3. Maps İstanbul, Çekmeköy, Nişantepe

different kinds of housing, became diversified with different dynamics of life in İstanbul, coexist. Low-rise, multi storey, modest-luxury, legal-illegal housing coexists within the same city so as to create different street patterns, and in different textures. This differentiation reveals itself in different forms in the city center and periphery of the city.

"The behaviours of different groups in housing within the urbanization process are tackled as both gaining social status and taking a share from urban income, as well as the struggle for getting over the difficulties in the city: What makes its mark on the processes of urbanization and appearing with differentiation or diversification in Turkey in the 1980s are tendencies for disintegration. At one end, the urban poor who are making an effort to maintain their existence with more different methods and relationships than before in the periphery of the city and ready to do so much things for this cause that they cannot even imagine doing before; somewhere at intermediate, middle classes who participate in the struggle for sharing income in the city through cooperatives, and set their eyes on large lands

in the periphery of the city; at the other end, upper classes who live behind the high walls protected by private security systems, in the lands of the city's most prestigious areas, of which "they took possession", and even not looking back to the community, not only to the city they have abandoned" [4].

While İstanbul is growing up in uncontrollable / unpredictable and unplanned way, it experiences a constant change with urban transformation projects, the country new housing settlements, and the border slums. By its current state, İstanbul keeps its place in the agenda of urban and housing searchers, with its always varying issues, and new faces. In this study, focused on diversity in the housing environments, the research was conducted in a neighbourhood sample (Nişantepe neighbourhood) from the periphery of city, where different housing samples are available.

Nişantepe neighbourhood, (Figure 3), spatially fragmented and at which very different social groups live [5], is one of the neighbourhoods of Çekmeköy district, having several characteristics in common. This place is a field at which, all kinds of housing

presentations can be observed since on which slums, apartment buildings that are converted from slums, cooperatives pleading to lower and middle income group, and the sites that symbolize privilege and comfort are being built. Therefore, it is a field including diversities, where the people with different social status live together [5] In other words, it can be said that Nişantepe neighbourhood exemplifies a field where Istanbul's most advantageous and disadvantaged families in terms of economy and social resources live side by side but without making contact with each other.

In this section, different housing samples located in the neighbourhood will be defined/ exemplified, findings and survey results will be included, and the issues, problems and potentials that arise based on the diversity of housing in the neighbourhood will be discussed.

3.1. Different housing types in the neighbourhood

Different housing settlements (Figure 4, 5 and Table 2) coexist in Nişantepe neighbourhood. In this place, slums, every time being excluded from the city some more; those who have migrated and therefore brought their old habits along with them, those who escaped

from the chaos, noise and traffic of the city; those who attempt to possess property with future anxiety wherever they are; temporary settlers due to the university campus located nearby are all together.

The housing located at Nişantepe neighbourhood was studied within 4 categories in the scope of the study (Table 1).

The detached houses in Nişantepe ① are low-rise houses that develop dispersedly without any plans or arrangements in the neighbourhood. Apartment buildings ② have been located in a similar way with detached houses, dispersedly without being subject to any rule and one within the other with detached houses. These housing (apartment buildings and detached houses) are occasionally arranged so as to only satisfy the housing need, and sometimes commercial functions (market, barber, real estate etc.) will be located on the ground floors. There are two different types of housing (multi storey blocks and two storey villas) have been involved in the housing estate ③ (Alemdağ Housing) project that will be applied within Nişantepe. Alemdağ Real Estate Housing project, including 1192 'safe' housing, isolated from its surroundings by being surrounded by walls was built by PHA (public housing administration) and completed in 2013. The densest housing texture in the neighbourhood is here. In

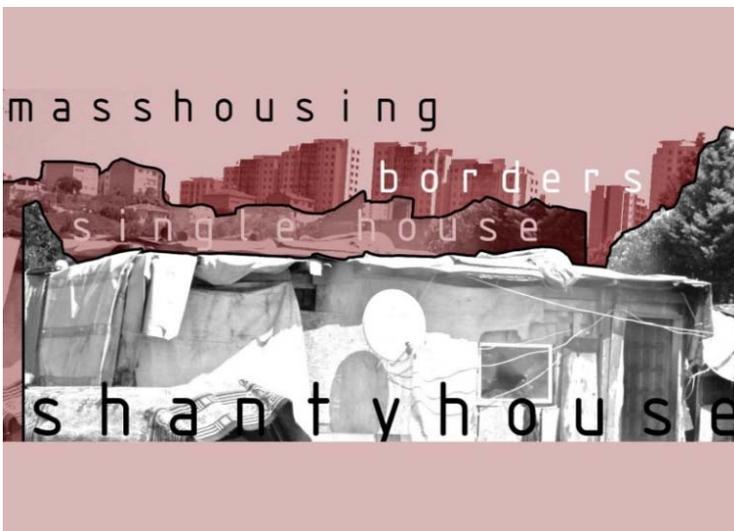


Figure 4. Layers of housing in Nişantepe

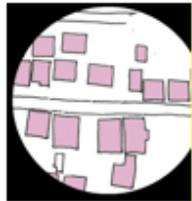
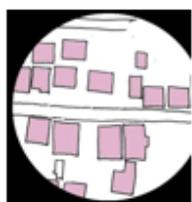
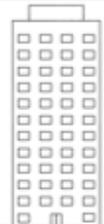
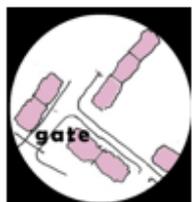
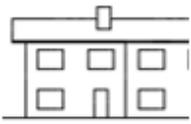


Figure 5. Housing in Nişantepe

Table 1: Types of dwellings in Nişantepe

① Detached houses /Low-rise dwellings	
② Apartment buildings	
③ Housing estate	
③.① Block in housing estate	③.② Duplex in housing estate
④ Duplex villa in housing estate	

Table 2: Different dwelling types in Nişantepe

1	detached houses / low-rise dwelling	example		
	definition	street view	pattern	example
	one or two storey #dwelling #dwelling+trade			
2	apartment building	example		
	definition	street view	pattern	example
	three or four storey #dwelling <u>#dwelling+trade</u>			
3	block in housing state	example		
	definition	street view	pattern	example
	blocks, 4 dwellings on one storey #dwelling			
	duplex villa in housing state	example		
	definition	street view	pattern	example
	ribbon building, two storeys, with garden #dwelling			
4	duplex villa in housing estate	example		
	definition	street view	pattern	example
	detached house, two storeys, with garden #dwelling			

addition to the houses; the sports areas, indoor parking, indoor-outdoor swimming pool, sauna, cafeteria, children's club and fitness center which can only be used by those living in these houses, have been included in the housing estate project. The project is announced in the advertisement brochures as "A high quality life...which you always desire, in touch with nature but

close to the city, safely equipped, with social facilities, you can make new friends, your child can play safely" [6]. While there are 1173 houses with 2,3,4,5 rooms in sizes ranging from 58 m² to 194 m² in multi-storey blocks (3.1), there are 19 two-storey villas (3.2) in sizes ranging from 160 m² to 173 m² in the housing estate. There are housing states consisting of low-rise detached houses at

the north of Nişantepe neighbourhood. These housing estate located on the forest border of the neighbourhood ④ are living environments, which is separated from the rest of the neighbourhood, and almost not having any connection with this neighbourhood by the help of intervening vehicle road, even not having any connection with similar housing estate, just behind the wall in the areas surrounded by walls and barbed wire. Apart from 4 types of housing listed here, there are also hut-like housing place in the neighbourhood. However, those which are used as temporary housing places are excluded from the study.

3.2. Research results and holistic evaluation

What makes its mark on the processes of urbanization and appearing with differentiation or diversification in Turkey in the 1980 are tendencies for disintegration. (Işık ve Pınacıoğlu, 2003). Similarly, the Nişantepe neighbourhood consists of subgroups of different people coming side by side in different ways. People living in this neighbourhood, which is located on the periphery of Istanbul settled this neighbourhood with different expectations. Some found the living what they were looking for; to be away from the city chaos, living low rise clean-green and of course sheltered dwellings, at here, low-rise, pooled, luxurious site living; some preferred this periphery neighbourhood, relatively remote from the city and out of sight, for their unlicensed slums. The housing estate located at Nişantepe has enabled middle income group to own a house with their limited opportunities, and become a good / safe investment tool for their retirement and children, with its certain characteristics. Different expectations and realities have led to the formation of

different housing settlements within the Nişantepe neighbourhood.

Table 3 summarizes possible and current problems and potentials of the neighbourhood in the context of the questionnaire and interviews made. The physical environment of the Nişantepe neighbourhood, situated at the north of Istanbul, has important data pointing out both its problems and potentials at the same time. One of these is its connection with important transportation arterial roads (TEM, 3rd bridge) at the north of Istanbul, and the other is being surrounded by forest areas. While the location of the neighbourhood becomes more accessible and easier to relate to the rest of the city (through the surrounding roads become more important for the city), the income stress created by this situation can lead to a problem for low income people living here. While the structure of the neighbourhood surrounded by the forest area is defined by the neighbourhood resident as one of the greatest strengths of the neighbourhood, with its clean air, and beautiful environment; this feature makes the area more attractive for the rest of the city, which may lead to an increase in population density and correspondingly lead to new problems.

The residents living in the houses exemplified by codes 1 and 2 in the neighbourhood (Table 1) are town-dwellers who can establish social relations in the neighbourhood, established a bond of belonging with the neighbourhood they live in, and spend almost all of their time in this neighbourhood. Those living in these dwellings look happy for being in this environment despite the problems such as security, substance addiction, robbery, experienced in the neighbourhood. Since especially the young population that was born and raised here has a social environment in the

Table 3: Problems and potentials in Nişantepe neighborhood

problems current and potential		potentials	
spatial	life-related	spatial	life-related
Relationship with main transportation arterial roads (tem, 3rd bridge) of the city			
Forest area which also constitutes the neighborhood borders			
	substance addiction		fresh air
urban equipments			
security			
Closed sites and borders			ownership t (partial)
	ownership t (partial)	low density	
		neighborhood relationships (partial)	

neighbourhood have a stronger sense of belonging. Nevertheless, they think that the local government has not invested enough in improving the quality of their living quarters; this view is also generally strengthened by their belief in being marginalized due to their poor status. Even despite thick walls don't exist between them and their surroundings, and they reside in a freer / open physical environment than 3-4 examples, they don't prefer to join the city outside the neighbourhood. These people also constitute the section living in the neighbourhood and have a lower income level among households. They mostly have a similar economic structure, and they state that they could establish neighbourhood relations despite their different ethnic identities. It can be said that these people who emigrated from across Istanbul and other parts of Turkey created a very rural environment near the city.

The housing estate in the neighbourhood has completely different dynamics. This is a dense housing settlement that rises in vertical blocks and separated from city with thick walls. Although there are opportunities such as pools and sports areas that allow to become socialized in the site, and which can be used only by site residents; it cannot be said that the people living here could become socialized within the site and develop neighbourhood relations. The differences coexist here as far from toleration and often in a state of intolerance. A major part of those living in this site have settled here either since they could afford to become a homeowner only at this site, not since they preferred it, or, since they study in the university within the neighbourhood and need a temporary shelter during their education. Therefore, it is almost impossible to develop a relationship / sense of belonging even for Nişantepe neighbourhood and even for its own sheltered - closed sites.

3.3. In Nişantepe / At intermediate

The surveys and interviews conducted indicate that the main obstacle for housing groups (1, 2, 3, 4) that have become diversified in the neighbourhood, in terms of *i n t e g r a t i o n* of the potentials of developing relationships with each other is closed sites, which are indicated in 3 and 4 examples, and which put up impassable walls between their surroundings and themselves with the worry of creating their own sheltered housing environment. Therefore, the issue of closed sites will be mentioned in this section of the article.

The upper middle class and upper class who do not want to face with these problems created by the urbanization in Istanbul are aiming to establish new living quarters, and thus, housing systems have appeared which differ from the natural structure of modern cities. This new

housing system's residents, who do not want to deal with the problems that modernization reveal, not only spatially isolated themselves from the problems that urbanization creates, but also, they didn't want to encounter with these problems, in terms of sociocultural [7]. Thus, the number of safe / sheltered / indoor housing sites has increased rapidly, and this type of housing settlements have become one of the most important urban elements of Istanbul. Each of the safe sites has its own name and own roads leading to the city. It also contains within itself the spaces where all kinds of needs that can be met from the city can be satisfied without having to go out of the site. The roads, parking lots, sports facilities, parks and gardens, swimming pools, small shopping centers, available in the safe sites are exemplifying for these spaces. The most important consequence of self-enclosed housing is to make social and spatial disintegration sharpen. The streets surrounded by walls, privatized common areas behind closed doors cause publicity and urbanism to be questioned. In addition to these, since urban organization in the form of closed sites has reduced the permeability of urban space, it also leads to the problems in terms of **accessibility** and **public use** [8]. Sheltered settlements have primary risks like showing urban pathologies such as social polarization and exclusion [9]. Landman [10] states that as well as sheltered settlements restrict the interactions of people of different race, culture and class; they also cause to have a difficulty in the social network organization created on the basis of social and economic activities.

Studies "reveal that children are kept in a protective balloon with excessive safety concerns at modern sites, and that it has a potential to create problems in children's social-psychological development. It is thought that this may also lead to a wide range of physical and social influences such as creating a society, consisting of frightened, insecure and asocial people, constantly afraid of unidentified others in the future [11]. Besides, it has been documented that "after living in modern sites for a certain period of time, especially women are afraid of going to the city at the paranoia level, develop anxiety for their children; obscurity, marginalization regarding immigrants and the poor are at the border on phenomenon in their mind; They mostly lock themselves in their sites and do not use the urban area so much; they become estranged to the city, getting used to living in an artificial world, in completely isolated manner [11, 7]

Now, the situation seems very different in the neighbourhood which was compared with closed sites in terms of scale and the units it contained, and which constituted the most important part of Istanbul city life in the past. An advanced neighbourhood culture and dialogue dominate this unit. Moreover, this dialogue is not limited to the inside of the neighbourhood; dialogue

also spreads to other / adjacent neighbourhoods', and thus, the neighbourhood can be regarded as a dynamic / living piece of a large network circulating in the city. Its state of integrity undoubtedly allows residents to develop a strong belonging relationship with the neighbourhood and city as well.

The fragmented housing sites substitute for the neighbourhood fact that establishes the city through integrating with each other in Istanbul [5, 8]. Today, the issues, such as human relations decline; the school is not neighbourhood school anymore, in other words, the regulation of urban services becomes invalid, lead neighbourhood concept to come under question [5, 8]. The primary relationships, solidarity, sponson for each other, close social relationships of neighbourhood residents take an important place in traditional neighbourhoods [7]. Neighbourhood is a social and physical unit. A neighbourhood is a living space of a community consisting of the people who know each other, responsible from each other's behaviour, being in social solidarity [12].

It can be observed that despite all kinds of physical environment are attempted to provide in the closed sites which are the spatial expression of a fragmented society [5], they can't satisfy these features of the traditional community. Safe sites, encoding everybody outside the site as a disturber in their minds through their physical structure; from this aspect, is far from the understanding of security, evolving based on the fact that people in the neighbourhood should recognize and know each other [11].

The matter is more complicated for Nişantepe neighbourhood which was chosen as sample research area in this study. Here, a part of living is spent in the closed sites (exemplified by 3.1, 3.2.4), separated from each other and from other people living in Nişantepe; a part of living is also spent in the detached houses and apartment buildings in relation to each other but again separated from others. So, Nişantepe takes part at intermediate in many ways. The place / life existing here neither seem as a neighbourhood in the past, nor could become a part of the modern city. The people living in the neighbourhood neither manage to become a town-dweller as they couldn't establish a dialogue with city and each other, nor completely became disconnected.

4. Conclusion

While a modern metropolitan city is required to establish its mechanisms stronger than comer and goer, and ensure the integration of comer urgently; it has to fill the deficiency of goer at the same speed. In order to achieve such a goal, it is required that the city's opportunities should fairly be distributed to different

groups living in the city; the opportunities for the meeting of different groups, and common public use should be enhanced; the data offered by basic identity elements of the place should be ensured to be adopted by everyone, the diversities should be considered as elements that will enrich the main structure, and urban house living should be ensured to develop on a line aiming integration instead of disintegration [13].

Undoubtedly, diversity in housing environments includes more than the physical formations of the buildings and the composition they form together. Coexisting, and feeding from the awareness of coexisting, being a part of a whole without losing individuality... The fact called city is a space where many different cultures and social classes meet. If so, living in the city means to meet with people with different characteristics, not only with people like you, being able to communicate, being able to live together, respect mutual individuality. How should the urban / housing environment be planned with this view? If the coexistence of diversities is expressed as a wealth in terms of city and city life, and furthermore if it is expected so, then diversity should be owned as a planning approach / design strategy.

The results of this research show that Nişantepe neighbourhood is a settlement where diversity (cultural, economic, social, spatial ...) coexists in many ways, and these diversities have a great potential to offer wealth in terms of urban and urban life. However, the way of revealing this potential is the spatially preparation of communication / interaction opportunities between the diversities. In other words, the diversities that do not interact with each other in housing environments cannot coexist.

Diversity has to be spatialized in the city and especially in the housing environments with a holistic understanding allowing for different colours. The elements that exist in the "neighbourhood" of the past and are far from us now should be reassessed. Instead of insisting on memories of the past, a new sense of coexistence must be developed with today's realities, needs, and opportunities.

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