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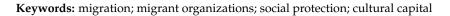
'Finding My Own Way': Mobilization of Cultural Capital through *Migrant Organizations* in Germany

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Abstract: *Migrant organizations* MOs), as associations that are founded, managed, and led by people with migration biographies, have recently emerged as facilitators of social protection interventions. This article is devoted to this barely debated issue of MOs in the field of social protection, by emphasizing their role in facilitating the mobilization and access to cultural capital as an important determinant of protection and wellbeing of people with migration biographies. Specifically, we study how MOs promote the formation and mobilization of skills and resources to be used in different fields, in particular in the education and labor markets. We find that MOs facilitate various occasions for their members to generate migration-specific cultural capital, predominantly in the field of education and language skills. MOs also promote the creation and institutionalization of cultural capital on the labor market. In addition, our results show that people with a migration background appreciate their participation in *migrants' organizations*, because they allow them to pursue their own projects and find their own way through the different phases of migration and settlement, in often challenging environments.

Keywords: migration; migrant organizations; social protection; cultural capital

1. Introduction

'Finding my own way' was an expression Najim coined when he elaborated on the role of the organization Lomingo e.V.. Lomingo e.V. was founded in 2015 by a woman who has a family biography of migration, to support many people who fled from the Syrian war and other global conflicts to Germany. Najim has a long history of flight and frequent stays in various refugee camps since he fled the Syrian war with his family when he was a young child. Following years of instability, fear, and uncertainty, and while in a refugee camp in Turkey, he reconnected with his mother, who had successfully applied for asylum in Germany. Here, he soon joined Lomingo e.V., an organization offering a range of activities and support.

Originally founded when there was a great demand for support for the many people who sought asylum in Germany, around 2015, Lomingo e.V. does not only address the people who have migrated, but also seeks to facilitate a more inclusive conviviality (Nowicka 2019) among the people in Germany. Similar to many other MOs in Germany, that have developed highly professional structures, in the last few years (Barglowski and Bonfert 2022b, 2022c; Bonfert et al. 2022; Halm et al. 2020), Lomingo e.V. offers a range of services and activities, such as language courses, job-related training, sexual and family education, as well as school tutoring. Najim enthusiastically attends various courses, which have enabled him to consolidate his musical skills and, as he says, allows him to gain a German university entry certificate (Abitur). Now, his biggest dream is to study music at a German university. Based on various opportunities for accessing and mobilizing a range of skills and competences, Lomingo e.V. has become, not only a major source of orientation and

belonging, but also of social protection. This article is devoted to this barely debated issue of the so-called *migrant organizations*[1] as facilitators of social protection interventions, in the context of the formation and utilization of cultural capital. MOs refer here to associations by and for people who define themselves as *migrants* (Pries and Sezgin 2012; D'Angelo 2015).

In the literature, social protection interventions are broadly defined as all help and support measures, focused on mitigating the social risks and vulnerabilities of people who are most in need (Barglowski et al. 2015; Bilecen et al. 2019; Faist et al. 2015; Mumtaz 2022; Thimmappa et al. 2021). Social protection is an encompassing term that captures all initiatives geared toward supporting health, basic income, and well-being. Social services, as implied in the term of social security, as well as public, private, and organizational initiatives that strengthen people's resilience to circumvent social risks, are facilitators of social protection interventions. Recently, the building and mobilization of skills and capabilities that increase the economic, social, and personal well-being of people and their families in the context of migration, has moved into focus of social protection interventions (Thimmappa et al. 2021; OECD 2022). In this article, we focus on MOs and their role in promoting access and mobilization of cultural capital, as an important determinant of wellbeing and protection. Using the concept of cultural capital[2] (Bourdieu 1986; Erel 2010), rather than human capital, as is often used in policy programs and social protection interventions, we analyze how MOs contribute to the mobilization of skills and informal and formal resources that have become recognized as cultural capital. With such an understanding, cultural capital is not a universal or objective asset, but depends on social and cultural processes of valuation (Bourdieu 1986). Cultural capital, as a range of assets (education, experience, ways of being, speaking, and thinking) that are deemed desirable in a given society, thus conveys social status and power, and thus promotes social mobility.

Migration scholars have emphasized the role of cultural capital in the processes of migration and settling, with a particular emphasis on labor market trajectories (see e.g., Nowicka 2014; Weiß 2005) and education (Barglowski 2019; Soremski 2010). This concept has received less attention in the literature on social protection. In the face of various difficulties in assembling formal protective resources provided by state institutions, numerous scholars have stressed the role of social capital generated through social networks, and its contribution to social risk averting strategies within and across borders (Boccagni 2017; Sabates-Wheeler and Feldman 2011). The role of cultural capital in the approaches to managing social risks thus remains largely unexplored. Most research investigating skills focuses on the labor market trajectories of people and how their abilities and qualifications, often referred to as 'human capital', contribute to their labor market outcomes after migration. In addition, scholars have drawn attention to the social and cultural processes involved in the validation of specific abilities, such as capital and resources, and the ambivalent and often contingent processes of recognition. International migration yields a complexity in skill recognition, both in terms of transferring and in capitalizing on (new) knowledge and abilities (Nowicka 2014; Erel 2010; Erel and Ryan 2019; Anthias and Cederberg 2009; Weiß 2005). Following Erel's (2010) critique of the concept of human capital, as too simplistic in a way that views capital as easily transferable from one country to another ('rucksack approach'), we look at the complex ways people who migrate, accumulate and translate knowledge and formalized qualifications into cultural capital. Instead of considering abilities and degrees as fixed sets of resources that become formalized in the immigration country, under regulated conditions, we focus on the validation and capitalization of skills, alongside highly contingent migration trajectories (Nowicka 2014; Weiß 2005; Erel 2010; Erel and Ryan 2019; Amelina 2022; Rye 2019). Although previous research has largely focused on the personal relationships and the individual agency of people with migration backgrounds, we focus on the contribution of organizational resources on the processes of activating, transferring, and generating new forms of cultural capital in a new environment. Specifically, we investigate how MOs offer opportunities for *people who have migrated or who were born in families with migration histories*, to generate and

mobilize skills and resources, that can be capitalized on in various fields and promote their well-being and social mobility.

In recent years, MOs have been increasingly debated as "important means of support and integration for ethnic minorities" (D'Angelo 2015, p. 83). Ranging from small interest groups to large professional organizations, MOs offer a variety of activities and services in various spheres (Pries and Sezgin 2012). Although public and scientific debates about these services were long ambiguous about their potential contribution to social integration or distinction from the destination context, D'Angelo (2015) suggests that they "do or have the potential to do both things at the same time" (p. 84). In Germany, recent studies have specifically pointed to the growing importance of MOs in the realm of social protection (Barglowski and Bonfert 2022b, 2022c; Halm et al. 2020; SVR 2020). As many MOs have increasingly professionalized and expanded their scope of activities, they provide access to key protective resources. However, the focus of studies on MOs as sources of support, has generally been on the networks and subsequent social capital they provide (D'Angelo 2015). Their role in generating and activating cultural capital, in the context of their target groups' individual trajectories, has not received much attention. Therefore, in this article, we aim to draw attention to how MOs facilitate generation and activation of cultural capital. Looking at the ways people depict MOs as spaces relevant to organizing issues concerning social protection issues, we specifically investigate how MOs enable people to activate previously accumulated capital, as well as to generate new skills and knowledge, including 'migration-specific cultural capital' (Erel 2010).

1.1. Social Protection Interventions, Cultural Capital, and Migration

Social protection interventions have traditionally focused on financial measures to alleviate poverty. More recent understandings of social protection, to support the most vulnerable people in society, take a broader perspective that covers all aspects that affect people's capabilities (Metz 2016). Building on Sen's capability approach, notions of capacity building that promote universal values of a 'good life' have gained popularity in various scientific disciplines and policy interventions. In the specific case of migration, this change of focus is evident in various policy initiatives geared toward enabling populations to access skills and competencies relevant to mitigating social risks that may arise during migration and in foreign labor markets. Especially in response to the insufficient protection measures for people, in contexts of migration, in their destination countries, there have been increasing attempts to enhance the capabilities of a transnationally mobile workforce (Clark 2005). The Indonesian government, for example, prepares future live-in care workers with specifically tailored programs, including training in hotel housekeeping, foreign language proficiency, and caregiving skills, that are tested in a competency examination (Chang 2018). Similarly, various national and internationally operating NGOs and welfare providers work together with immigration country municipalities, to offer training in skills that enable people who plan to migrate, to competently navigate the labor markets and secure their and their families' income. An example is the Safer Migration Project (SaMi), a bilateral initiative between the governments of Nepal and Switzerland. This initiative aims to provide future transnational workers with relevant information, training, and services, to decrease their vulnerability and exploitation in foreign labor markets, and to make their migration "an informed choice" (SaMi 2019, p. 3). They also support the families to deal with various social, cultural, and emotional effects of the migration, for instance, on how to spend remittances efficiently, thus accounting for the transnational nature of family life.

Although capability building approaches, information campaigns, and training of this kind can be criticized for placing responsibilities for securing basic social needs on the individual and creating 'docile' people with migration backgrounds, rather than designing more inclusive social services and formal protection systems, such interventions strengthen people's agency in dealing with harmful situations and other challenges related to transnational mobility. NGOs and their interventions offer practical solutions to daily life struggles, in the often challenging circumstances of their addresses. Opportunities to

generate and mobilize capital to build capacities and gain information, can in this regard, be important factors that decide a person and their families' ability to manage social risks throughout the different stages of migration and employment experiences in foreign labor markets. The formation and accessing cultural capital should thus be regarded as a distinct component and goal of social protection interventions.

Bourdieu's concept of capital has repeatedly served as a basis for studying how people organize and implement migration projects and how they experience the consequences (Barglowski 2019; Erel 2010; Nowicka 2014; Weiß 2005; Rye 2019). Exploring people's abilities to accumulate and transform economic, social, and cultural capital, provides a common starting point to understand the migration decision making and outcomes. This line of thinking follows Bourdieu's approach to capital conversion (Bourdieu 1986), which conveys the idea that forms of capital depend on the chance to be exchanged for other forms of capital. Migration and the access to transnational networks, for example, yields opportunities for both bonding and bridging social capital (i.e., building social capital from connections both within and across social groups) and thus represents transnational social capital (Holvoet and Dewachter 2022).

In terms of Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, migration, as a change of location from one country to another, poses challenges to what constitutes 'knowledge' and to the "mechanisms of validation" beyond national state borders (Erel 2010, p. 649). This is because the context-specific expectations and requirements strongly determine the recognition and valorization of assets as capital. Knowledge and education obtained before migration as "incorporated cultural capital" (Bourdieu 1992) can lose their functionality as capital in countries of destination. The same applies to institutionalized forms of cultural capital, especially educational degrees, certificates, and titles, which are often difficult to activate as capital in a new environment (Nohl et al. 2018). However, migration processes also grant access to new cultural capital. The research field on educational mobility shows how people, through international mobility, gain access to reputable certificates (Waters 2006). Since dominating integration debates place particular emphasis on the skills and knowledge people obtain in the destination country, capital accumulated through migration (migration-specific cultural capital) is often rendered invisible (Erel 2010; Nititham 2011; Waters 2006).

The challenges migration trajectories induce in the conversion and accumulation of cultural capital, have been highlighted by numerous scholars (Nohl et al. 2018; Kelly and Lusis 2006). Nohl et al. (2018) have drawn attention to the importance of time and the downward spiral that recognition of skills of people who enter a country can take, thereby in their study on people who have migrated from the Philippines to Canada, Kelly and Lusis (2006) found that developing a 'transnational habitus' affects the processes of accumulating, converting, and (de)valuing capital. Thus, experiences of devaluation of previously obtained and institutionalized cultural capital in Canada were compensated by capitalizing cultural practices and assets. This agency in transforming skills and knowledge into capital was also stressed by Erel (2010), who found that people with migration backgrounds "co-construct institutions for the validation their cultural capital within the society of residence" (p. 656). Based on an ethnographic study of migration trajectories from Central Africa to Brazil and French-Guyana, Santos (2020) illuminated the challenges inherent in activating previously obtained capital, especially for people from places of origin that are historically disadvantaged, on a global scale. Thus, the potential for using European certificates obtained by his Central African interlocutor in Spain, as capital in Brazil, is not subject to evaluation of the certificate, but rather of him as a Central African.

Researchers in the field of sports also stressed the importance of maintaining and creating cultural capital in migration, who found that spaces created through physical activity, have key implications in this regard. Based on interviews with Polynesians in Australia, McDonald et al. (2019) showed how "codes of rugby, in some situations, allow for the development of a form of 'polycultural capital' which, when successfully deployed, is recognized and valued within the Pacific Island diaspora in Australia" (p. 236). According

to the authors, sports thus offer a space in which people can accumulate new skills and values, which allows people to consolidate their identities in a new social context. Therefore, "migrants negotiate their cultural capital by using sport and physical activity as a site to both produce new forms of cultural capital, that are valued in the destination country and to (re)generate the migrant-specific cultural capital valued in the particular homeland and diasporic communities" (Smith et al. 2019, p. 861). This highlights the complexity inherent to generating and activating cultural capital in the context of migration.

Based on interviews with people who engage with MOs in Germany, we seek to show how participation in MOs contributes to the processes of generating and activating cultural capital in the specific context of securing their social protection. Considering migration trajectories and cultural capital to shape one another, we examine the concrete ways in which MOs facilitate "opportunities to mobilize resources and convert them into capital" (Erel and Ryan 2019, p. 246). By highlighting the role of cultural capital, we seek to illuminate the contribution of MOs to social protection interventions.

1.2. Migrant Organizations and Cultural Capital

For many years, MOs in Germany were largely perceived as places that provided occasions for people to maintain connections with others from their places of origin. Since MOs started to professionalize in the 1990s, a growing number became engaged in political activities seeking to represent the specific needs of people with migration backgrounds in Germany (Bäßler 2013; SVR 2020), resulting in an increasingly diverse and dynamic field. Broadly defined, MOs are "non-profit, migrant-led associations, aiming to provide practical and social support to specific migrant groups" (D'Angelo 2015, p. 83). Previous research has shown that people's engagement with MOs offers opportunities to maintain and build social networks, thus offering opportunities to build social capital (D'Angelo 2015; Levitt 2004; Thränhardt 2013). However, the role of MOs for accessing and activating cultural forms of capital in Germany, remains largely unexplored.

In Germany, most MOs are voluntary organizations, often legally registered associations. According to the previous literature, the structures inherent in voluntary organizations, which offer various opportunities for participation, provide numerous opportunities to generate and institutionalize capital (Karstein 2013). Therefore, they provide an environment for learning and extending or attaining new abilities (Düx and Schäfer 2009). In this way, the voluntary organizations allow people to access and expand knowledge, which can serve them as cultural capital. Furthermore, voluntary organizations, such as 'socializing institutions' have an impact on the ways people develop their identities and competencies (Karstein 2013). This may have further implications, not only for accessing new knowledge and skills, but also for translating existing knowledge into locally applicable cultural capital. Furthermore, services and activities that are specifically targeted to familiarize people with their destination context (e.g., language courses or support with institutional encounters) can contribute to accessing cultural capital relevant to operating in this context (Erel 2010).

In their research on a Russian-Jewish youth organization in Tel-Aviv, Prashizky and Remennick (2015) apply Bourdieu's theory to the field of MOs, by looking at the production and validation of cultural and social migration-specific capital. The authors observe how "the participants successfully merge and trade social and cultural forms of capital: drawing on their co-ethnic social network as a resource, they produce new forms of high and popular culture, which in turn helps reinforce their social ties and hybrid identities" (p. 31). Hence, they succeeded in building bridges between the Russian culture and the Hebrew culture of the countries' elites. This finding also shows the importance of MOs as a bridge between emigration and immigration country, as well as for places where people can find a sense of belonging in migration (Barglowski and Bonfert 2022a). Drawing on these insights, this research illuminates the importance of cultural capital in social protection, as well as of MOs as places for both belonging and protection.

2. Research Design

The results presented in this article stem from data collected in the context of a collaborative research project between the Universities of Bochum, Dortmund, and Duisburg in the Ruhr area of Germany, which explores the role of MOs for social protection practices and their embedding in the German welfare state architecture (Bonfert et al. 2022). Specifically, we draw on interview material collected with 34 members of 17 Mos, between October 2020 and November 2021, in which they shared with us their personal approaches to managing social risks and the role ascribed to their MO in this regard. An interview guideline that covered questions on the participants' experience with social risks in various spheres of life (including, but not limited to, work, health, and education), served to initiate narrations about the ways they manage different types of risk and the role ascribed to their MO. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the interviews took place personally or digitally.

Based on the publicly accessible information about existing MOs in the Ruhr area, we contacted MO representatives and asked them for their support in finding people who use their services, and who would share their experience with the MO, in an interview. Polzer Ngwato (2013) has addressed the process of acquiring interview partners through NGOs. She argues that the so-called SPOs (service provider organizations) survey methods can help "address the gap between the research process, research findings, and the use of those findings in advocacy and implementation planning" (p. 152). Most respondents felt confident about speaking German, and the MO representatives also supported translations, if necessary. In this way, we conducted 21 interviews and two group discussions with 17 women and 17 men, between the ages of 13 and 65, with various educational backgrounds and migration trajectories[3]. Their period of residence in Germany ranged from 2 years to a lifetime. All participants were European citizens or were granted asylum, which made them eligible to social protection under the German Asylum Act (AsylG). Participants were recruited through a variety of MOs. As a result of this sampling strategy, the importance of MOs is fairly pronounced. However, as the knowledge of this diverse and dynamically changing field of MOs in Germany is fairly limited, the empirical material offers a venue to illuminate the specific ways MOs contribute to the management of the social risk of their target groups.

Having discussed and collected the consent with our approach to collecting and managing data, their interviews were recorded and transcribed by an external transcription service. In the spirit of a grounded theory approach, we then coded and analyzed the data using MAXQDA, a software for qualitative data analysis. In addition to analytical tools inspired by grounded theory, we followed Amelina's (2010) approach to data analysis in transnational settings. Accordingly, in the first step of the open coding, we openly explored the material and anonymized all of the people and organizations mentioned in the interviews. While collecting and openly coding the additional data, the axial and theoretical coding steps enabled us to identify the relationships between emerging codes and derive categories that indicate the understandings and approaches of participants in managing social risks and the various roles ascribed to their MOs. The interviews included in this article was selected as they relate to the acquisition and mobilization of cultural capital. Moreover, the analyses of small sequences allowed for in-depth inquiries of social protection practices, in the context of MOs, and the role of cultural capital.

3. Results

The results indicate that MOs play an important role for their members in (a) facilitating the generation of cultural capital, (b) institutionalizing the generated cultural capital, and (c) activating the generated and institutionalized cultural capital in the labor market. These three processes ultimately enhance the social protection of our participants. The first two steps emphasize the abilities of MOs in social protection interventions, while the latter focus on the individual's agency. Consequently, many participants interviewed use the MO as a landmark, a steppingstone and a booster in their educational or professional path, having worked, volunteered or interned there at some point, in addition to frequently par-

ticipating in the MO's services and activities. Capital, both generated and activated through Mos, is predominantly migration-specific in the sense that it concerns competencies closely linked to the process and implications of migration. Prominent examples include language skills, as well as cultural and intercultural knowledge, which are today important parts of 'cosmopolitan' or 'transnational capital' that allows people to navigate mobility and transnational spaces (Weenink 2008; Carlson et al. 2017; Barglowski 2021).

3.1. Facilitating the Generation of Cultural Capital

Our data suggest that MOs facilitate various occasions for their members to generate migration-specific cultural capital. Most MOs place a particular focus on language acquisition, related both to the language of the immigration country, here German, as well as the languages of emigration countries. Given that Germany, as many other countries, is primarily based on an integration paradigm in its dealing with migration, there is a relative absence of institutionalized opportunities for people to acquire, maintain, and transmit their emigration country language (Barglowski 2021). Meanwhile, many MOs offer language courses in the mother tongue of their target group and organize so-called language cafés, where people come together to converse. Here, one of the goals is to maintain the cultural heritage and connections to the countries of origin. In our interviews, this is especially important for people who were born in Germany and who have few institutional opportunities, outside the family or community, to speak in in their family's native language and to maintain social, cultural, and symbolic ties to their parents' country of origin. Therefore, they specifically stressed the opportunities provided through language courses or conversations with other members of their MO, to acquire or improve these skills. Therefore, learning and practicing language skills predominantly takes place in the domestic sphere, family networks, and in communities often formed in the context of MOs. Anthea, who moved from Greece to Germany with her parents when she was a teenager in the 1980s, sees the multilingual upbringing of her children facilitated through GriBo e.V. as an asset, which she actively seeks to promote through the Greek lessons offered in the MO, as the following interview excerpt shows:

> *I mean, that is/I think it is nice anyway, too, that the kids had the opportunity to grow up bilingual and still speak the language [Greek] well. They speak very well but read and write not so well. However, they had Greek lessons once a week for two hours. In this respect, I really appreciate that they have learned so much. [...] And I think it is good that they also can really perfect the language, I think that is nice, and that they get the opportunity to intensify the relationships with relatives again, I think that is okay. (Anthea, 53 years old, parents migrated from Greece)*

Engaging in weekly Greek lessons, facilitates her children's contact with their relatives in Greece, thereby keeping the transnational bonds alive and stable. As far as Anthea is concerned, living, and growing up in transnational contexts is a privilege for her family and especially her children, as it opens a variety of life opportunities for them:

> *I think we are very privileged, so all those who can live abroad and then still have a second home or still have a back door. I think they are very privileged; we are very lucky. Also, I think that everyone should experience living abroad once in their life, for a longer period, not for half a year or a year, but longer. (Anthea, 53 years old, parents migrated from Greece)*

This account presented by Anthea needs to be framed by the quite unique situation of people with Greek origins, most of whom moved to Germany during the time of the guest-worker agreements in the 1960s, and their descendants. Migration from Greece to Germany is characterized by a high percentage of returnees, commuters, and transnationally mobile people (Siouti 2019). This is mainly due to the Greek community's politics in Germany, which has incentivized the return migration and set up enabling structures for return and commuting, most notably with a specific binational education system in Germany. Greek-

German schools are financed by the Greek state and coordinated by Greek diplomatic missions in Germany, while both countries acknowledge their diplomas (Siouti 2019).

Thus, for people of Greek origin, keeping in touch with Greece and having their children also dispositioned with the necessary abilities to do so, is particularly important considering their transnational migration projects and high number of returnees (Siouti 2019). In more general terms, moving competently and freely in transnational spaces requires 'cosmopolitan' or 'transnational' cultural capital, including language skills and cultural knowledge (Weenink 2008; Carlson et al. 2017). This, for example, is vital in communicating with family members living in Greece, and is thus a means of recreating family belonging from a distance. In this respect, our results indicate that MOs address the institutional infrastructure, which focuses almost exclusively on the knowledge of the language, history, and culture of the immigration country. MOs are often the main formalized settings in which people with migration backgrounds can mobilize emigration country-related resources, independent of their own and family capital. In this sense, MOs provide important venues for these people to build their 'ethnic' capital, but also to mobilize transnational cultural capital. This does not only concern language, but also embodies forms of cultural resources, in the sense of being and thinking beyond the nation state border. Competences and abilities of this kind become increasingly important in a globalizing world (Weenink 2008; Carlson et al. 2017; Barglowski 2021). Building transnational forms of capital also provides opportunities for flexible migration projects, including return migration. As Anthea also expressed, she wishes that her family and children could choose between Greece and Germany as their future home.

The example of Anthea shows how MOs facilitate the generation of migration-specific cultural capital, in terms of language proficiencies. Likewise, Erel (2010) considers language skills to be of crucial importance, especially in the context of bilingualism among the women with migration biographies that she interviewed, as, in the long run, linguistic capital has the potential to unlock job opportunities. Consequently, Anthea uses the services provided by the MO, in native language instruction, strategically to equip her children with an additional qualification for their future careers, thus enhancing her family's social protection. Competences of this kind go beyond mere language proficiency. They also include incorporated cultural resources, including abilities to competently navigate various cultural scripts, something Pauli (2020) has termed 'code-switching'.

3.2. Institutionalizing Generated Cultural Capital

As the previous section has shown, MOs can facilitate access to various types of cultural capital that are important for people, in the context of different migration biographies, in different spheres of life. Many participants in this study specifically referred to their MO as an important place to meet people who share similar migration histories or to stay in touch with their emigration country. However, the importance of MOs goes far beyond their contribution to maintaining and building ethnic identities and cultural resources. In many cases, resources generated within MOs may become important preconditions for future education and careers, as well as the generation of social capital. An interesting example is Najim, a 17-year-old member of Lomingo e.V., who fled the Syrian war in 2017. As other young members of the same MO, with whom we spoke, Najim specifically emphasized the importance of participating in a music project founded by Lomingo e.V. This project, not only helps him pursue his passion and improve his musical abilities, but also provides access to spaces and activities otherwise inaccessible:

> *They also have a lot of projects going on here; for example, coming to Lomingo Tonal Art again, we were able to join a project to go to Holland and then participate in a workshop for singing in a choir. That was, I think, for a week in a hostel or hotel, but suitable for musicians, where they had instruments everywhere and then you could play music there. So, it is like a youth hostel, but with musical instruments. And yes, that was all paid for as well. We did not have to pay anything. Yes, so you first have a lot of projects going on here, where you could just get to know new things and integrate. And yes, a little more,*

if you are lonely, a little more, yes, go out and meet people. (Najim, 17 years old, from Afghanistan)

Being part of the music project has not only strengthened Najim's resilience and provided him with a sense of emotional well-being, but it also paved his way towards studying music at a German university. Under the supervision and with the support of his music teacher at Lomingo Tonal Art, he was able to join a jazz academy, increasing his opportunities of passing the demanding aptitude test at his university of choice, in Germany. According to Najim, completing a degree in music strongly improves the likelihood of a successful career in the arts:

I am also in the music school, as I said, at the jazz academy here also in the/ So, there is a department for the jazz academy [. . .] Yes, and the first music teacher I had there at the music school has really helped me that I came so far and could go to the jazz academy at all. [. . .] So the university, if I am accepted there after the exam, that will help me very much, that I have diploma or something, that I studied music here. (Najim, 17 years old, from Afghanistan)

Furthermore, he highlighted the importance of the first music teacher he ever had at Lomingo Tonal Art, who heavily inspired and motivated him. Thus, Lomingo e.V. provided the infrastructure, resources, and role models for Najim to immerse himself in music and professionalize his abilities. Given the high costs of private music lessons and instruments, as well as the competitive procedure for enrolling in a music course at university, the MO enabling structure is of utmost importance in this regard.

Another young member of Lomingo e.V., 19-year-old Hamid, who fled from Afghanistan in 2017, distinguishes himself with his ongoing volunteer work at the MO, starting with his arrival in Germany. When his school education required a two-week internship, he also completed it at the MO, whose representatives he knew very well by then. Asking them for a vacancy as an intern and a corresponding certificate proved to be no problem, as the following interview excerpt illustrates.

Yes, I just said that I want to do my internship here. She said, okay, if you need my signature, then, yes, you get that. [. . .] Sofian, he oversaw me when I did my internship and helped me a lot with my internship. He was like a big brother to me. He didn't talk to me in a loud voice, he is always friendly. Yes. Very sympathetic and has a good character. (Hamid, 19 years old, from Afghanistan)

In the context of the MO, obtaining an internship placement seems easy and uncomplicated. Accordingly, the familial atmosphere and respectful interactions at Lomingo e.V. made the experience rewarding and pleasant for Hamid. In this way, MOs provide a key alternative, especially for people who experience institutional racism and racialized exclusion, for example, in the educational system, the labor market (Heinemann and Mecheril 2016) and in the care sector (Lewicki 2022). In their role as official representatives of a registered association, members of the MO staff, such as Sofian, can issue certificates. This makes a major difference to the informal community networks. Similarly, the MO stands out as a place where cultural capital can be acquired and officially institutionalized in a friendly and nondiscriminatory environment. This capital can then be activated by its members in the educational system or in the labor market. In a similar vein, Hamid had the opportunity to improve his knowledge of three languages, as part of the MO's educational programs, thus acquiring a 'talent for translation' in various languages. Due to the courses offered by the MO, he can use these acquired skills professionally as a voluntary translator for various German welfare organizations, such as Caritas, AWO, and Rotes Kreuz (The Red Cross). Volunteering is an important reference point in the German labor market logic and is highly appreciated by employers when recruiting staff, because it is regarded as a sign of commitment (Strauß 2009). In this sense, Hamid's acquired language skills could improve his career prospects, not only as a musician. The case of Lomingo e.V. demonstrates how practices, linked to institutionalizing cultural capital, allow MOs to

make a valuable contribution to their members' social protection, which is fostered by the acquired cultural capital.

3.3. Activating Cultural Capital on the Labour Market

As Hamid's case has shown, cultural capital mobilized within MOs can be important for future career paths and inclusion in the German higher education system and the labor market. In this sense, MOs can act as important bridges to local institutional environments. One especially interesting example of the links between the generation and activation of cultural capital in organizational contexts, is the career path of Helias, who was born in Germany as a child to people who migrated from Greece to Germany. Helias first became involved with GriBo e.V. as a child. Originally founded by Greek parents seeking to support their children's education in Germany, GriBo e.V. has increasingly become a MO for the entire Greek community. From Helias' point of view, who has been engaged with Gribo e.V. in several ways over the course of his life, the community was a formative part of his growing-up and identity-formation:

> *Greece plays a very important role for me. I grew up in this Greek community thing. Back in the day, I was sent to additional lessons in the native language back in the day, and later, as a teenager, I continued a little bit voluntarily. I was also part of a Greek dance group for several years and have been teaching Greek dance groups for 12 years now. Of course, vacation in Greece during the summer was on the bucket list. And my parents put a lot of emphasis on giving me a better understanding of the village, and although the village did not really offer much, it was always very important to travel there and really rattle off the family. Especially the older ones. Yes, and that shaped me very strongly. So that really shaped my identity. (Helias, 34 years old, parents migrated from Greece)*

Helias' account emphasizes the importance of GriBo e.V. for his personal growth, upbringing and identity-formation. In addition, he stressed its decisive role for his professional career. According to Helias, his avid engagement in GriBo e.V. was guiding in his choice of profession, his advancement in the labor market, and finally, his successful attainment of a position in the Greek consulate in Germany. As of today, he works at the consulate, where he is involved in cultural, public, and press relations, as well as translation. His first internship was in a German-Greek online magazine organized by another community member. According to Helias himself, he was 'predestined' for the job, due to his ongoing commitment and activity in the Greek diaspora. As he was able to institutionalize his knowledge of the Greek language and culture, through the structures of the MO, he had all the necessary attributes to pursue a professional career in international relations, as the following interview excerpt shows:

> *Not directly but indirectly, it has a strong influence on it. If I had not been in this club as a young child, my knowledge of Greek would certainly not be what it is today. Many activities of this club have led to the fact that I was also active in other areas or networked, which had something to do with Greece and the Greek community. (Helias, 34 years old, parents migrated from Greece)*

Looking back, he describes his volunteer work in the MO as outstandingly beneficial to his career. The institutional framework of the MO allowed Helias to generate migration-specific capital in the form of in-depth knowledge of Greek culture, language, and history. He not only uses it as a professional career guidance and driver, but also as a way to achieve a high-level position. Helias was able to activate the migration-specific capital generated through his personal experience, as well as his engagement in the MO. At the same time, the MO provides the institutional framework facilitating the capital's activation on the German labor market. The example of Helias demonstrates that the concept of migration-specific cultural capital, as proposed by Erel (2010), proves to be extremely useful in the context of studying Mos, as facilitators of social protection. In this context, the MO is shown to be a catalyst, on the one hand, and a platform, on the other, for the generation and activation of migration-specific cultural capital. For Helias, his professional success is strongly linked to

the cultural capital generated in the context of the MO. In addition, the networks formed at GriBo e.V., provided important social capital, based on which he found the vacancy that facilitated a successful start to his career path. This demonstrates that both social and cultural forms of capital are relevant to the abilities of the capacity building abilities within the realm of MOs. In this way, it also highlights the need to move beyond the focus on social capital, which currently dominates the scientific discourse on MOs, and to add the aspect of cultural capital, which plays a vital role in improving social protection, in the context of migration and settlement.

4. Conclusions

This article has drawn attention to the many resources, in terms of language, educational, and professional certificates and skills, that can be mobilized and institutionalized within MOs. Skills and capabilities have recently been emphasized as important parts of social protection interventions, which contribute to the resilience in dealing with social risks and vulnerabilities of people, in the context of migration (OECD 2022). Consequently, research has paid attention to the diaspora politics of sending states, as well as local and transnational NGOs, that design targeted interventions to support the skills and capabilities (Chang 2018). This article has investigated organizations that are managed and led by people with migration biographies and their ability to facilitate the generation of skills among their target groups. Our research with people who use the services of various MOs emphasizes the importance of these organizations for mobilizing resources that they can capitalize for their education and professional careers. Previous research has emphasized the complexity of the mobilization of skills, in the context of migration and settling (Nowicka 2019; Erel 2010; Erel and Ryan 2019; Anthias and Cederberg 2009; Weiß 2005). However, research on social protection has focused on social capital in the sense of networks and personal relationships and how they contribute to´ risk aversion strategies, in the context of migration and settlement (Bilecen 2020). This research is very important because it shows the various sources of protection outside formal structures that might be discriminatory or not accessible (Lewicki 2022). However, similar to social capital, cultural capital provides a useful conceptual and empirical tool to investigate the complex trajectories of skill-mobilization and life-making in changing social, economic, and cultural contexts. Therefore, in this article, we have shown how cultural capital, acquired and mobilized within Mos, provides important venues for people with migration biographies to facilitate their lives, by completing projects and finding their 'own way' through their different stages of migration and settlement.

We find that, by offering social services, MOs enable people to generate cultural capital, predominantly in the field of education and language skills. Furthermore, in their institutional form, as registered associations, MOs can institutionalize cultural capital by validating and certifying courses, qualifications, or voluntary participation. This process is of vital importance, as institutionalized capital proves to be easier to mobilize in the labor market and thus is relevant to social mobility. The distinction between generating and institutionalizing cultural capital is essential due to the specific forms of capital they may foster. When MOs facilitate the generation of cultural capital, on the one hand, this refers to incorporated forms of capital, which become an indivisible part of the person by whom it is acquired. Cultural capital that is validated and certified by recognized institutions, on the other hand, is considered institutionalized (Bourdieu 1986). Usually, occasions to generate and institutionalize cultural capital coincide. This is the case, for example, when the MO offers a course (facilitating the generation of incorporated cultural capital), followed by the subsequent certification of the acquired skills and knowledge (institutionalizing cultural capital). In this sense, MOs create preconditions for people with migration backgrounds to meet certain job requirements, thus increasing their opportunities in the labor market. In this sense, the research results contribute to a greater understanding of *migrant organizations* and their capabilities.

Institutional Review Board Statement: The research study entitled "Migrant organizations and the co-production of social protection" underlying this article includes human research participants. The study was prospectively approved by the legal office of the Technical University of Dortmund. Ethical approval was not mandatory for this study.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: To protect the privacy of our research participants, research data are not shared.

Notes

[1] In a departure from methodological nationalism and in line with transnational, feminist, postmigrant, and postcolonial approaches, the category of the *migrant* is increasingly being critically questioned in qualitative migration research (Siouti 2022). Accordingly, it is necessary to reflect on global and societal power relations and the embeddedness within them. This process requires overcoming the categorization of the *migrant* as deviating from the social norm, thus engaging in a process of othering. Qualitative migration research finds itself caught between the demands of academia, the political-societal discourses surrounding migration, and the demand for critical engagement with them (Siouti 2022). To signal this, the terms *migrant* and *migrant organization* are in italics.

[2] We are aware of the critique raised by Shubin (2021) that the term cultural capital in the field of migration scholarship tends to underestimate regimes of valuations and runs the risk of commodifying people with migration backgrounds. We use the term here not to measure or denote the position of their class or the value of their cultural resources, but to emphasize the processes within migrant organizations that can strengthen skills and capabilities and ultimately their resilience to mitigate social risks.

[3] For further information on the interview guide and details on participants sociodemographic variables, please contact the corresponding authors.

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