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Political Integration by a Detour? Ethnic Communities and Social Capital of Migrants in Berlin

Maria Berger, Christian Galonska and Ruud
Koopmans

This article investigates the impact of associational participation of migrants on their political integration in Berlin. Using survey data, we focus on the individual level to see whether migrants who are active in German and/or ethnic organisations are better integrated politically. We test the social capital argument that participation in voluntary organisations is beneficial for political integration and investigate the empirical side of the often normatively-based fear that ethnic self-organisation is a danger to the integration of ethnic groups in the receiving society. We could not find a clear-cut answer to this question. Participation in German organisations does indeed support integration, but the effects of participation in ethnic organisations are more ambiguous: migrants active in ethnic organisations are more politically active, but not more interested in German politics, than migrants who are not active in ethnic organisations. Furthermore, we conclude that the mechanisms behind the social capital argument are different for the ethnic groups under study.

Keywords: Political Integration; Social Capital; Berlin; Migrants

Why Study the Political Participation of Migrants?

This article deals with the political participation of migrants in Berlin. During the guestworker era, when migrants were seen—and often also saw themselves—as temporary labour migrants, the socio-economic side of the integration process was at the forefront. Now that migration has turned into permanent settlement, and second and third generations of migrant origin are becoming increasingly visible and

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numerous, the question of migrants' political role can no longer be avoided. From a normative perspective, democratic philosophies, regardless of their political colour, cannot tolerate that sizeable parts of the population are excluded from democratic rights and do not participate in the political process. From a factual perspective, migrants themselves have not remained passive and are an increasingly visible group in public debates and political contention.¹

Not all such migrant involvement is equally welcomed by the 'receiving' society, though, and not all of it seems to contribute equally to the quality of the democratic process. Many European countries, for instance, are confronted with sometimes violent political activism by migrants referring to the political situation in their countries of origin. Examples are conflicts between Kurds and Turks, between different ex-Yugoslav ethnicities, or between Muslims and Jews. By focusing the hearts and minds of migrants on the politics of the 'homeland', such migrant activism seems to stand in the way of, rather than contribute to, the democratic integration of migrants into the host society.

But political participation is not the only form of ethnic activism that is feared for its possible hampering effect on the integration of ethnic minorities. Also the emergence of ethnic communities, consisting of all kinds of institutions, organisations and shared identities, is a contested issue. On the one hand, there are those—whom we may call 'assimilationists'—who fear that such ethnic communities and identities will lead to the emergence of 'parallel societies' or 'ethnic ghettos', and to an increased fragmentation of the population. On the other hand, we find those—whom we may call 'multiculturalists'—who claim that migrants can only integrate successfully into the political process on the basis of confident subcultures with a strong sense of identity. In the multiculturalist view, political integration of migrants is accomplished by a 'detour'. The political integration of migrants in the host society can only be reached when migrants become politically integrated in their own ethnic community first.

From a non-ethnic perspective, civic engagement is nowadays seen by many political observers—from conservative communitarians to left-wing libertarians—as a precondition for a well-functioning democracy. Beyond the normative value of citizens' participation, social-scientific studies have shown that the 'social capital' that is produced in civil society enhances mutual trust among citizens, as well as their trust in democratic political institutions. In his influential study on Italy, Robert Putnam (1993) additionally showed that policy effectiveness was greater in regions with strong civic participation and organisations. A strong civil society both assists individual citizens to address demands via the political system, and helps politicians to inform themselves about the needs and wants of the population, allowing them to involve citizens' organisations in policy formulation and implementation.

In a multicultural democracy the exciting question is whether or not this positive impact of civil society and social capital can be generalised to migrants' political integration. Do strong migrant organisations and subcultures also have a positive effect on migrants' political integration in the majority society? Or do the social

capital produced in ethnic communities and the ensuing trust and solidarity remain limited to the particular ethnic group and thereby become detrimental to, rather than beneficial for, integration into the wider society? Various researchers have suggested that maybe not all civil organisations are beneficial for democracy but only those organisations that teach their members to trust, and cooperate with, people from a different background—for instance people with a different ethnic origin (Portes and Landolt 1996; Putnam 2000).

Fennema and Tillie (1999) have shown for Amsterdam that ethnic social capital does have a beneficial effect on political integration of ethnic groups, as the ethnic group with the highest level of participation was also the group with the most organisations and the most dense organisational community. In this article we analyse the political participation of ethnic groups in Berlin. As the political participation of migrants can have an additional dimension, namely the orientation to their or their parents' country of origin, we asked the questions on political participation twice. We will follow the research design of Fennema and Tillie and investigate the influence of participation in ethnic organisations on political integration, but we do so on the individual level of analysis. We ask if, and to what extent, levels of political participation of individual ethnic citizens can be explained by their participation in ethnic and non-ethnic organisations.

Methodological and Technical Design of the Survey

In this article we will present part of the results of a population survey that we conducted in November 2001 and January 2002 in collaboration with the *Zentrum für Türkeistudien*. Before we present our results, we offer a short description of our empirical fieldwork in order to make our data transparent.

A special feature of the Berlin political opportunity structure is that different migrant groups are treated differently. We used this fact in the decision about which groups to include in the survey. Respondents of four different ethnic groups, Turks, Italians, Russians (among which *Aussiedler* and Russian Jews—henceforth presented as one category), plus Germans as a control group, were interviewed. These four groups differ in respect to their formal and cultural status, and therefore form interesting comparative material in order to investigate the impact of different policies on the integration of migrants. *Aussiedler*, ethnic Germans, have automatic access to citizenship and are also seen as German in a cultural sense. Russian Jews have no automatic access to citizenship, but they have relatively easy access to the German nationality and are culturally seen as close to the Germans. Italians lack the easy access to citizenship of the two former-mentioned groups, but being EU citizens, they do have voting rights at the city district level. Furthermore, there exists a relatively positive image of Italians, both in the political discourse and in the public opinion (Thränhardt 2000). The Turks definitely hold the worst position. German nationality is as difficult to obtain for the Turks as for the Italians, but because Turkey is not a member of the European Union, they also lack voting rights at the district level, as well as the positive image that Italians profit from. Finally, the

non-recognition and public problematisation of Islam makes the position of Turks more difficult than that of the three other groups.

Quantitative research strategies, especially focusing on socio-economic questions, usually refer to immigrant data that are collected as part of larger population surveys. But such data are not always suitable, because there exist considerable limitations due to the methods (not using mother-tongue interviewers), sampling design (excluding migrants in possession of German nationality) and the variables under investigation (see Galonska 2003).

The definition of a population of migrants depends to a high degree on settings. 'Immigrants' in the narrower sense applies only to the first generation; the term 'aliens' describes only a legal status, which excludes naturalised Turks or Italians; and an 'ethnic group' is, following Max Weber (1964: 307), kept together by a subjective belief in a common ancestry, which, in the case of the '*Aussiedler*', can sometimes refer to their German descent, sometimes to their Soviet country of origin. To get a broad and well-defined sampling basis, we used an analogy to the Dutch official definition, which classifies the ethnic group under study as persons who are born, or whose parents were born in respectively Turkey, Italy or the former Soviet Union. Unfortunately, this definition comes with a methodological problem. While in the case of the criteria of citizenship it would be possible to draw an unbiased random sample from the Berlin population registry, in Germany there are no official lists available for the ethnic population defined in the way it is done here. The 'random route method', often used instead of lists, is also not applicable, because it is very inefficient to locate members of small subgroups of populations like the Italians in Berlin. The so called 'snowball method' is not suitable either, because it would affect the results of the survey in an undesirable way: individuals with a higher intensity of personal networks have a higher probability to be designated by individuals who are already part of the sample. Since personal networks are an important part of our explanatory model, the snowball method is as ineligible for our purposes as the other sampling strategies.

Instead of the methods described above, we opted for a sampling technique based on names, which benefits from the fact that households of migrants can be identified by specific first names, family names or parts of names. Technically this was accomplished by a data-base query of telephone registers on CD-ROM. The advantage of this method is that a sample based on names does not refer to legal status or to subjective affiliations and that—ostensibly—there is no bias expected due to the kind of names.² The density of telephones in non-German households is, at 90 per cent, as high as in German households. From other research it is known that negligible deviations regarding the availability and the willingness to participate are related to sex, age and language abilities (Diehl and Blohm 2001; Granato 1999; Humpert and Schneiderheinze 2000; Salentin 1999).

Taking into account the considerations sketched above, the fieldwork was undertaken using the following design. In addition to a German comparison group, Turkish, Italian and Russian migrants were examined, using their own or one of their parents' birth in the corresponding country of origin as criteria to define the

ethnic groups. The interviews were conducted by telephone using a standardised, bilingual questionnaire for each migrant group. The interviewers were also perfectly bilingual. This was done in order to minimise potential biases in favour of linguistically and, in close connection, culturally and politically more integrated migrants. To prevent problems arising from sex (women may dispense with an entry in the telephone directory due to fear of harassment) and age (older migrants tend to leave Germany without checking out with the registry office), a quota plan was used. In this way, 306 Germans, 317 Turks, 316 Italians and 857 Russians were interviewed.

For the purposes of this paper we select respondents from the survey by different criteria. Firstly, in order to use only exact data we restricted the sample to cases which have—for the variables under investigation—a maximum of one missing value. Secondly, to make the tests of significance comparable we restrict the group size to the extent of the smallest group. By using random samples of the larger groups we obtained 279 cases per sample. Thirdly, beside four 'ethnic groups' we drew samples of 'national groups', excluding migrants with German nationality. Using the same design as described in the first and second steps, we obtained 188 exclusive nationals per sample.

The concept of national group refers to migrants who only have the citizenship of their country of origin, and not the German nationality. Belonging to an ethnic group is defined by being born in a foreign country or having a parent born in a foreign country. The distinction between ethnic group and national group is made for reasons of comparability, as data on ethnic groups are not available for every city included in this special issue. Furthermore, the differences between the ethnic and national groups can be interesting in themselves because they show the impact of not possessing German nationality. In addition, we will test the significances of the differences between the migrant groups with the 'Mann Whitney U' test, an ordinal equivalent to the better-known 't-test'.³

The Social and Political Participation of Turks, Russians and Italians

In this section we will present the results of the survey in a descriptive way. First we describe levels of political participation, namely political interest and engagement in different forms of political activities. Following that our main explanatory variable—memberships in ethnic and German organisations—will be presented.

Political Interest

The first form of political participation presented here is talking about politics, which we regard as a proxy for political interest. Besides talking about German politics, we asked respondents how often they talk about politics in their homeland. We do not present the data on this here, but we will use it later on to explain political participation regarding Germany.

Table 1 shows that among the ethnic groups, the Italians are most interested in German and Berlin politics: 62 per cent of them talk almost daily or frequently,

Table 1 Political interest concerning Germany

| | Autochthonous | Ethnic groups | | | National groups | | |
|---|---------------|---------------|----------|----------|-----------------|----------|----------|
| | Germans | Turks | Italians | Russians | Turks | Italians | Russians |
| 'Talking about German politics' (column %) | | | | | | | |
| Never | 2.9 | 12.9 | 10.8 | 12.2 | 16.5 | 13.3 | 16.0 |
| Not frequently | 20.8 | 41.2 | 27.6 | 35.1 | 43.6 | 29.3 | 32.4 |
| Frequently | 45.9 | 31.2 | 38.0 | 38.4 | 26.1 | 39.4 | 38.8 |
| Almost daily | 30.5 | 14.7 | 23.7 | 14.3 | 13.8 | 18.1 | 12.8 |
| Total | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| N | 279 | 279 | 279 | 279 | 188 | 188 | 188 |
| Significance of differences between groups (p-value based on 'Mann-Whitney U') | | | | | | | |
| Germans | – | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.000 |
| Turks | – | – | 0.000 | 0.266 | – | 0.005 | 0.156 |
| Italians | – | – | – | 0.009 | – | – | 0.148 |
| Russians | – | – | – | – | – | – | – |

Notes: Differences between ethnic and national groups (p-value based on 'chi-square'): 0.000 (Turks); 0.088 (Italians); 0.295 (Russians).

followed by 53 per cent of the Russians and 45 per cent of the Turks, but the differences between Russians and Turks do not have a statistically significant character. If the focus is changed to the national groups, no dramatic changes in these results can be observed. When immigrants without German citizenship are excluded, the percentages slightly decrease, but the rank order stays the same: 58 per cent of the national Italians, 52 per cent of the national Russians and 40 per cent of the national Turks talk frequently or almost daily about German politics. The differences between the ethnic and national groups are significant for the Turks and Italians.⁴ One observation is unambiguous: compared to the Germans, the political interest of all ethnic and national groups is significantly lower.

It is not too surprising that Germans are more interested in German politics than ethnic groups and that the ethnic groups are more interested than the national groups. However, we still have to investigate if this is a direct effect of the granting of citizenship or whether there is a sort of latent variable 'orientation towards Germany' lying behind this mechanism. Another question that is still unsolved is why there are no differences between ethnic Russians (who are mostly *Aussiedler*) and national Russians (who are predominantly Jews), taking into account that these are two rather different groups of which the *Aussiedler* are presumed to be more 'German' in a cultural sense, and are facing a more favourable political opportunity structure.

Political Activities

A range of activities that people can undertake if they are concerned about the welfare of their neighbourhood, country, community etc. were included in the survey. These forms of participation are, formally, open to everyone, and therefore

Table 2 Political activities concerning Germany

| | Autochthonous | | Ethnic groups | | National groups | | |
|---|---------------|-------|---------------|----------|-----------------|----------|----------|
| | Germans | Turks | Italians | Russians | Turks | Italians | Russians |
| Types of political activities participated in (% of all) | | | | | | | |
| Money contribution | 39.8 | 22.2 | 41.2 | 14.7 | 17.6 | 43.1 | 19.1 |
| Meeting | 27.2 | 23.4 | 17.6 | 9.3 | 17.6 | 16.5 | 8.0 |
| Collection of signatures | 25.4 | 13.3 | 16.5 | 5.7 | 10.1 | 12.2 | 3.7 |
| Demonstration | 17.6 | 16.5 | 20.4 | 5.7 | 13.8 | 18.1 | 2.7 |
| Contact to media | 11.8 | 11.5 | 14.0 | 9.3 | 7.4 | 13.8 | 11.2 |
| Contact to politician | 10.8 | 9.7 | 10.4 | 6.5 | 6.4 | 9.6 | 4.3 |
| Complaint | 8.3 | 5.7 | 9.7 | 3.6 | 7.4 | 12.2 | 4.3 |
| Strike | 2.5 | 4.7 | 3.6 | 1.8 | 5.3 | 3.2 | 0.5 |
| N | 279 | 279 | 279 | 279 | 188 | 188 | 188 |
| Count of political activities (column %) | | | | | | | |
| No activity | 37.6 | 53.0 | 42.7 | 72.4 | 62.2 | 42.0 | 71.8 |
| One activity | 25.4 | 19.4 | 20.4 | 13.3 | 13.8 | 22.3 | 14.4 |
| Two activities | 14.0 | 10.8 | 16.8 | 6.5 | 12.2 | 17.0 | 5.9 |
| Three + activities | 22.9 | 16.8 | 20.1 | 7.9 | 11.7 | 18.6 | 8.0 |
| Total | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| N | 279 | 279 | 279 | 279 | 188 | 188 | 188 |
| Significance of differences between groups (p-value based on 'Mann-Whitney U') | | | | | | | |
| Germans | – | 0.001 | 0.356 | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.318 | 0.000 |
| Turks | – | – | 0.014 | 0.000 | – | 0.000 | 0.030 |
| Italians | – | – | – | 0.000 | – | – | 0.000 |
| Russians | – | – | – | – | – | – | – |

Notes: Differences between ethnic and national groups (p-value based on 'chi-square'): 0.001 (Turks); 0.851 (Italians); 0.937 (Russians).

also to people without citizenship rights (Diehl and Blohm 2001). We asked respondents about their participation in different activities, again both in relation to issues concerning Berlin and German politics, and separately in relation to their country of origin. In Table 2 the Germany-related activities are presented.

The rank order regarding the relative popularity of the different forms of activities is more or less the same for each ethnic group, with monetary contribution at the top, and participating in strikes at the bottom. The count of political activities (second section of the table) shows that the Russians, both in ethnic and national composition, are the group with the lowest level of participation: 72 per cent of them did not undertake any political activity during the last year. Only about 42 per cent of the Italians are inactive in the same way. The ethnic and national Turks differ: 53 per cent of the ethnic and 62 per cent of the national Turks were not involved in any political activity. The differences between all groups are significant, with one exception: ethnic as well as national Italians seem to participate almost to the same degree as Germans. Whereas on the criterion of political interest a difference in the participation pattern between Germans and Italians was found, regarding political activities we can draw the conclusion that Italians are fully integrated in the German society, as their participation resembles that of the Germans.

It is interesting to note that regarding interest Russians score higher than Turks, but that Turks reverse their position in the rank order when political activities are concerned. As with political interest, the ethnic and national Turks differ. There seem to be mechanisms linked with the possession of German nationality which are especially relevant for the political participation of Turks, but not for the Italians, as the ethnic and national Italians participate to the same degree. We need to investigate these mechanisms more fully.

Main Explanatory Variables: Involvement in Voluntary Organisations

Here we will describe our most important explanatory variable, involvement in voluntary organisation. There exists a whole range of different kinds of voluntary organisations, and not all of them have the same nature. Some organisations have purely social aims, like sports and hobby organisations. Others can have social or political aims, like women's and youth organisations. Political parties, on the other hand, have purely political aims. In some cases, participation in voluntary organisations can therefore overlap with the concept of political participation (questions on forms of political participation, like participating in strikes or meetings of political parties). This is rather crucial in our research project because social participation is used to explain political participation. But it is quite logical that active membership in a political party leads to participation in political meetings. To say in this case that participation in organisations leads to political participation comes close to a tautological argument. Therefore the impacts of political and non-political organisations on individual political participation were analysed separately.⁵

Contrary to our expectations, it appeared that people who are active in political organisations (both ethnic and German) do not tend to be more politically integrated than people who are active in non-political organisations (Berger *et al.* 2002); also the intensity of membership participation seems to have no explanatory value. As the nature of the organisation does not seem to make a substantial difference we will abandon this distinction and make our analysis in this article based only on the distinction between ethnic versus non-ethnic organisations. The only exception is that engagement in German trade unions is treated separately, since earlier research has shown that this category is interesting to consider separately (Jacobs *et al.* 2002).

The first section of Table 3 shows the different levels of membership in ethnic and German voluntary organisations and German trade unions. The ethnic and national Italians are the most engaged in both German and ethnic organisations. The Turks show a complex distribution. The ethnic Turks are more engaged in German than in ethnic organisations, whereas the national group shows the reverse pattern. The Russians are on both levels more active in ethnic organisations than the Turks, which is, at least in part, due to the membership of almost all Jews in the *Jüdische Gemeinde*. But they are also the least active in German organisations, although the ethnic group is to a substantial part composed by *Aussiedler*, who are presumed to be more German than other migrants. Overall (second section of the table), the Turks and the Russians participate to the same degree in voluntary organisations.

Table 3 Memberships in ethnic and non-ethnic organisations

| | Autochthonous | | Ethnic groups | | National groups | | |
|--|---------------|-------|---------------|----------|-----------------|----------|----------|
| | Germans | Turks | Italians | Russians | Turks | Italians | Russians |
| Memberships in ethnic and German voluntary organisations and German trade unions (% of all) | | | | | | | |
| Ethnic organisations | – | 30.5 | 48.0 | 41.2 | 34.6 | 45.7 | 37.8 |
| German organisations | 89.2 | 37.3 | 59.9 | 31.9 | 29.3 | 53.2 | 24.5 |
| German trade unions | 33.0 | 22.2 | 17.2 | 1.8 | 20.2 | 14.4 | 2.1 |
| | 279 | 279 | 279 | 279 | 188 | 188 | 188 |
| Memberships in German and ethnic voluntary organisations (column %) | | | | | | | |
| No membership | 10.8 | 46.2 | 29.0 | 48.4 | 52.7 | 31.4 | 52.1 |
| Member in ethnic organisations only | – | 16.5 | 11.1 | 19.7 | 18.1 | 15.4 | 23.4 |
| Member in German organisations only | 89.2 | 23.3 | 36.9 | 21.5 | 16.5 | 30.3 | 14.4 |
| Member in both | – | 14.0 | 22.9 | 10.4 | 12.8 | 22.9 | 10.1 |
| Total | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 | 100.0 |
| N | 279 | 279 | 279 | 279 | 188 | 188 | 188 |
| Significance of differences between groups (p-value based on 'chi square') | | | | | | | |
| Turks | – | – | 0.000 | 0.456 | – | 0.000 | 0.543 |
| Italians | – | – | – | 0.000 | – | – | 0.000 |
| Russians | – | – | – | – | – | – | – |

Notes: Differences between ethnic and national groups (p-value based on 'chi-square'): 0.013 (Turks); 0.049 (Italians); 0.007 (Russians).

About half of these groups are or were never a member of such associations and there are no significant differences between these groups, neither on the ethnic nor on the national level. The Italians are most often a member of both an Italian and a German organisation (23 per cent), followed by the Turks (14 per cent and 13 per cent) and the Russians (10 per cent). As with political interest and activities, the national and ethnic Turks differ, which strengthens the idea that it needs to be further investigated why not having the German nationality seems to be more important for the Turks than for the other groups.

If we look at the upper section of the table again, we see that the memberships in trade unions are of a special kind. Ethnic and national Turks are the most engaged in German trade unions, even more than the Italians. This difference is due to the historical fact that the Turks came as guestworkers, the Russians as *Aussiedler* or Jews. The Turks immigrated in times of full employment when the trade unions had great political influence. Trade unions were very engaged in questions of equal rights and anti-discrimination concerning guestworkers. The biggest part of the Russian immigration took place in the 1990s during times of high unemployment when the power of trade unions was decreasing. Furthermore, it may be that the Russians distrust labour organisations, which had an ambiguous character in the communist states. The Italians are to a considerable part self-employed, so it is not very surprising that they are less engaged in trade unions.

A First Attempt to Explain Political Participation

In the foregoing we have explored the political participation of Turks, Italians and Russians and their participation in both ethnic and non-ethnic organisations. In this section of the paper we attempt to answer the question as to what extent we can explain the different kinds of political participation by reference to membership in ethnic and non-ethnic organisations, and we address the question of how participation regarding the country of origin relates to this. The first item is the *degree of political interest*. We will analyse this in its original composition with four categories ranging from ‘never talking about politics’ to ‘daily talking about politics’. The second item is the *degree of political activity*, measured by the number of different forms of activity as described in Table 2, ranging from ‘no activity’ to ‘three or more activities’.

All dependent variables have an ordinal character and should, in our opinion, not be interpreted as an interval scale because the scales are not divided into intervals of the same length and they do not approximate a normal distribution. Therefore it was decided not to use a linear regression technique, but an alternative found in the family of logistic regression models, the so-called ‘ordinal logit models’. The key indicator for the effects of the different explanatory variables is standardised ‘odds’. The statistically correct interpretation of odds is a very abstract undertaking. For our purposes here it is sufficient to know that values of less than 1 correspond to negative effects and values greater than 1 to positive effects of the independent variable. Moreover, the multiplicative distance to 1 is an indicator of the intensity of the effect. These ordinal logit models are used to compute the correlations between the two forms of political participation and our explanatory variables.⁶

Analogous to the other empirical articles in this *JEMS* special issue (the following three papers), the independent variables will be added to the model in four steps. In a *first step* of the analysis the independent variables gender, education (based on a score of estimated years that are necessary to reach different educational degrees) and language proficiency (five categories ranging from ‘no German’ to ‘German is mother tongue’) are introduced. In a *second step* the occupational status (occupied and unemployed in relation to not being active in the labour market) is added. In the *third step* we come to our main explanatory variable, membership in ethnic voluntary organisations (coded as a dummy). The cross-ethnic counterparts of this variable—membership in German voluntary organisations and membership in German trade unions—are added in the *fourth step*.

In addition to these comparable steps we introduced one more variable in a fifth model, namely homeland-orientated participation. This last point is very important in order to get pure effects of ethnic communities on political participation. Remember what a multivariate analysis is able to perform: the estimated effects—here presented by standardised odds—inform us about the impact of an independent variable *controlled* for the effects of all other independent variables in the model. The most interesting variable according to the theoretical framework is membership in ethnic organisations. When political interest concerning Germany is

the dependent variable and political interest concerning the country of origin is added to the model as one of the independent variables, one controls for a latent background variable, which can be described as 'general political interest'.⁷ So the effect of memberships in ethnic organisations on German political interest is adjusted for this global relationship and enables the model to answer the following question: What is the correlation between memberships in ethnic organisations and the exclusive political interest concerning Germany when the general political interest is equal for all respondents?

After this excursion into the methodological and theoretical background of our analytical strategy, we now come to the analysis itself. We present two tables, one explaining German political interest (Table 4) and one explaining German political activities (Table 5), for ethnic groups as well as for national groups.

Model 1 of Table 4 shows that gender (being a female) has a negative impact on political interest for the Turks, especially for the national Turks. Education is of high significance for all groups, and it stays significant when other variables are added to the model. Language proficiency has a somewhat smaller impact, but—opposite to education—its impact increases when more variables are added. In *model 2* the occupational status was included, but this made no contribution to the explanatory power of the different models. Likewise, adding memberships in ethnic organisations does not increase the explanatory power of the model (*model 3*). So it seems that membership in ethnic organisations has no impact, either positive or negative, on the German political interest of all ethnic groups. In *model 4* we added memberships in German organisations and trade unions. Here we see that for the Turks membership in trade unions and for Italians membership in German organisations correlate significantly with political interest concerning Germany. For the Russians neither membership in trade unions nor in German organisations influence their political interest.

The explanation of political interest in Germany is not very satisfying taking the information derived from models 1 to 4 together. The explained variances are low (under 20 per cent). This changes dramatically if we look at *model 5*, where we added the variable political interest concerning the country of origin. In this model the explained variances for all groups rise dramatically. Migrants interested in homeland politics are much more interested in German politics than migrants who never or seldom talk about politics in respectively Turkey, Italy or Russia. This is the case for all groups with the most extreme value for the national Russians. It is also interesting to observe that the impact of ethnic memberships becomes negative for Turks and Italians when their homeland interest is controlled for. So we have to adjust the former statement that ethnic membership is irrelevant for political interest in Germany. There exists indeed a tendency for ethnic membership to correlate negatively with political interest. Although this correlation is not significant we cannot disregard it because this tendency is the same for Turks and Italians. It only needs a larger sample for these effects to become significant. This substantiates our argument that it is necessary to control for the latent background variable 'general political interest'. So one can conclude that when two migrants are politically

Table 4 Explaining political interest of migrants concerning Germany

| | Ethnic groups | | | National groups | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|---------|---------|-----------------|---------|---------|
| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 |
| Turks (N = 279 and 188) | | | | | | |
| Woman ref. men | 0.749* | 0.754* | 0.756* | 0.799* | 0.799* | 0.799* |
| Education | 1.496** | 1.492** | 1.492** | 1.503** | 1.503** | 1.503** |
| Language proficiency | 1.360** | 1.356* | 1.355* | 1.388** | 1.388** | 1.388** |
| Unemployed (ref. inactive) | | 0.845 | 0.845 | 0.842 | 0.973 | 0.885 |
| Employed (ref. inactive) | | 0.993 | 0.993 | 1.008 | 1.089 | 0.981 |
| Ethnic membership | | | 1.008 | 0.951 | 0.867 | 0.809 |
| Cross-ethnic membership | | | | 1.137 | 1.138 | 1.172 |
| Trade-union membership | | | | 1.385** | 1.316* | 1.347* |
| Talking about homeland politics | | | | 2.613** | 2.613** | 2.362** |
| Pseudo R ² | 0.130 | 0.138 | 0.138 | 0.176 | 0.339 | 0.324 |
| Italians (N = 279 and 188) | | | | | | |
| Woman ref. men | 0.875 | 0.896 | 0.898 | 0.875 | 0.850 | 0.853 |
| Education | 1.502** | 1.432** | 1.432** | 1.302* | 1.275* | 1.597** |
| Language proficiency | 1.254* | 1.277* | 1.298* | 1.093 | 1.466** | 0.892 |
| Unemployed (ref. inactive) | | 1.081 | 1.078 | 1.109 | 1.023 | 1.155 |
| Employed (ref. inactive) | | 1.237* | 1.221 | 1.196 | 1.144 | 1.310* |
| Ethnic membership | | | 1.094 | 0.954 | 0.826 | 0.901 |
| Cross-ethnic membership | | | | 1.813** | 1.660** | 1.788** |
| Trade-union membership | | | | 1.247* | 1.285* | 1.344* |
| Talking about homeland politics | | | | | 2.716** | 2.351** |
| Pseudo R ² | 0.085 | 0.095 | 0.098 | 0.192 | 0.358 | 0.368 |
| Russians (N = 279 and 188) | | | | | | |
| Woman ref. men | 0.957 | 0.938 | 0.946 | 0.944 | 0.943 | 1.053 |
| Education | 1.401** | 1.431** | 1.412** | 1.395** | 1.328* | 1.262 |
| Language proficiency | 1.273* | 1.278* | 1.291* | 1.283* | 1.478** | 1.204 |
| Unemployed (ref. inactive) | | 0.844 | 0.852 | 0.842 | 0.788* | 0.814 |
| Employed (ref. inactive) | | 0.954 | 0.962 | 0.951 | 0.929 | 0.979 |
| Ethnic membership | | | 1.112 | 1.107 | 1.020 | 1.091 |
| Cross-ethnic membership | | | | 1.111 | 1.043 | 0.948 |
| Trade-union membership | | | | 1.130 | 1.130 | 1.198 |
| Talking about homeland politics | | | | | 2.159** | 3.644** |
| Pseudo R ² | 0.049 | 0.056 | 0.059 | 0.066 | 0.194 | 0.366 |

Notes: * significant on a level of at least 90% (p < 0.1). ** significant on a level of more than 99% (p < 0.01).

Table 5 Explaining political activities of migrants concerning Germany

| | Ethnic groups | | | | | National groups | | | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-----------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 | Model 5 | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 | Model 5 |
| Turks (N = 279 and 188) | | | | | | | | | | |
| Woman ref. men | 0.876 | 0.889 | 0.993 | 1.031 | 1.108 | 0.948 | 0.967 | 1.033 | 1.054 | 1.141 |
| Education | 1.216 | 1.194 | 1.181 | 1.177 | 1.126 | 1.151 | 1.093 | 1.081 | 1.101 | 1.054 |
| Language proficiency | 1.652** | 1.644** | 1.590** | 1.602** | 1.873** | 1.707** | 1.691** | 1.573** | 1.507* | 1.901** |
| Unemployed (ref. inactive) | | 1.119 | 1.151 | 1.098 | 1.120 | | 1.303 | 1.345* | 1.228 | 1.076 |
| Employed (ref. inactive) | | 1.099 | 1.077 | 1.035 | 1.061 | | 1.284 | 1.269 | 1.231 | 1.109 |
| Ethnic membership | | | 1.575** | 1.540** | 1.225 | | | 1.436* | 1.344* | 0.985 |
| Cross-ethnic membership | | | | 1.509** | 1.328* | | | | 1.376* | 1.294 |
| Trade-union membership | | | | 1.373* | 1.258* | | | | 1.289 | 1.270 |
| Participation in homeland politics | | | | | 2.737** | | | | | 2.895** |
| Pseudo R ² | 0.097 | 0.100 | 0.151 | 0.233 | 0.393 | 0.090 | 0.105 | 0.134 | 0.184 | 0.359 |
| Italians (N = 279 and 188) | | | | | | | | | | |
| Woman ref. men | 1.147 | 1.152 | 1.153 | 1.142 | 1.189 | 1.143 | 1.151 | 1.158 | 1.134 | 1.172 |
| Education | 1.521** | 1.449** | 1.463** | 1.369* | 1.237* | 1.661** | 1.599** | 1.672** | 1.521** | 1.297 |
| Language proficiency | 0.994 | 1.023 | 1.133 | 1.019 | 1.125 | 0.970 | 0.994 | 1.049 | 0.988 | 1.109 |
| Unemployed (ref. inactive) | | 1.189 | 1.214 | 1.243* | 1.151 | | 1.185 | 1.245 | 1.284* | 1.170 |
| Employed (ref. inactive) | | 1.208 | 1.135 | 1.118 | 1.154 | | 1.165 | 1.061 | 1.081 | 1.139 |
| Ethnic membership | | | 1.642** | 1.533** | 1.265* | | | 1.688** | 1.554** | 1.323* |
| Cross-ethnic membership | | | | 1.469** | 1.389** | | | | 1.448* | 1.340* |
| Trade-union membership | | | | 1.211* | 1.251* | | | | 1.243 | 1.246 |
| Participation in homeland politics | | | | | 2.031** | | | | | 2.170** |
| Pseudo R ² | 0.062 | 0.074 | 0.138 | 0.185 | 0.272 | 0.081 | 0.090 | 0.160 | 0.205 | 0.305 |
| Russians (N = 279 and 188) | | | | | | | | | | |
| Woman ref. men | 0.904 | 0.920 | 0.936 | 0.958 | 0.926 | 0.934 | 0.906 | 0.939 | 0.965 | 0.904 |
| Education | 1.233 | 1.217 | 1.120 | 1.089 | 1.088 | 1.078 | 1.083 | 1.041 | 1.039 | 1.051 |
| Language proficiency | 1.142 | 1.113 | 1.182 | 1.189 | 1.309* | 1.115 | 1.112 | 1.190 | 1.183 | 1.319 |
| Unemployed (ref. inactive) | | 0.990 | 1.068 | 1.055 | 1.080 | | 0.710* | 0.783 | 0.790 | 0.763 |
| Employed (ref. inactive) | | 1.136 | 1.203 | 1.193 | 1.193 | | 0.900 | 0.963 | 0.955 | 0.962 |
| Ethnic membership | | | 1.741** | 1.750** | 1.586** | | | 1.574** | 1.556** | 1.426* |
| Cross-ethnic membership | | | | 1.274* | 1.248 | | | | 1.150 | 1.275 |
| Trade-union membership | | | | 1.119 | 1.165 | | | | 1.089 | 1.126 |
| Participation in homeland politics | | | | | 1.743** | | | | | 2.034** |
| Pseudo R ² | 0.015 | 0.019 | 0.093 | 0.112 | 0.193 | 0.006 | 0.026 | 0.074 | 0.082 | 0.193 |

Notes: * significant on a level of at least 90% (p < 0.1); ** significant on a level of more than 99% (p < 0.01).

interested to the same degree, the one who is a member of an ethnic organisation will be less interested in political issues referring specifically to Germany.

Table 5 presents models regarding the explanation of German political activities. The first model shows that the overall effects of gender, education and language proficiency are lower than in the analogous models for the explanation of political interest; only language proficiency for Turks and education for Italians are significant. Employment status (model 2) has no significant impact on political activities.

But one can observe meaningful differences from the political interest explanations when memberships in ethnic organisations are introduced (model 3): highly significant effects appear for all groups. These effects remain stable when memberships in German organisations are controlled for (model 4), which are also of higher importance than in the models explaining political interest. But the effects of German membership are smaller than the effects of ethnic membership.

But these effects, especially of ethnic organisations, decrease when political activity concerning the homeland is added in model 5. Once more the impact of the homeland-directed counterpart has the absolutely strongest explanatory power for all groups. As with the models regarding political interest, only the input of this variable leads to a satisfactory explanatory model. As in the models explaining political interest, the explained variance is lowest for the Russians and highest for the Turks. It seems that our explanatory models 'fit' the Turks better than the Russians.

Conclusions

Looking back at the descriptive data, we conclude that there are some substantial differences in the political participation patterns of Italians, Turks and Russians and in the way they relate to the German patterns. Italians resemble the Germans the most, especially regarding political activities, and participate always more than Russians and Turks, of whom Turks participate more in German political activities and Russians talk more about German politics. But only for the Turks does it seem to be of importance whether or not they have German nationality. Surprisingly this does not hold for the Russians, where the *Aussiedler*, who encounter in Berlin relatively favourable opportunities, dominate the ethnic category because of their German nationality. The fact that the data show that Italians participate more than Turks is not so stunning, as the opportunities, both political and in the public discourse, are more favourable towards Italians than towards Turks.

The assumption that ethnic political participation of migrants is a threat to their political integration in Berlin and German society does not seem to be confirmed by the data presented in this article. Participation, both political interest and political activities, towards the country of origin is the most powerful variable in our models for explaining political participation in Berlin and German politics. The fears of the assimilationists therefore seem to lack an empirical basis, as political participation regarding Germany and the country of origin seem to be country-neutral, and influenced by a latent variable—'general political interest'. However, on the aggre-

gate level (the participation scores of the different ethnic groups), the positive relation between German-oriented participation and homeland participation cannot be found. The Turks are the most homeland-oriented and the least Germany-oriented, both regarding their political and social orientation; this is exactly the other way around for the Italians, who are the most German-oriented and the least homeland-oriented. For the Russians this picture is somewhat ambiguous, probably due to the recent immigration of this group.

Whereas on a general level our data provide support for the mutual reinforcement of ethnic and non-ethnic political participation, support for the more specific arguments of theories of social capital was more ambiguous. Both participation in ethnic and German organisations correlates positively with German political activities, irrespective of whether the organisation has a political or a non-political nature. This means that a person who is involved in a German or ethnic organisation is more likely to participate in German political issues. On the other hand, for the variable of political interest we found some indications that went in the opposite direction, namely that involvement in ethnic associations may be detrimental to interest in Berlin and German politics. People involved in ethnic organisations tended to be more interested in homeland politics and less interested in German politics.

How can we explain this paradoxical fact that ethnic civil society contributes to political activities with regard to Germany, but not to an interest in German politics? The question on political participation was asked twice, once homeland-related and once related to Germany. But this latter form of participation can in itself also have two orientations. It can be oriented around general German issues, like unemployment or the foreign politics of the German government, but also focused on the ethnic group in Germany, like integration politics or the right to Islamic education. Thus it could be that ethnic organisations do succeed in getting their members mobilised on migrant themes, but not in getting them interested in German politics in general. We must also bear in mind here that the wording of the question on activities differs from the wording of the question on interest. Where the word 'politics' was explicitly used in the latter, for the question on activities we described politics more implicitly as 'bring about improvements or counteract deterioration in society'. Therefore it is possible that respondents who were interested in the latter type of 'low' politics, answered in the negative on the question on political interest, which refers to a more abstract level. Anyway, we can state with certainty that political interest and political activities are two separate elements of political integration and that the underlying social capital mechanisms function differently. This conclusion is also strengthened by the fact that the socio-demographic variables (language, education) are of more importance for explaining interest than for activities.

We can conclude that ethnic and German political participation, both measured as activities and interest, are not mutually exclusive at the individual level. But on an aggregate level, the group with the highest amount of homeland-directed orientation, the Turks, is not the group with the highest orientation towards the politics

of Germany, and vice versa. The social capital hypothesis that membership in voluntary organisations contributes to political participation is confirmed entirely for political activities, and partly for political interest. Also the cross-cultural effects are ambiguous, as membership in ethnic organisations contributes to activities but tends to affect interest negatively. To investigate the mechanisms that underlie these results, in future work we will expand our scope to the aggregate level and investigate the organisational structure of the ethnic communities and see if the density, quality and functioning of the networks can help us solve the questions that are still open. By doing so we hopefully can also answer the question as to why our models do a better job in predicting the political participation of Turks and Italians than the political participation of Russians.

Notes

- [1] In a recent study of protest activities in the Federal Republic of Germany since 1950, Rucht (2001) reports that the issue-area of immigration, ethnic relations and xenophobia has in the 1990s become the single most important topic of protest. This includes racist attacks and antiracist demonstrations, but also a sizeable share of mobilisation by migrants themselves.
- [2] One exception was made with respect to the immigrants from the former Soviet Union: the so-called *Aussiedler* and the Jewish 'refugees'. By communicating with the responsible authorities for the admission of both groups in Berlin, it could be detected that a proportion of the ethnic Germans as well as the Jews, have names which are not descended from Russian, but are typically German or Jewish. Therefore we had to test whether *Aussiedler* and Jews with Russian names differed from those with German names. To test this a further sample of Russian migrants was drawn, which was based on specific German and Jewish names. However, it turned out that there were no significant differences between the *Aussiedler* from the Russian and the German lists of names, and neither between the Jews from the two lists.
- [3] By 'Mann-Whitney U' the null hypothesis that two random samples derive from uniformly distributed populations having identical means is tested. The test is based on rank sums of deviations from the median (and not the arithmetic mean). This procedure is suitable when the variable under investigation has an ordinal character as is the case for political interest and political activity. The p-value represents the probability of making an error in accepting the alternative hypothesis that the samples are drawn from different populations.
- [4] We tested the differences between ethnic and national groups by the underlying assumption that the distributions of the ethnic groups are representative of the whole population. Then we examined the deviations of the national groups using 'chi square'. This procedure has the disadvantage that we cannot use the ordinal information of the dependent variable, but unfortunately we did not find a procedure analogous to 'Mann-Whitney U', testing two populations sharing a part of their members. The p-value represents the probability of making an error when accepting the alternative hypothesis that the national group derives from a different population.
- [5] In the category 'political' the following organisations were included: citizens' initiatives, political parties, socio-political organisations (e.g. Greenpeace) and special-interest organisations. As non-political we included sports clubs, leisure organisations, cultural organisations, self-help groups, welfare organisations, women's organisations, youth organisations, religious organisations and ethnic/national organisations.
- [6] Ordinal logit models are part of the family of logistic regression models. The basic model

of logistic regression, the binary logit model, is used when the dependent variable is dichotomous. In ordinal logit models the categories of the dependent variable are aggregated to dichotomous variables where higher-ranked categories are contrasted with lower-ranked categories. The coefficients for all binary logit models are aggregated to one coefficient.

- [7] From earlier analyses we know that there is a strong correlation between political interest concerning the country of origin and German political interest. The same applies to political activities. This indicates that there exists a latent background variable, that is country-neutral.

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