Article

Migrant Organisations on the Rise after 2015/2016? Between "Projectitis" and the Formation of New Structures and Types

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Abstract: The paper departs from the observation that the role of migrant organisations (MOs) in Germany has changed significantly since the strong influx of refugees in 2015/16. As a result of this specific historical situation, it seems that MOs were able to strengthen their position as important civil society and integration policy actors and reduce reservations about them. While there has been growing attention on MOs' civic and social contributions, both in public and academic debates, this article also highlights the risks of failure and inflated expectations and the often rather fragile structures of MOs. Thus, the article aims to broaden the view on MOs by focusing on aspects which have been neglected in the course of recent public and academic interest and rather optimistic perceptions. The methodological approach is one of "embedded research": the author has been a senior executive of one of the largest German MOs for six years and, at the same time, a migration researcher for many years. From this special inside/outside view, an ambivalent picture emerges: despite a significantly greater appreciation of the achievements of MOs and much verbal recognition, there is a clear lack of the necessary material/structural support, jeopardising the sustainability and viability of many MOs.

Keywords: migrant organisations; participation; refugees; embedded research; social protection

1. Introduction

This paper addresses the question of how the role of migrant organisations (MOs) in Germany has changed after the strong influx of refugees in 2015/2016 and to what extent this change is sustainable. The article starts from two basic assumptions:

1. Migrant organisations make an important contribution to promoting the equal participation in society of people with a migration history.
2. Their importance has increased significantly in Germany in recent years.

These assumptions reflect a widespread assessment of the role of migrant organisations in German-language discourse. However, such a predominantly positive view of MOs is rather recent in Germany. For decades, MOs were either not perceived at all or were perceived rather sceptically. In public debate, they were attributed with promoting so-called parallel societies. In academic discourse, they were often associated with segregation. For a long time, interest in migrant organisations was limited to narrow academic circles.

While, since the 1980s, there have been isolated studies and research that aimed to show, empirically and pragmatically, where MOs contributed to integration, a trend reversal in perception has been noticeable in the last 15 years or so. The strong influx of refugees to Germany in 2015/2016 in particular gave MOs a further boost in terms of public perception and positive societal and academic evaluation.

Numerous migrant organisations became involved in supporting refugees during this period. Overstretched municipalities worked together with MOs. This historical constellation resulted in a window of opportunity for MOs to prove themselves and to further reduce existing reservations. These new forms of civil and social engagement also attracted increased academic interest. A number of recent studies (cf., e.g., SVR 2020; Halm

et al. 2020; Huth 2019; Priemer and Schmidt 2018) confirm in various ways the observation that migrant organisations have been heavily involved in refugee work since 2015/16 and show in a more general way their important contributions with respect to integration and participation.

Numerous recent studies have produced a wealth of detailed information on MOs regarding their activities, functions, organisational structures, members, funding, personnel, networks, challenges, etc. There is considerably more data on MOs than there was a few years ago. Nevertheless, there are many questions that remain open and aspects that remain underexposed.

Against the backdrop of this boom in research and attention, this article chooses a more subjective view, a perspective of its own, in comparison to recent studies. To this end, a method of "embedded research" is used, which allows for the analysis and comparison of the outlined observations from *within* a migrant organisation. The aim of this contribution is to show in what complex environment and context the role of MOs has changed and that, despite quantitative and qualitative growth, their position is much more fragile than it may seem. To this end, two hypotheses are assumed:

1. The migration situation in Germany in 2015/2016 has acted as a booster, promoting new forms of cooperation between MOs and other actors and the emergence of new types of MOs.
2. The repeated affirmative statement of how important MOs have become belies how fragile their development is, how vulnerable many organisations are, and how strongly sceptical perceptions and attributions on the part of established actors persist.

The aim of this article is to review the currently widespread image of MOs and to work out the nuances and shades more precisely from a specific internal perspective. In doing so, the considerable risk of failure for these organisations will also be highlighted. Also, structural and cognitive barriers that prove to be very durable and stable are shown.

But what justifies a "subjective perspective" at this point, in the context of a scientific contribution? While the results of studies usually come from quantitative surveys and/or qualitative interviews, as well as from further data analysis, all of which are collected *externally*, the observations presented here are based on data collected and analysed *internally* in the context of active participation and "embedded research".

The author is a senior executive of a large migrant organisation and, at the same time, an interdisciplinary migration researcher. From this special perspective of simultaneous inside and outside view, the hypotheses are tested. Such an approach brings with it numerous pitfalls but also many advantages and new insights.

The following section (Section 2) outlines the development of public and academic discourse on MOs in the German-language debate. After reflecting on the emergence, functions, and evolution of MOs (Section 2.1), it will focus on a possibly new role for MOs since 2005 and in particular since 2015/16 (Section 2.2). Section 3 reflects on the opportunities and the risks of the embedded research method. The author's role is also critically examined.

In Section 4, the results of interviews, observations, and data analysis are presented with regard to the research questions and hypotheses. Section 4.1 aims to draw a differentiated picture of the recent development of MOs, highlighting persistent forces, barriers, and ambivalences. The internal perspective and analysis refer to an umbrella organisation of migrant organisations in a large city in the Ruhr region. Closely related to this are insights into the worlds of experience of the more than 60 member organisations as well as selected MOs and local alliances/networks throughout Germany. In Section 4.2, a case study of the BV NeMO[1] (Federal Association of Networks of Migrant Organisations) is used to show the extent to which refugee migration in 2015/16 contributed to the development of new types of MOs and modes of cooperation. At the same time, fragile structures and risks of failure are also highlighted there.

The article ends with a conclusion and outlook (Section 5).

2. MOs in Public and Academic Discourse in Germany

2.1. Evolution, Functions, and Debates

Migrant organisations in Germany can look back on a long history. Due to space restrictions, their development will be roughly sketched here, starting with guest worker migration from the mid-1950s onward. However, this focus should not obscure the fact that already, in earlier times—e.g., in the course of labour migration during the industrialisation phase in the German Empire—migrants formed their own associations and unions (cf., e.g., Bade 2000 for the case of the so-called Ruhrpolen). Expanding the view to a more global and time-spanning perspective, one can conclude that the specific development of migrant organisations in Germany can ultimately be classified within the ubiquitous significance of migrant associations. "All over the world, it seems, immigrants have been seen as a group who founded numerous organizations", notes Moya in an article examining the existence, founding motives, and formative forces of MOs from a global and historical perspective (Moya 2005, p. 839).[2]

So, if MOs are a ubiquitous phenomenon, what accounts for their respective development? What exactly are MOs? And what specific development have they shown in Germany, and for what reasons?

Research on immigrant organisations was initially characterised by a focus on the U.S. context and the assumption that certain cultures of origin play a particular role in the formation of immigrant associations. Since then, however, numerous studies have shown that the association of migrants happens quite independently of existing association cultures in their countries of origin or favourable conditions in the host country (cf. Moya 2005). Rather, there seem to be general human needs for association and community as well as responses to specific needs or gaps in social, economic, cultural, religious, or other services for new residents.

Here, MOs fulfil certain functions for their members and target groups. Moya states, in this regard:

> [. . .] it is hardly surprising that historically they have mushroomed in situations where neither traditional institutions—such as kinship groups and the parish church—or newer ones—such as the welfare state, insurance companies and corporations—could satisfy social needs like healthcare, leisure and companionship. Functionalism offers here a more insightful explanation than arguments based on the civic and political culture of the immigrants or theirs hosts.[3]

At the same time, however, the surrounding institutional and structural conditions in a country certainly influence the way in which MOs are constituted, the strategies they choose, and how successful they are in fulfilling their functions in line with needs. Funding models and migration and integration policy perception patterns, as well as fundamental policy changes, may play an important role in this process.[4] Path dependencies may emerge as well as dominant perceptual patterns that are long-lasting and stable in form. All in all, it can be said that opportunity structures and functionalism interact. Against this intellectual background, the development of MOs in Germany is outlined and then its current state of development is critically examined.

From a long-term perspective, MOs in Germany have experienced phases of disregard, strong scepticism, and then a polarised perception, followed by a more differentiated and even ambivalent–euphoric assessment.

In their own self-image, profile, and functions, MOs developed according to the perceived needs of their members and differentiated themselves functionally.

The first long phase, which lasted from the mid-1950s to the late 1970s and early 1980s, was characterised by a certain ignorance and scepticism within public discourse. The engagement and association of migrants were not noticed at all, or hardly at all (cf. Thränhardt 2013). A stronger discursive debate began in the 1980s, also promoted by academic contributions that structured, or polarised, the perception of MOs.[5]

However, quite independently of this *external* perception and evaluation of MOs, migrants had formed associations since the beginning of labour migration to Germany in the 1950s and these associations fulfilled various functions for their members and communities. Almost unnoticed, they built up needs-oriented services and activities over decades, which also changed over time, adapted to new circumstances, and had an impact on their own organisational structures.

Originally founded as a result of the first labour migration to Germany, the first migrant associations served to cultivate the home culture, to exchange ideas with compatriots, to have a piece of the familiar in a foreign country, and for migrants to support each other. In this way, they responded to a perceived lack, to needs that were not met by the host society and its institutions (cf. Hoesch 2019).

In fact, migrant organisations had a number of functions early on that were noted in recent studies on their present and recent past. However, their proportions and weightings have changed over time (Section 2.2). For example, the so-called homemaking-function—one function out of four which Bonfert et al. (2022, this special issue) identify with respect to current MOs—is a particular one compared to the others, a kind of cross-departmental function, shaping and complementing the other three functions, which have a direct relation to social services or interest representation. The homemaking function is at the basis of all other functions; "a form of informal protection based on mutual support, trust and understanding" (Bonfert et al. 2022, p. 1)[6]. While this homemaking-function was at the core of MOs' activities in the 1950s and 1960s, it became, more and more, a broad basis for concrete social services, consultancy services, and support in the face of successively consolidating and permanent immigration to Germany. As migrants came, stayed, and established themselves as families, and as their welfare needs and rights grew, MOs functionally grew into the role of independent providers, mediators, bridge builders, and advocates. This is because the German state often reacted with a time lag, remained blind to the increasingly permanent nature of migration, and—intentionally or unintentionally—kept barriers to state welfare benefits high.[7]

In the beginning, therefore, the reference to origin dominated, the associations were homogeneous in terms of origin, and there were hardly any ambitions in the direction of intercultural opening or political commitment. Initially, migrants mainly joined together informally before increasingly forming associations under German association law (Thränhardt 2013). Often, MOs offered (and still offer) social services and support, which for many people with a migration history only create the *preconditions* for using the services of regular structures (see below).

While the official position of German politics for decades assumed that migration to Germany was only temporary and that integration was therefore not necessary, migrant organisations began to address the emerging needs pragmatically. On the part of the German state, German welfare associations were given the task of carrying out so-called emergency work: the various welfare associations were each responsible for specific countries of origin and were supposed to provide basic counselling and social work. The attitude was paternalistic, perceiving migrants as beings in need of help, as foreigners who had to be looked after—and not as independent citizens (Puskeppeleit and Thränhardt 1990). The interests of the *migrants* were not necessarily considered first and foremost, but those of the *welfare organisations*, as early case studies and examples of local conflicts already show (Breuer and Thränhardt 1981).[8]

Over time, migrants' associations became increasingly involved in the interests, participation, and educational needs of their members, in addition to their homemaking-function. This commitment intensified, especially after 1973, when it became clear that many migrants would remain permanently in Germany as a result of the recruitment ban. Accordingly, migrant associations aimed to improve the real-life situations of their members and communities in German society. A very good example of the success of this functionally motivated commitment is the activity of the Spanish parents' associations (Hunger 2004; Sánchez Otero 2007). On the one hand, they responded to educational and support needs with

their own services for Spanish students (homework help, etc.), and on the other hand, as a political pressure group, they pushed for the children of Spanish migrants to be taught in regular German classes. The results of this commitment are still considered to be the cause of the educational and integrational successes of this group today.

Little by little, associations differentiated their functions, from culture, sport, language, leisure activities, religion, homework help, and education to international development cooperation (cf. Hunger 2004; Hunger and Holz 2019, p. 19), many of them being multi-functional until today.

Over time, more formal associations were founded, more associations that were explicitly heterogeneous in origin or intercultural in orientation, as well as more umbrella associations (cf. Hoesch 2019, p. 30).

It should also be emphasised at this point that the way MOs were perceived and treated varied considerably at municipal and state levels. For example, there were cities in which it was recognised as early as the 1970s that migration takes place and is permanent. Accordingly, in some municipalities, pragmatic approaches were developed very early on to deal with the issues of migration and integration and to open up opportunities for migrants to participate.[9] In some cities, therefore, cooperation with migrant organisations began at an early stage; in others, developments only began with the change in political framework conditions at the federal level, especially from 2005 onward (see Section 2.2).[10]

In the sphere of academic and political debate, important markers were set in the 1980s that contributed to greater attention to the issue. These highly polarising debates also meant that developments that had passed quasi–below-the-radar of public interest for decades now received more attention in academic and general public debate and were given a clearer structure.

In their analyses, the protagonists of the debate—Hartmut Esser and Georg Elwert—assessed the importance of migrant organisations in terms of integration and participation opportunities in completely opposing ways. Esser (1980) formulated—following classical theories of assimilation (Gordon 1964; Eisenstadt 1954)—in his sociology of migration the hypothesis that integration succeeds better if there are no alternatives to assimilation—e.g., through integration into ethnic communities. Elwert (1982), on the other hand, argued that 'integration through internal integration', i.e., integration into self-ethnic networks, improves the chances of successful integration under certain conditions. According to Elwert, ethnic communities fulfil important functions that promote integration and the ability to cope in the new living environment. He refers to three contexts in which the positive significance becomes visible. These are the importance of internal integration for (1) the development of self-confidence, (2) the transmission of everyday knowledge, and (3) the development of pressure groups. Internal integration can strengthen the self-confidence of migrants, which is often damaged through the process of migration. This is an important step in promoting their own participation and integration on their own initiative. Internal integration is also central to the acquisition of everyday knowledge. This knowledge of how things work and how to behave in certain situations is a key resource for gaining access to the labour market, residence status, or the housing market, for example. Similarly, but more specifically with regard to the quality of social contacts, are the approaches of social capital theory, which see opportunities and risks above all in the nature of the ties of communities: are these bridging or bonding? Do they open up new approaches, or do they hold on to rather marginal social positions?[11]

This is precisely where Esser sees the danger: ethnic networks offer alternatives. They enable a *kind* of integration, but at a lower level, beyond true equality. They bear the danger of becoming mobility traps which keep migrants in marginal positions. Thus, according to Esser, ethnic stratification can arise even without obvious discrimination (Esser 2001, 2004). In his model of social integration, he describes the possibility of a functioning multiple integration both in the society of origin and in the host society, but considers this to be realistic only for social elites (Esser 2001, 2004). However, assimilation theories also

recognise the possible importance of internal integration, at least for a transitional phase (Hoesch 2018).

Ultimately, these two opposing positions have long been influential in the perception and evaluation of MOs in the German debate, and numerous research papers could be assigned to either one or the other position (cf. Kortmann 2011, pp. 37–38). In the broader public debate, the term "parallel society", initially formulated by academics, was also used. In a striking way, it conveys the assumption in everyday language that the association of migrants in organisations, associations, and initiatives related to their origin leads to self-isolation, segregation, and—associated with this—strong cultural and identificatory demarcation.[12] This term crops up again and again in the German debate, often linked to cultural fears and with simplistic, polarising intent. Inspired by the controversy, later studies in migration studies focused on finding out when and under what conditions MOs promote integration and when they inhibit it. Here, references were made both to social capital theory and to political advocacy.

Compared to other countries, peculiarities in the development of German MOs come to light. In comparison with the Netherlands, for example, it can be seen that German MOs made strong use of German association law in their development and formed stronger religious organisations. In the Netherlands, on the other hand, the independent activities of migrants were clearly taken into account earlier and supported in the course of the promotion of minorities. Both specific paths of development reflect different opportunity structures (Kortmann 2011).

The scientific discourse already differentiated in the 1990s. At the political level, change only began with the change of government in 1998 and the accompanying legislative reorganisation of migration and integration through the Immigration Act of 2005. Before outlining this fundamental shift in the perception and evaluation of MOs by German federal policy, this section concludes with a definition of MOs.

In accordance with these multifaceted and multidimensional manifestations of MOs, which are still valid today, the broad definition of the Council of Experts on Integration and Migration is used here. According to this definition, migrant organisations are non-profit associations at least half of whose members or founders are people with a migration biography. In addition, a migration experience in the broadest sense is central to the self-image, goals, and activities of these organisations (SVR 2020, p. 9).

2.2. A New Role for MOs since 2005 and 2015/16?

In the last two decades, the role of MOs as integration policy actors has changed considerably, both from an internal perspective and in the attitude and behaviour of established actors towards MOs. During this time, policymakers have increasingly recognised the potential of MOs in terms of harnessing it for integration processes. It was also increasingly recognised that the state would have to act as a promoter of this civic engagement in order to be able to exploit the benefits of self-organisation for the community. The aim was to continue to support the organisations on their path to professionalisation beyond project funding (Hunger and Holz 2019, p. 19).

In many places, MOs have now become an important part of German civil society and an indispensable point of contact for politics and administration. The changed perception of MOs is particularly clear at the federal level. For example, in 2017, the BAMF (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees)[13] described MOs "as important actors in civil society" who fulfil an essential bridging function between migrant communities, political decisionmakers, and the host society (quoted after Hunger and Holz 2019, p. 19). Weiss observes that migrant organisations have become "to some extent the fire brigade of integration work" (Weiss 2013; translated by the author) and notes: "Today, there is hardly an integration concept in local, federal and state governments that does not emphasise how important the work of MOs is for successful participation" (Weiss 2013, p. 24).

Two important turning points were the Immigration Act of 2005 and the massive influx of refugees in 2015/16. What exactly happened, and what impact do these political and historical events still have today?

Although, as shown above, the immigration situation had already been pragmatically recognised in individual municipalities and forms of cooperation with MOs had emerged, it was only after the change of government in 1998 that MOs were upgraded and included in a more systematic way. The new social democratic–green government initiated a change in immigration policy, in the course of which a comprehensive immigration law was developed in Germany for the first time.

The Immigration Act came into force in 2005 after years of lengthy and difficult negotiations and set an important course for MOs, partly directly and partly indirectly. In the course of declaring integration a state task, municipalities were given new responsibilities. As a result, they began to manage integration strategically and to see it as a cross-cutting task. "Integration master plans" were developed involving non-governmental actors, including MOs (Hoesch and Harbig 2019, p. 111). Municipalities started discovering the advantages of working with MOs as culturally sensitive mediators who have good access to numerous communities in (super-)diverse cities. Their important function as bridge builders, mediators, and contact persons facilitating the initial integration of migrants and refugees was being referred to increasingly.

MOs also benefited from the fact that, since the turn of the millennium, there had been a general increase in the discussion about civil society and its potential to shape society in an integrative way (Meyer and Ziegler 2018, p. 7). Since then, not only has the number of overarching networks and alliances of MOs increased, but also their professionalisation. Furthermore, MOs have become much more political in their appearance, appearing as *pressure groups* in order to campaign for the improvement of their own situation, e.g., in education and equal participation and against racism and discrimination. This trend, and the claim to become noticeably more involved in political and societal debates, has intensified and manifests itself in the growing number of larger interest groups and umbrella organisations (cf. Hunger and Holz 2019; SVR 2020).

At the institutional level "integration through civic engagement and equal participation" became part of the German national integration plan in 2007, and strengthening the self-organisation of MOs, as distinct from 'classic' associations, was named as a goal (Deutsche Bundesrgeierung 2007, pp. 173–74).

This change in awareness was also reflected in the systematic and media-effective inclusion of MOs in symbolically significant new dialogue formats at federal level, such as the German Islam Conference (Deutsche Islam-Konferenz, DIK) and the Integration Summit of the federal government, both initiated in 2006.

Various federal states launched funding programmes specifically for MOs, also at the federal level. Here—in the 2010s—possibilities were created to apply for funds for the structural promotion of MOs. In addition to various thematic programmes, the main aim was to professionalise MOs and enable them to raise funds on their own (SVR 2020, p. 66). At the same time, however, the situation remained ambivalent. MOs were often included under very one-sided patterns of perception, as in the DIK, where they were primarily addressed with questions relating to security issues and the prevention of extremism and fundamentalism. Questions of representativeness were also raised, as liberal Muslims, for example, were hardly represented initially due to loose organisational structures.

While sceptical attitudes persisted, the strengthening of MOs was in the interests of various stakeholders. Tasks and responsibilities could be shifted symbolically by emphasising the important role of MOs in integration. In fact, MOs increasingly filled gaps in state welfare integration work as the need grew due to growing refugee migration.[14]

The influx of more than one million refugees in 2015/16 brought with it unprecedented challenges in terms of accommodation and initial integration. MOs were intensively involved in overcoming these challenges (Hunger and Holz 2019; Karakayali 2018). In 2019, 36% of the MOs interviewed stated that they were involved in refugee work (SVR

2020, p. 23). Various studies have shown that their involvement in refugee work in 2015/16 led to a re-evaluation in the perception of MOs. The unique situation broke up routines, and those responsible for administration and politics were prepared to enter into new collaborations that they would probably not otherwise have tried. For MOs, this specific situation constituted a window of opportunity to prove themselves and to overcome sceptical attitudes (Hoesch, forthcoming).

The strong urge of MOs to get involved in refugee work was encountered in many places by municipal administrations, which urgently sought cooperation with civil society organisations and volunteers.[15] The cultural and language skills of migrant volunteers (and MOs in particular) were of great value to municipalities that had to take care of the initial reception of so many people. In this singular situation, where migrants' and MOs' support service offers met with demand from local administrations, new opportunity structures for MOs emerged, which allowed them to further develop their role and to make their important social contributions more visible and tangible. In this sense, Nagel (2016) states in a study on religious migrant organisations that the commitment to refugees represents an opportunity for MOs to present themselves to the public as partners for welfare production, able to use their specific sociocultural experience as a resource and, at the same time, overcome a lack of professionalisation. Beck (2016) suggests that "civil society initiatives and networks [. . .] have become the most important municipal resource in dealing with the refugee issue, and their relevance is rated even higher by the municipalities than the availability of additional human or financial resources" (2016, p. 101; quoted after (Karakayali 2018, p. 12). Speth and Becker (2016) compare three cities to show how cooperation between civil society organisations and local authorities has changed depending on the local constellations and that, in general, there is greater recognition of commitment by the municipalities (Speth and Becker 2016; Karakayali 2018, p. 16).

The importance of civil society involvement in refugee work was also recognised at other federal levels. New funding opportunities for MOs at all federal levels, as well as by charitable organisations, were expanded after 2015/16 in the area of integration. (Freuwört et al. 2021, p. 90; SVR 2020, p. 64). However, the result here was also ambivalent: several studies show that the majority of organisations were unable to apply for funding and go through complex application procedures due to a lack of professional structures (see Section 4.1.4).

The increased political interest in MOs was accompanied by an increased scientific interest. Numerous studies were carried out (cf., e.g., Halm et al. 2020; Huth 2019; Klie 2022; Pries 2018; SVR 2020). Initially, religious MOs were considered disproportionately, and secular MOs—despite their strong commitment—hardly at all (Karakayali 2018, p. 21). The SVR study from 2020 is particularly interesting in this context, as it collected data on the activities, functions, networks, etc., of MOs in Germany on a broad empirical basis. According to the report, the number of MOs in Germany was estimated at between 12,400 and 14,300 (SVR 2020, p. 13)[16]. Half of the organisations were founded after 2004, and a quarter after 2012. Estimates suggest that many organisations disband over time (SVR 2020, p. 19).

The MOs' fields of activity are very broad overall. The SVR study names the following areas in which MOs most frequently made offers in 2022: exchange between people with and without a migration background (45.4%); child and youth work (45.3%); education (42.1%); artistic and cultural activities (39.3%); support for refugees 35.9%; consulting (32.6%); offers for women (25.7%); work with parents or families (19.1%); and cultivating cultures of origin (19%).[17]

Despite strong development, it is important to note that there is still a very large heterogeneity of organisations; there is, therefore, no such thing as the "typical" migrant organisation. Rather, the current situation is characterised by a parallelism of very different forms, types, stages of development, and understandings of the role and claims of MOs, some of which have only existed for a short time or have recently gained in importance. In contrast to the early phases of development, however, today's MO landscape is distin-

guished by a growing number of organisations that explicitly claim to shape the future, strategically promote the further development of their structures, see themselves as advocacy organisations, or (more often in the case of businesses or providers in the legal form of an association) professionally offer educational programmes and social services and vociferously demand dialogue and cooperation "at eye level".

3. Material and Methods: Perspective of Embedded Research

In the following passage, the method of embedded research will firstly be discussed before the author's role is reflected upon. After that, the empirical data underlaying this analysis will be displayed. The following reflections on embedded research refer in particular to a paper by Vindrola-Padros et al. (2017) which systematically reviews and evaluates research and literature on the topic across disciplines.[18] Further helpful considerations can be found in a paper by Lewis and Russell that situates embedded research in a broader context of ethnographic fieldwork (Lewis and Russell 2011).[19]

In a nutshell, the concept of "embedded research" signifies a specific methodological approach in which the researcher fits closely into the field being studied, becomes a part of it, so to speak, and takes on a role of his or her own. At first glance, some obvious problems can arise from this embeddedness, such as the question of how a distanced view can be maintained, whether personal relationships have a distorting influence, and how powerful conflicts of interest can become (to name only the most obvious).

However, this embeddedness also brings several advantages. The process of immersion by the researcher in the host organisation is considered essential:

> By 'being there', the researcher is able to grasp the challenges faced by the organisation, its goals and interests and the contexts where these play out. [...] By being immersed in the organisation, the embedded researcher can gain greater understanding of the pressures and problems faced at different levels of the organisation and tailor improvement strategies accordingly. (Vindrola-Padros et al. 2017, p. 71)

This means that, on the one hand, embedded research enables a *deep* comprehension and knowledge, can look behind the scenes on various levels, registers informal and subliminal processes and relations, and penetrates deeper than, for example, interviews. On the other hand, this knowledge, acquired in the field, is practical and application-oriented in a specific way: it connects science and practice and promotes mutual knowledge transfer and the co-production of knowledge, as well as associated effects such as (social) innovation or the impulses for decision-making processes and policymaking. In this respect, Vindrola-Padros et al. place embedded research in a larger context of knowledge transfer and knowledge mobilisation.

This positive assessment of the potential of 'embedded research' is based on the assumption that

> Knowledge that is collected 'on the ground', through daily interaction and negotiation with practitioners, managers and service users, will provide better insight into the issues affecting these stakeholders, be more relevant to the local context and will, therefore, be more easily incorporated into changes in practice. (Vindrola-Padros et al. 2017, p. 70)

Vindrola-Padros et al. primarily refer in this benefit analysis to the improvement of the quality of health services in a system, where embedded research offers the chance to break through hierarchical decision-making patterns and to consider other relevant perspectives and levels. Its application in other fields is equally promising; embedded research offers a complementary perspective in general, enabling feedback between observation and practice and a comparison, a further test of theories and approaches in the field. Are certain observations reflected in the field? How are they perceived at different levels by actors and participants? Are they shared? And, if not, what deviating observations are made? What

consequences does this have, on the one hand, for recommended procedures and actions derived from them and, on the other, for fundamental concepts, approaches, and models?

Lewis and Russell stress that, as well as specific insights for embedded researchers, this method also provides benefits for the organisations under analysis. They benefit from external feedback which may help to improve current activity: "the grounded but most importantly critical analysis provided by the embedded researcher is likely to be highly valued by an organization attempting to establish itself, or improve its practice." (Lewis and Russell 2011, p. 8).

What is important in embedded research is not the physical presence in an organisation. Rather, the crucial component of embeddedness lies in "the quality and types of relationships the researchers foster with staff. Through these relationships, the researchers gain trust and are seen as members of the team" (Wong cited in Vindrola-Padros et al. 2017, p. 72).

However, these relationships also bring various challenges. On the one hand, there is a risk of "blind spots" arising from too deep an immersion; on the other, researchers may be inhibited from publishing critical or negative observations. Additionally, tangible obstacles may arise, such as internal rules that prevent critical or potentially harmful results from being published. These constellations of relationships, different rationalities for action, competing rules, and conflicting goals can bring embedded researchers into a state of "in-between-ness" "where they have to show their commitment to the organisation's goals and to the academic standards established for conducting publishable research in the field" (Vindrola-Padros et al. 2017, p. 76).

However, there are several ways to deal with these challenges, including—if the researcher is simultaneously affiliated to a research institute and an organisation under study—agreeing on clear guidelines from both sides to deal with expectations and possible conflicts. If there is no "dual affiliation", it is important for the researcher to maintain a regular dialogue with other scientists in their field of research. Such a connection to academia allows embedded researchers "to keep up to date on new trends, preserve a critical perspective and make sure their research is rigorous" (Vindrola-Padros et al. 2017, p. 78).

There are various definitions of embedded research, most of which assume that researchers are both regular employees of the host organisation and academics associated with a research institution (Vindrola-Padros et al. 2017, p. 70; McGinity and Salokangas 2014). However, reference is also made to the possibility that embedded researchers are employed exclusively by a non-scientific employer and conduct research from their position there. In this case, there is a higher risk that the researcher is in a dependent relationship with the organisation, which influences the type of research undertaken and the dissemination of findings. Nevertheless, it is also emphasised here that it is a good opportunity "to get a unique perspective, insight and data" (Jenness 2008; cited in Vindrola-Padros et al. 2017, p. 73).

Against this methodological background, I would like to outline my role as a senior executive in a major migrant organisation and reflect on chances, pitfalls, and the empirical data used.

Being part of the staff of the Federation of Social-Cultural Migrant Associations in Dortmund" (Verbund der sozialkulturellen Migrantenvereine in Dortmund e.V., VMDO)[20] and, at the same time, conducting research on MOs implies that the possibilities and restrictions of this research are similar to those reflected above. My field of responsibilities is project development, project management, and knowledge transfer. Although I do not have a dual affiliation, i.e., I am not assigned to a research institute, I bring my migration studies background into my work. I previously worked in migration research for about 15 years. Even since leaving academia, I have never really ceased thinking in terms of categories of migration research, nor have I abandoned my research interest in MOs. This means that I regard the development of migrant organisations from both an inside and outside perspective. I am also active in various scientific professional associations and working

groups. There, I discuss and reflect on my insider observations and review them against the background of external analyses and models. Moreover, I am an active member of the "Knowledge Transfer"[21] working group within the Netzwerk Fluchtforschung (German Network of Forced Migration Studies). One of the main aims of this working group is to discuss methodological challenges at the interface between science and practice. While all of this cannot completely eliminate the possibility of bias from the internal perspective, the risk can be minimised. As well as the migrant organisation I am working for, I also have insights into the work and functioning of the federal association of BV NeMO (representing about 800 MOs in Germany) as well as numerous local alliances of MOs. I am in close exchange with BV-NeMO board members as well as board members and staff in local alliances in different cities and federal states.

The empirical basis for this paper is formed by a total of 16 guideline-based interviews conducted with those responsible: project leaders, board members, and coordinators at VMDO, BV NeMO, and in the Samo.fa project[22]. In addition, numerous background discussions; participation in conferences and network meetings; participation in board and advisory board meetings; and the evaluation of project reports, internal reports, minutes of meetings, correspondence between migrant associations and municipalities, and workshops with representatives of municipalities, welfare organisations, and diverse associations all serve as an empirical basis for this research.

In addition, my specific experiences and the impressions gained in my role as a senior executive are also incorporated. In this context, I am in talks and negotiations with the municipality, welfare organisations, civil society actors, and foundations and funding bodies at EU, federal, state, and municipal levels. By managing a project with East German MOs as partners, I have deeper insights into the situation there.

In summary, the term "embedded research" refers to a mix of different methods, including document analysis, informal interviews, participant observation (in a dual role as "real" participant and "undercover" observer), and semi-structured interviews.

Finally, I would like to point out an important difference that arises from my dual role as a researcher/employee compared to embedded researchers with a direct academic affiliation. While with "real" external researchers it is clearly communicated that, e.g., a meeting, a conversation, or an event is observed from a research perspective, this is not necessarily clear in my case and the corresponding informal or unannounced participant observation. What does that mean? When I participate in meetings and conversations in my role as an employee/representative/senior executive, I do so in that very role. For the other participants, my additional role as a quasi-external observer with academic interests remains hidden. From an ethical point of view, this poses a problem because the other participants are not informed about my additional dimension or role. I solve this problem by handling the different types of data differently.

Interview data are the clearest in this regard. The interviewees were informed and aware of the interview situation. In addition, data are reported anonymously. Analyses and observations derived from informal conversations and experiences are only reflected in an abstract, anonymous form. Text passages based on the evaluation of internal documents and internal informal discussions and joint reflections were in each case submitted to the management for approval. It should be noted at this point that in this and other published texts, critical passages were also approved for publication, and no restrictions were imposed by my employer.

4. Results and Discussion: New Opportunities and Forms of Cooperation?

How Does the Development of Migrant Organisations Look from the Inside?

The observations and results presented below are based on the empirical material described in Section 3.

4.1. Beyond or between Barriers, Biases, and Ambivalences?

It was shown how strongly MOs have developed in recent years and what kind of influence the Immigration Act 2005 and the refugee migration of 2015/16 have had. On the surface, there was a strong increase in importance, in some cases almost a euphoria with regard to expectations of the challenges MOs could take on. At the same time, from an internal point of view, it seems that the prevailing image is rather a simplistic one, which creates excessively high expectations and ignores too many important facets. This means that disappointments and setbacks are inevitable on both sides. It seems—this observation is based on numerous personal experiences and observations as well as exchanges with colleagues and professionals in the field—that success is absolutely desired by the relevant players and structures. At the same time, however—despite this desire and the corresponding declarations—barriers, biases, and ambivalences persist that have grown over the years and cannot simply be wiped away. They operate on different levels, some of which are easily visible and measurable on a material and structural level, while others are less measurable when it comes to hidden attitudes, hierarchies, or cognitive barriers. In the following, these various forces, which also accompany, challenge, question, jeopardise, or delay the developments described, will be outlined under thematic subheadings. Methodologically, they are based on many years of observation, experience, and analyses, as described above. Some of them are linked to the findings of other studies.

4.1.1. Recognising the Performance of MOs/Management of Expectations

First of all, MOs agree with the observation that their achievements and contributions have been much more recognised and appreciated in the recent past. This is what BV NeMO states:

> Self-initiatives continue, and the weight and reputation of migrant organisations (MOs) have increased noticeably, at least at the institutional level, but also in a much broader sense 'on the ground'. The active role of MOs in supporting the numerous refugees who came to us from 2015 onwards has certainly provided an important impetus for this. [translated by the author] (BV NeMO 2020, p. 6)

However, it must be emphasised that this process is not a linear one and that it differs with respect to regions or municipalities. Moreover, it had to be fought hard for. There was nothing like an "automatic" development as a logical consequence of 2005 or 2015/16—an impression that can easily arise in view of the very MO-positive rhetoric of political and welfare state actors. Although the situation after 2015/16 was certainly a window of opportunity (Hoesch, forthcoming; Hoesch and Harbig 2019), it had to be opened with great effort on the part of MOs. Opportunities were closely linked to local and regional path dependencies, different experiences with migration and MOs, and existing networks and actors' constellations.

In debates between MOs and representatives of administrations and other civil society organisations or welfare associations, there is often a discussion about the *obligation to fetch and bring*,[23] whereby both sides expect the other to get more involved and to support the process of MO participation more strongly. However, this mutual demand is asymmetrical in that MOs generally still do not have permanent, stable structures, i.e., neither sufficient full-time staff nor rooms and structural infrastructure. This clearly distinguishes them from established welfare associations, for example, which are often important actors and providers of integration services at the municipal level. In contrast to MOs, established welfare associations can often build on decades of cooperation and working relationships with municipalities and integration practice. However, the established institutions in particular are often not really aware of this imbalance. There is, therefore, a danger of overcharging MOs: in the course of a general revaluation of MOs, this new positive perception has been superficially adopted by many established actors, but, at the same time, they are insufficiently aware of the precarious financial and structural situation. In addition, old reservations about MOs may still resonate. There is a growing willingness to

involve MOs in municipal processes, but "under reserve". They have to prove themselves over and over again and continue to face "special observation". The risk of failure is high: their resources have not kept pace with the rapidly increasing expectations. MOs therefore find themselves in a situation where many *want* to see them succeed but, at the same time, are hardly willing to provide them with the resources that would be necessary to enable them to meet the increased expectations without being permanently overburdened.

Often, the process of including MOs in relevant networks, working groups, committees, and tasks remains fragile, i.e., it depends on the political constellations in individual municipalities. The recognition and inclusion of MOs in important fields of work must be fought for again and again. The strong growth of MOs in recent years should not hide the fact that many of them are not permanently viable. This does not only apply to small MOs. Even large, professional organisations with full-time staff usually have to plan "on the edge" financially and take risks. Here, too, insolvencies and dissolutions occur time and again.

There is also a huge variety in how MOs are perceived and dealt with according to specific local idiosyncrasies. This becomes clear when comparing the working conditions, cooperation, and involvement of MOs within the BV NeMO member organisations in ten federal states alone (see below Section 4.2). The perception of MOs outlined here shows that ambivalences, barriers, and biases are closely interlinked and mutually interdependent.

4.1.2. Professionalisation, Cooperation at Eye Level, Persisting Power Asymmetries

"Professionalisation" and cooperation "at eye level" are two buzzwords that come up regularly in the context of MOs. From the point of view of the MOs, they are ambivalent: on the one hand, some of them perceive themselves in need of professionalisation, on the other hand, they are already experts in many areas and react sensitively to persistent demands for professionalisation. Here, it would be helpful to differentiate more between the different types, tasks, and demands of MOs, as well as the different expectations towards them.

In many cases, what is labelled as a "lack of professionalisation" rather represents a plethora of many different challenges, one of which is a perceived inability to take part in debates sufficiently and articulate one's interests or represent one's achievements to relevant stakeholders. In other words: the alleged lack of *professionalisation* rather refers to a lack of strategic *self-presentation* and *public relations communication*. These deficits in strategic communication, which are particularly present in small, purely voluntary organisations, must not be confused with a lack of *competencies*. Quite the opposite: MOs have strong, specific competencies, but they often remain hidden or do not fit with what institutional actors would like them to provide. In addition, problems repeatedly arise at the interface with administrative requirements. The reasons for this are usually a lack of (or undersized) administrative structures within MOs, which are rarely adequately funded and almost always depend on temporary project funding.

In addition, the proportion of volunteer work may also be responsible for MOs being labelled as insufficiently professional. Here, too, there is an asymmetrical situation. Full-time actors demand more professionalism, which can hardly be achieved with the time and financial resources volunteers have at their disposal. This is also where a "classic" problem comes into play at the interface between full-time and voluntary work: incompatible working hours. Volunteering necessarily takes place after work or on weekends, assuming that the people involved are employed. A simple (and, at the same time, not negligible) reason, which strongly hinders cooperation, is the lack of flexibility of full-time (e.g., municipal) employees to work outside their usual office hours. For example, it is always a huge challenge to plan professional and networking events in my organisation and many similar ones; the possible timeframes for full-time and voluntary work simply do not fit together. One can imagine that in cities that are already further along in their cooperation with MOs, municipal employees act more flexibly to make this possible. Conversely, where there is little experience with MOs, it is all the more difficult to overcome these practical hurdles. There are, therefore, self-reinforcing effects that have led to relatively

rapid development in some places and paralysed progress in others. This greater or lesser sensitivity to these factual barriers also contributes to the highly varied forms of cooperation with, and perceptions and evaluations of, MOs by established structures.

Furthermore in terms of *external expectations* it makes a difference, for example, whether smaller associations that work mainly on a voluntary basis are supported by specific small-scale and low-threshold funding programmes ("micro funding"), such as 'House of Resources'[24], and enabled to carry out smaller projects, everyday support, etc., and to professionalise their internal processes at a very basic level, or whether MOs that are legally recognised providers of social services or further education (e.g., youth welfare, labour market integration, etc.) and significant employers work almost exclusively on a project-financed basis and (unlike, for example, welfare associations or social enterprises) have hardly any leeway for organisational or personnel development and appropriate administrative structures. They find themselves in unequal competition with other actors (such as welfare associations, commercial service providers, and municipal or state agencies) who are often not aware of the financial and structural restrictions and therefore complain about a lack of professionalisation. This real—or assumed—lack of professionalisation means that the always demanded exchange at eye level rarely works.

As a result, MOs are often perceived as unprofessional. The established players and structures are hardly aware of the complexity of the reasons for the real or supposed professionalisation deficits. The heterogeneity in the MO category is also not sufficiently reflected by many players. Otherwise, there would be a greater understanding that small, purely voluntary organisations should not be expected to provide similar services and participate in networks in the same way as organisations with a reasonably stable, full-time staff.

Precisely because reservations about MOs have existed for decades, they remain powerful in the background. If cooperation between established players and structures does not work as expected with MOs—for a variety of possible reasons—the entire approach is quickly called into question as a reflex. These are unconscious mechanisms that can only be surmised and not proven at this point—more sophisticated survey methods would be required for this.[25] However, I would like to give an example from my work context in one of the BV-NeMO member organisations.

In a large city with considerable experience of migration and relatively well-functioning stakeholder networks, the responsible local authority department developed a new collaboration format to involve as many stakeholders as possible in shaping integration across all topics and institutions. The idea was to bring together the relevant representatives from administration, civil society, local politics, welfare organisations, and important local institutions and service providers. The specialist groups had topics and areas of responsibility such as language promotion, living together in the neighbourhood, health, children and youth, volunteer work, labour market integration, refugee counselling services, participation of migrant organisation, etc. A sophisticated system of different meeting formats and management tools was developed to ensure the most efficient exchange possible between the more than 150 stakeholders involved. While responsibility for the overall process lay with the city departments, the specialist groups and committees were to be managed by tandems of municipal and non-municipal partners. The responsible senior administrative staff pursued an approach that was very commendable: the aim was to involve those directly affected from the target groups, e.g., refugees, or, in particular, refugee women. In order to find these individual representatives from the target groups, the migrant organisations involved were asked to bring them in. The desire was to involve persons—not association representatives—who were to talk about their firsthand concerns, needs, and requirements.

However, the administration had not considered at all the fact that various hurdles and barriers would make it very difficult for the desired persons to participate. MOs involved in the process—and partly managing some of the specialist groups as part of the tandems— pointed out that it would not be easy to convince individual refugees to speak in the

sessions because (1) there is a fear of speaking in front of many experts in these professional meetings; (2) this fear is exacerbated by language difficulties and corresponding inhibitions; (3) more general fears, and sometimes traumatisation, can exist amongst the desired target groups; as a consequence, this psychological dimension makes it particularly difficult to talk about personal experiences; (4) many of them have had bad experiences with authorities (be it in Germany or elsewhere) and are therefore very cautious; and (5) they would have to invest time resources, for which they probably could not expect appropriate recognition. The process of finding the right approach and persuasion would therefore be lengthy and time-consuming.

In the following weeks, a discussion developed, in the course of which the MOs tried to find possible participants and—referring to the barriers—explained why it would not work so easily. With these remarks, however, they did not succeed in getting through to the administrative management level. The administrative management, for their part, were rather driven and convinced by their new instrument, insisted on their timescale and sophisticated procedure, and ignored basic knowledge about what is needed to foster participation at a very basic level. According to those in the administration who were responsible, the representatives from the desired target group should adapt to the streamlined exchange and management process—not the other way round.

In the end, everyone felt angry, disappointed, and misunderstood, culminating in the dissatisfied and categorical statement by the responsible senior staff member: "Participation just does not work!"

This frustrating outcome of an originally well-intended project illustrates very lucidly the outlined barriers, patterns of perception, and associated reflexes. There was certainly an abstract will to engage in participation at "eye level" and some knowledge about whom to involve. At the same time, knowledge, will, and procedures were too superficial and too little thought through to recognise, reflect, and overcome persistent barriers. Furthermore, it can be assumed that the organisational logic of local government and the prioritisation of the timetable to achieve targets and use a new tool led to a certain ignorance of the challenges involved and possible solutions. In this stressful situation, the persons in charge reflexively fell back into old patterns of perception and evaluation. Instead of considering possible failures and the need for improvement on their part, they (directly or indirectly) blamed the MO for the failure, fundamentally calling the entire process into question. A process that was actually going well came to a sudden, hard stop due to the barriers and biases outlined above.

Another phenomenon also comes into play here, the significance of which was confirmed to me in discussions with numerous activists from MOs and also in workshops with administrative staff: it cannot be overestimated that—to put it mildly—the more than 60 years of bad experiences of migrants with the German authorities also have an impact on MOs. Fears of dealing with authorities and official bodies have become deeply engrained in the collective consciousness of migrant communities. At the same time, some are more affected by these experiences than others, depending on their ethnic origin and the associated perceptions and prejudices.[26] The effect of this is that many MOs, or their representatives, often lack the necessary self-confidence when dealing with bureaucracy and institutions. They are hesitant and biased and/or have difficulties finding representatives who are able to represent them with the necessary self-confidence and assertiveness in established circles. Also, in view of the power asymmetries described above, a real exchange "at eye level" does not seem to be realistic in the foreseeable future—at least in most cases.

Our own experiences in various municipalities have shown that a lot still depends on individual persons. Even in municipalities where cooperation between MOs and the city works well, it happens again and again that individual employees, responsible persons, or clerks cultivate sceptical, paternalistic, or patronising attitudes towards MOs. Despite all the recent euphoria towards MO, deficit prospects also persist. In negotiations, it is often assumed that MOs can be satisfied more quickly and should be grateful for being included.

In some cases, they are disadvantaged compared to other organisations or have to fight harder for equal treatment.[27]

4.1.3. Competition and Exclusions in the Area of Social/Welfare Services

Migrant organisations often act as providers of social services, learning opportunities, and culturally sensitive educational programmes (language courses, integration courses, etc.). In doing so, they cover a broad spectrum of degrees of professionalisation, from simple voluntary everyday support and peer education/peer services to professional services/social work/socio-educational work provided by academically trained professionals in the areas of (further) education, labour market integration, initiatives in cooperation with job centres, work with senior citizens, child and youth work, and psychosocial counselling, among others. MOs are confronted with various difficulties.

There is an ambivalence of expectations, which continues to be very powerful. MOs are expected to follow a more professional orientation beyond mere migration issues while, at the same time, they quite often find themselves reduced to precisely this migration expertise.

On the one hand, it is often demanded of MOs that they organise themselves more strongly in professional associations and professional structures and, in this sense, professionalise themselves beyond integration-related tasks. On the other hand, they are—also due to the needs and the lack of culturally sensitive offers—again and again limited to this task area. Here, too, one must differentiate more strongly between the various forms of MO and their possibilities and limitations. Many professional project organisers with full-time staff are members of professional associations and resemble social enterprises more than classic associations. At the same time, there are also numerous MOs that, as classic associations, provide social services exclusively on a voluntary basis and for a very narrow target group in their own community. Due to their very limited resources, it is more difficult for them to be represented in professional associations and networks. A differentiated view of the very heterogeneous equipment and demands of MOs would be important here, especially since MOs are disproportionately involved in the area of social services compared to non-migrant associations (SVR 2020).

Another problem that burdens MOs is their function as a permanent stopgap for a lack of welfare state services.

The situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic also made existing social problems in the field of MOs more visible. Even before the pandemic, it was known that MOs act as stopgaps where existing welfare state services are not sufficient. In the author's organisation, "preparative education" and "preparative measures" are spoken of. This refers to measures that often create the basic prerequisites for taking advantage of regular services (such as integration courses, language courses, job coaching, labour market measures, etc.). MOs often develop services for intersectional problems and offer holistic counselling and support. The bureaucratic responsibilities distributed among many agencies and the lack of one-stop counselling, as well as limited culturally sensitive and linguistic competences in the regular structures (e.g., job centre, foreigners' authority, schools, etc.), represent high hurdles for many migrants, which make it difficult to enter into successful communication, to clarify and enforce entitlements to benefits, to take advantage of or find services, etc. MOs have been reacting to this lack for years with their services. A major problem, however, is that the services and innovations developed by MOs do not result in sufficient institutional learning or an adaptation of state services. The potential of these innovations is wasted if they are not taken up elsewhere. Therefore, MOs are working to engage in debates with these observations and corresponding demands. For, in a society where over one-quarter of people have a migration biography—in some cities, one-third or one-half, and in some neighbourhoods, over 90%—welfare state gaps cannot be permanently filled by associations. In the context of the pandemic, the disproportionate disadvantage of people with migration biographies was often addressed. MOs experienced this in their everyday counselling work and made up (to an even greater extent than usual) for what

was lacking in regular services. They fulfilled preparatory welfare state tasks for those who would otherwise fall through the cracks of bureaucracy, measures, and programmes. This was especially true for digital access to government services, which often became an existential issue when migrants were not able to communicate with immigration authorities during the lockdown.

The following ambivalence represents another major barrier to equal competition, particularly with established welfare organisations: an abstract will to involve MOs more strongly in the tasks of German welfare corporatism is in conflict with the competition for state contracts in a zero-sum game.

The services of MOs just described are certainly perceived and appreciated by other actors now. However, this does not necessarily mean that MOs are better equipped or that they will be given better consideration in the awarding of contracts.

The SVR study (SVR 2020) states that there is competition between MOs for funding. However, there is also considerable competition between MOs and welfare organisations. The latter take over welfare state tasks at the municipal level and as a result of negotiations with the city council, e.g., in work for the elderly, child and youth work, diverse information centres, etc. From the MO perspective, we perceive a kind of *abstract will* on the part of welfare organisations: it is an abstract will to support MOs in their efforts to become part of the system of welfare organisation at local level. This *abstract will* shows itself in appreciating *verbally* the important social commitment of MOs. Also, there are general demands that MOs should be better involved. In concrete negotiations, however, the *logic of competition* between organisations and their own organisational goals prevails. In the end, the award remains a zero-sum game. However, due to their structurally worse starting position and shorter history of cooperation, MOs are at a disadvantage. In comparison, their participation and success in contract acquisition in the context of municipal negotiations is negligible. To summarise: despite verbal appreciation and abstract will, funding and contracting have changed little. From the perspective of organisational sociology—considering the vested interests of the established welfare associations—this is hardly surprising. However, it shows once again that, despite the abstract will and MO-positive rhetoric, strong systemic and structural forces of inertia are at work beneath the surface. At the same time, however, it should be noted that some MOs have persistently achieved small successes here and are entering a field that has long been closed.

4.1.4. Funding as a Major Challenge

The funding possibilities for MOs are complicated and—depending on the characteristics of the association—make sustainable development very difficult. So-called "projectitis" is a persistent problem that even newer offers of structural funding can hardly help overcome. Other interrelated problems in this context are the often high demands for proprietary funds as well as the usually limited possibility of collecting membership fees.

The SVR study describes the financial situation of MOs in Germany as follows:

> Like many non-profit organisations, most MOs have quite low income. At the time of the survey, some MOs had less than 1000 euros a year at their disposal (12.7%), but some had over 1 million euros (3.4%). At slightly less than 40 per cent (37.8%), a large proportion had less than 10,000 euros a year at their disposal. [translated by the author] (SVR 2020, p. 69)

Although 82.2 per cent of the MOs charge membership fees, these are often not paid (due to the financially precarious situations of the members) and do not in the least suffice to finance the activities of the MOs (cf. SVR 2020, p. 70). Some MOs generate income through self-generated funds such as course fees in the fields of education or social work. However, this financing option is only available to a few, as some users live in precarious financial circumstances and cannot pay for the services. In this respect, it is impossible for many MOs to generate their own funds in this way.

However, own funds are a prerequisite in most funding programmes. In most cases, project partners have to bear 10–20% of the total costs themselves, and in some cases as

much as 50%. Apart from the considerable bureaucratic hurdles that arise when applying for funding (see below), this problem is one of the most pressing. Own funds and manpower have to be made available, which are not invested in the structures of the organisations, especially if there is no regular funding and the organisations are financially dependent on project funding for the most part. This leads to a considerable amount of extra work for the staff, partly because additional third-party funds have to be acquired as own funds or brought in through voluntary/unpaid work. It is not uncommon for individual members of the association to put private money into their association when things get tight financially (own experience/interviews as well as interview results SVR 2020, p. 70).

Another major problem is the funding conditions. Numerous studies now show that the often extremely complicated procedures for awarding funding lead to smaller organisations in particular being excluded. For example, a Bertelsmann study (Bertelsmann-Stiftung 2018) showed that the majority of MOs active in refugee work are unable to benefit from the available funding because the application procedures are too complicated. Other studies document this problem in various facets. A study by the Mercator Foundation (Stiftung Mercator 2018) shows that not even various ministries are able to keep track of the diverse funding programmes, deadlines, contents, and procedures. A study by the Heinrich-Böll-Foundation from 2019 criticises in the context of the EU Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF), suggesting that the biggest problems lie in the highly complicated application procedures and the equally complicated regulations of implementation (Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung 2019). This is where smaller and medium-sized municipalities fail, according to the study. It is hardly possible for migrant organisations, which usually do not have any (or very few) funded positions, to become serious competitors here. In the requirements that follow during project implementation, MOs are also driven to the edge of what they can manage and are forced to do much of the work on a "voluntary" basis.[28]

The most important level of funding for MOs are, therefore, municipalities. In the SVR survey, 59.4% said they received funding from municipalities in 2019, followed by the Land (45.5%), Bund/BAMF (38.3%), foundations (32.4%), district (19.9%), other organisations (18.0%), EU funding (12.7), companies (11.6%), cultural institutes and consulates (6.3), and others (20.5%).

On the one hand, the municipality is the most important level, but, on the other hand, it is also a potentially fragile level for the reasons described above. In addition, beyond sponsorship contracts and regular funding, municipal funding tends to be low and includes few staff positions. In a nationwide comparison, the possibilities offered by municipalities vary considerably.

The various structural funding possibilities at the federal level are problematic in terms of sustainability: they finance the development of structures for a very limited period of time, the aim of which is for them to become self-sustaining after the end of the funding through project financing. Here, however, all the problems just described come into play.

Nevertheless, the structural funding, in combination with comprehensive project funding, has made it possible, among other things, to further develop a new form of MO and accelerate its growth.

The following section describes the development of the BV NeMO association against the backdrop of changing opportunity structures. Following on from Hypothesis 2, it is shown that the influx of refugees to Germany in 2015/2016 in particular has fuelled the emergence of new MOs—both qualitatively and quantitatively. At the same time, this case study once again makes plausible the risks and dangers that lie hidden beneath the surface of MO-friendly rhetoric.

To summarise the risks as described in this section: when dealing with MOs, established players often develop overly high, unrealistic expectations, which are then easily disappointed—and possibly confirm underlying reservations. The reasons for this are, on the one hand, the often-existing will (or political or administrative pressure) to include MOs and, on the other hand, an overall insufficient awareness of the continuing ambivalences, barriers, bias, and conflicts of interest or hidden competition. Despite the overall improve-

ment in opportunities for MOs to shape their role as important partners in participation issues, there are still various forces that are slowing down or jeopardising this development.

4.2. The Emergence of New Types of MO: Case Study BV NeMO and Its Local Alliances

The strong influx of refugees in 2015/16 and its consequences have also led to new forms of organisation and cooperation patterns in the field of MOs.[29] One of these new forms or types of migrant organisations are so-called local alliances ("lokale Verbünde"). Individual local alliances already existed before 2015/2016, but since then there has been a rapid growth and an increase in importance, which has been favoured by structural funding and—even more significantly—project funding in the area of engagement in refugee work.

After a phase of growth and a strong increase in importance, which can also be directly linked to the situation in 2015/16, local alliances as well as their federal umbrella organisation BV NeMO are now confronted with considerable challenges, some of which threaten their existence. These challenges concern the financial situation, the cooperative relationships with external partners, and internal processes. The three areas are closely interrelated. In the following, the characteristics and development of the alliances are shown first, followed by challenges and risks that (could) jeopardise further development.

4.2.1. Characteristics of Local Alliances

Under the umbrella of the Federal Association of Networks of Migrant Organisations (BV NeMO), 21 local alliances in 10 federal states have joined forces. The member networks in turn represent about 800 migrant organisations that are members at the local level. The BV NeMO member alliances share a number of common features. They unite under one umbrella a larger number of local and integrative migrant associations committed to shared principles. At the same time, the associations remain autonomous. Their orientation is local, participatory, independent of origin, cross-cultural, and secular. The associations usually have a two-tier structure. They have the legal form of registered associations. Representatives of the member associations elect the board of the association in the general meeting. At the same time, in addition to this voluntary structure, there is a full-time structure with staff and management.

The overarching goal of the alliances is to promote the equal participation of people with a migration biography. To this end, they are active in many different areas, depending on their local character, size, fields of action, etc. Many alliances are differentiated into three dimensions:

Firstly, they see themselves as the voice of migrants on the ground and get involved in socio-political debates.

Secondly, they aim to strengthen and professionalise their member associations, among other things, through networking, counselling, training, and qualification offers.

Thirdly, they are often responsible for various projects in the fields of social services, education, culture, needs-based and culturally sensitive services and counselling for people with a migration history, intercultural exchange, encounters, etc.

The federation structure favours organisational development towards a better networked collective actor capable of taking action. Federations can contribute to the professionalisation of the member associations through their permanent, full-time structures. However, here, too, there are the manifold structural challenges mentioned earlier. Furthermore, a huge variety of individual characteristics exists in their respective local structures and contexts.

Federations enable their member associations to speak with one voice and, thus, become audible and visible in the migration discourse locally as well as through networking supra-regionally and at the national level. This is particularly important for small associations that reflect the diversity of today's urban societies and have good access to their communities, but are hardly noticed. Associations also have a contact function for the municipality and other actors in politics, administration, welfare organisations, and civil society (cf. Hoesch and Harbig 2019; Hoesch, forthcoming).

An important goal of the local and national alliances is to create political awareness among the member organisations and to sensitise them to the fact that it is important for them not only to see themselves as service providers but also to actively participate in shaping policy, be it locally or at the federal or state level. This is also about overcoming the purely local: strategies and demands are developed jointly on the basis of perceptions of specific local needs. These are then communicated to relevant decision-makers at *all* relevant levels.

In addition to the commonalities described above, there are also considerable differences between local networks. These can be seen in, among other things, the form of a full-time or voluntary structure, the relationship patterns with other actors, the fields of action dealt with, the membership structures, and the content-related orientation of the member associations. The form and integration of local alliances also depend on municipal structures, experience with migration and integration, and cooperation with MOs in municipal contexts. For example, the situation of MOs in eastern Germany with comparatively low proportions of people with migration histories is quite different from that in cities in the Ruhr region or other metropolises with many years of migration experience and high diversity in urban society. It is easy to understand that the cooperation between MOs and municipal actors in Halle (Saale) is different from that in Dortmund, for example: in Halle there are a total of 18 migrant associations, 13 of which are members of the local alliance of MO; in Dortmund the number of MOs is estimated at between 180 and 240, of which over 60 are members of the local alliance.

The alliances also differ greatly in terms of the number of employees, with just under 50 employees at one end of the spectrum and no full-time employees at all (or just one part-time employee with about 25% of a regular position) at the other (BV NeMO 2020).[30]

The member associations also differ in terms of their political will to shape local policy. For example, a number of associations that have existed for a long time come from a more culturally oriented tradition of association. Many of their member associations have therefore seen themselves more as passive co-sponsors of a cultural forum or cultural centre. The orientation towards the basic ideas of active participation in policy formation has progressed to different degrees. Everywhere, however, work is being done on this in one way or another. However, BV NeMO alliances founded since 2016 have all had the goal of shaping local politics and creating a stronger political consciousness among their members from the beginning.

4.2.2. Impact of Refugee Immigration in 2015/2016

Although the federal association of local alliances BV NeMO has received structural funding from the BAMF/Federal Ministry of the Interior (Bundesministerium des Innern, BMI) since 2013, the growth and further development of the network approach in the way described would not have been conceivable without the strong influx of refugees. As a result, numerous migrants and their organisations became involved in refugee aid on a voluntary basis.

Suddenly, new opportunities arose for MOs to prove themselves: given the significant challenges that arose at all levels in the context of this historical situation, municipalities and other state levels were more willing to try out new forms of cooperation. Old routines were broken and civil society involvement—especially by MOs—was more strongly supported by funding programmes (see Section 2.2).

Against this background, BV NeMO developed a project that aimed to train migrant volunteers in refugee work and to provide them with skills in selected fields of action that would enable them to cooperate professionally at eye level in the municipalities and with other actors. The resulting project Samo.fa ("Strengthening those active in migrant organisations in refugee work") has been carried out in over 30 cities nationwide since 2016 and is funded by the Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration. Today, it can be said that it has contributed *significantly* to the emergence, development, consolidation, and better perception of local alliances.[31] A comparably

extensive project did not exist before in the field of migrant organisations (Hoesch and Harbig 2019, p. 113; Hoesch, forthcoming). A total of around 50 positions were created in the area of project coordination in the partner networks at 32 locations nationwide, as well as in project management and public relations at the BV NeMO headquarters in Berlin and Dortmund. In this way, Samo.fa has established the full-time structures that are necessary to coordinate the work of the volunteers and to bring out their potential.[32] In comparison, the contribution of the BAMF/BMI's structural funding was much smaller: the funds originally granted for a maximum of six years were successively reduced. In 2021, only one position could be financed.

Without the Samo.fa project funds, the development of numerous local alliances, as well as that of their umbrella organisation at the federal level, would not have been possible in this form. And, without the situation in autumn 2015, a project on a comparable scale would probably not have come about, according to the assessment of those responsible for the project (Hoesch and Harbig 2019, p. 125; Hoesch, forthcoming).

In addition to the actual tasks of the project—qualification and networking of volunteers in refugee work—BV NeMO also saw the opportunity to promote the development of networks and alliances as a positive side effect of the project work. The idea of building structures was initially tolerated by the funding agency, but not supported, as one of the project leaders reported. After two years, however, the funding agency also recognised the advantages of setting up networks because access to the various groups could be better guaranteed in the integration work of the municipalities. Later, the establishment of local networks and associations became an official funding objective.

Samo.fa has clearly advanced the structure-building and visibility of MOs, as two NeMO executives assess it:

> But the fact that a migrant organisation is so widely discussed about certain projects probably didn't exist before [. . .] We are now welcome representatives of migrant organisations nationwide. Also at the integration summit in the Chancellor's Office, where we as a federal association have been professionally involved. [transated by the author] (Hoesch and Harbig 2019, pp. 128–18)

BV NeMO is also represented in over 20 nationwide committees. It has a significant presence in the amendment of the National Action Plan on Integration (NAP-I), where BV NeMO members participate in meetings (BV NeMO 2020, p. 16). Furthermore, it is represented at EU level in the Monitoring Committee of the EU AMIF funding programme and involved in a number of networks and conferences at EU and transnational level.

4.2.3. Finance

It was shown that the current structure of BV NeMO and the development of the local alliances were made possible primarily through the Samo.fa project. The structural funding from the BAMF/BMI made the development of the project possible in the first place, but its effect was then limited. In the medium term, the funding for Samo.fa will end and it is questionable whether a comparable project can be launched again—the willingness to fund it was directly related to the situation in 2015/16.[33] The aim of the BAMF/BMI's temporary structural funding is to encourage MOs to build up structures that enable them to support themselves through their own project acquisition after the funding ends. This approach misses the realities of MOs, at least those that hardly have the means to finance a basic staff through membership fees. Without a minimum of employee positions, the acquisition of large projects is hardly manageable. The problem of the often high share of own funds described above also remains unsolved. Unlike, e.g., religious organisations, it is hardly possible for the non-governmental organisations to collect significant membership fees from their member associations. It follows that BV NeMO cannot expect any income through its member associations that would make it possible to finance one or a few job positions. The same is true for its member organisations at the local level: they often are in quite precarious situations and cannot rely on payment of membership contributions.

In the future, the work of BV NeMO will presumably be characterised by "projectitis", while at the same time the expectations of participation in bodies at all federal levels have grown. There is a danger of being permanently overburdened, or, as one BV NeMO officer put it, "you wear yourself out".

With regard to the local alliances, it is essential that they succeed in anchoring themselves more strongly in their local communities and municipalities and in acquiring their own projects through various funding bodies.

The overall complicated situation was summarised by BV NeMO in its 2019 annual report, as follows:

> However, all activities of BV NeMO were and are carried out on an extremely scarce resource basis, i.e., essentially through staff appropriations for a full-time position financed by the BAMF through structural funding. At the same time, the very successful acquisition of projects mainly benefits the active alliances and partners at the local level. The Executive Board—and in particular the Managing Board—are thus faced with the dilemma between very limited resources and, at the same time, growing demands and increasing tasks. Personal commitment makes many things possible, but in the long run leads to overload. [translated by the author] (BV NeMO 2020, p. 10)

4.2.4. Cooperative Relationships with External Partners/Perception and Visibility

As described above, numerous new cooperations have been established. BV NeMO, as well as the associations at local level, are increasingly asked to participate in committees, working groups, and various forms of professional cooperation. This is also stated in the annual report:

> In general, many colleagues work with confidence and commitment despite all the difficulties; municipal acceptance is increasing in most alliances. (BV NeMO 2020, p. 11)

However, here, too, "projectitis" leads to considerable difficulties. Employment contracts are temporary, staff turnover is high, and contact persons are not permanently available. This has a negative impact on networking on the ground. Accordingly, it is difficult to continuously send one's own experts to the relevant working groups and committees—to which, conversely, they are still not invited as a matter of course. In addition, there is often competition between organisations, which impairs cooperation (see also Hoesch and Harbig 2019; Hoesch, forthcoming).

4.2.5. Internal Challenges

The rapid growth of MOs brings challenges in terms of communication and transparency. The founding and initial development phases of the individual member associations of the local alliances mostly took place between associations and their responsible persons/volunteers, who knew each other well and trusted each other. Much of this happened on the basis of verbal agreements and informal channels. When an association grows, decision-making processes have to be formalised and internal transparency also has to be established in a formal way (annual reports, rules of procedure, etc.). This is all the more important because associations have different expectations regarding their membership due to their different structures—from small, purely voluntary initiatives to professional organisations with full-time structures. Associations examine very carefully under cost–benefit aspects whether membership in an association is worthwhile.

Depending on the profile and demands of the member associations, there are also conflicts of interest that have to be moderated. In line with basic concepts of association theory (cf. Schmitter and Streeck 1999), one can also speak of two conflicting logics here: the logic of membership vs. the logic of influence. According to this approach, interest groups are permanently forced to balance these two logics. A dilemma can arise in the representation of interests by associations: giving priority to the interests of members can

conflict with the chances of asserting external interests because external conditions (such as power relations, the legal situation, etc.) must be taken into account. Members do not necessarily understand these restrictions and strategic considerations. While this type of conflict is generally typical for associations, I have observed that it is perceived particularly strongly from the internal perspective of MOs. I think that there are three main reasons for this: firstly, intercultural challenges, conflict lines, or misunderstandings may exacerbate the phenomenon; secondly, the experiences of disadvantage and discrimination that exist in many cases might reinforce the importance of membership logic and the prioritisation of individual member interests; and, thirdly—due to the specific structure of the local alliances or umbrella organisation and the specific division of tasks between voluntary and full-time or professional work—the effect is further enhanced. Conflicting interests between voluntary board members and full-time specialist staff pose a major challenge. This sometimes leads to serious conflicts when situations, needs for action, and strategies are perceived and evaluated in very different ways. We observe this type of conflict in quite a few associations, and it seems to be a phenomenon that accompanies professionalisation and growth. While volunteers often play the most important role in the founding phase of MOs, this influence often shifts to the full-time level in the course of professionalisation. Therefore, it is not surprising that these two spheres are struggling for influence. Due to the legal structure of these local alliances, the implications of the law of associations and related procedures, these conflicts carry the potential for a destabilising dynamic, as we could observe in a number of local alliances at a certain stage of development. The legal structure of associations, which is widespread, creates powerful instruments for voluntary board members that can also be used to oppose professional expertise.

There is a major—and, so far, mostly unresolved—task in balancing the relationship and the claims to power, professionalism, and responsibility between the full-time and honorary positions, between the honorary board and the full-time management in a contractually binding manner.

4.2.6. Transfer and Social Innovation

Despite all the structural challenges, alliances often have and develop in-depth expert knowledge in their respective fields of work, as well as cultural and migration-sensitive competences. Flexible structures enable them to react quickly and flexibly to new challenges. They can thus become laboratories of social innovation. According to Howaldt and Schwartz (2010), social innovation should be understood here as the reconfiguration of social practices with the aim of solving problems better than existing approaches can. They embody—to use a metaphor from social innovation research—the mobile, agile "butterflies", in contrast to the "elephants" (the stable but rather sluggish and slowly adaptable institutions) (cf. Oosterlynck et al. 2013). In order to ensure that the specific knowledge of MOs is not lost and that social innovation goes beyond the level of local limitations, an even better transfer between alliances, other practice actors, and science would be desirable. This, however, is a considerable challenge under the resource conditions described above.

5. Conclusions and Outlook

This paper started with the questions of how the role of MOs has changed in Germany since 2015/2016 and whether this change is sustainable. It stated the hypotheses that the historic migration situation acted as a booster, generating new forms of MO and cooperations, but, at the same time, that these developments are quite often regarded in too optimistic a way, disregarding the considerable risks of failure as well as how fragile many of these recent MOs are.

It was shown that the specific situation of refugee immigration represented a window of opportunity for MOs to get involved with their engagement and to make their mark on the ground. Some organisations succeeded more than others. The decisive factor was often the extent to which municipalities were willing to trust MOs and actively involve them. While at the federal level there is now a clear recognition of MOs as important civil

society partners in participation-related areas, there are considerable differences *between* the municipalities. There are municipalities where cooperation works comparatively well and those where MOs still have to fight hard for their recognition. But, even where the acceptance of MOs has increased significantly, their inclusion in relevant bodies and networks is not a matter of course but must be demanded again and again. It takes a long time for stable working relationships to develop here—this is also made more difficult by the high staff turnover, internal challenges, and the project dependency of MOs.

Thus, from the perspective of MOs, there are two ways of reading the changes since 2015/16. On the one hand, it is true that their contributions are more strongly appreciated, they are included in important processes, and supported by newly launched funding programmes. But, on the other hand, measured against the enormously high expectations placed on MOs, one could speak of symbolic politics: there is a lot of talk and verbal appreciation, but little material change. The so-called structural funding is in fact project funding that does not take into account the realities of MOs and does not match the high expectations towards umbrella organisations with regard to their availability as permanent contact persons and participation experts. This applies at least to those associations that cannot fall back on income from tuition or membership fees. Against this backdrop, the development of the role of MOs is positive overall but, at the same time, fragile. It also happens in municipalities that MOs are financially disadvantaged compared to other providers. Paternalistic and patronising attitudes also remain widespread. Sometimes, it seems that a certain image of MOs wants to be seen, a kind of euphoric perception. However, this picture remains silhouetted, and many of the nuances and shades described here are not adequately perceived. This limited view can lead to disappointment and jeopardise cooperation and funding. Especially under stress, administrative staff and representatives revert to old reflexes and patterns of evaluation and exclusionary tendencies, which are then not reflected upon. There is a lack of awareness of these mechanisms on the part of those within established structures. What is urgently needed is a more realistic, differentiated view of MOs by those in administration, which is also informed by empirical studies in this area. Currently, the awarding of funding and contracts to MOs seems to be driven by very different motives. MOs are sought as partners, e.g., for symbolic reasons, in order to close gaps or shift responsibility. Despite a certain amount of progress, there is still a general lack of factual analysis as to which organisation is best suited and why, which expectations are realistic, and where structural support is still needed. These are questions that require various kinds of investment: time, analysis, and money. If these fail to materialise, reflexive patterns of exaggerated and then disappointed expectations are likely to be repeated.

An ambivalent assessment of the current state and possible future direction of MOs emerges: certainly, there has been an astonishing development of MOs since about 2005 and, in particular, since 2015/16. New opportunity structures emerged which allowed MOs to develop and to participate in an unprecedented, self-confident way. But, at the same time, persistent forces, barriers, and ambivalences on different levels have slowed down and jeopardised this progress. Furthermore, the term migrant organisation suggests a uniformity, a common category that disguises the extreme heterogeneity of this type of organisation. There is a considerable range of very different organisations, each of which responds to very different needs and which itself has very different needs in terms of its organisational development and stabilisation. However, the knowledge of this complexity and the resulting consequences is often still too limited.

In view of the heterogeneity within the MOs, it would be important for future studies to consider much more precisely which type of organisation is involved, with which logics of action, possibilities, and which limitations. As Karakayali puts it with regard to civil society organisations in refugee aid in general: "The classification into different types of civil society actors and their logics of action can provide a basis for an in-depth study of the consequences of the integration of civil society involvement into stately/institutionalized structures" (Karakayali 2018, p. 16).

It remains to be seen whether there will be a willingness to reflect upon these complex mechanisms and to offer genuine structural support in the future. Inevitably, the question will arise as to which organisations should enjoy this privilege and on what grounds. For, in this zero-sum game, a gain of for organisation would be a loss for another. Nevertheless, it must be asked whether a decision in favour of selected organisations would make sense here, possibly on the basis of an input measurement and the development of indicators. The idea that the diversity of civil society innovation can be stimulated again and again via the logic of temporary models of project funding and skimmed off in the name of social innovation runs into the void if, again and again, new "butterflies" perennially seek to offer missing social services and fill gaps before they die without the "elephants" having moved or learned from them. The permanent transfer of elephantine tasks to fragile butterflies cannot work.

Notes

[1] Bundesverband Netzwerke von Migrant*innenorganisationen, www.bv-nemo.de, accessed on 20 September 2023. The author is also involved in the work of the federal association BV NeMO and has insights into its member organisations as well as developments at state and federal level.

[2] The article by Moya is part of a special issue on migrant organisations of *The Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* published in 2005. During this period, migrant organisations experienced a first boom in attention in research and debate. In Germany, the Immigration Act came into force that year, marking an important milestone for the further development of MOs.

[3] Conversely, it is then logical that services disappear and migrant organisations adapt to changing conditions when needs are met elsewhere. Moya shows this for the example of mutual aid societies—once one of the most important categories of MO—which disappeared within immigrant communities following the expansion of government and business social security systems (Moya 2005, p. 855).

[4] Kortmann (2011) shows the effect of different opportunity structures by comparing MOs in Germany and the Netherlands.

[5] For a good overeiew of the dominant debates see Klie (2022).

[6] The other functions, according to Bonfert et al. (2022), are the *service function* (providing social services themselves), the *hinging function* (mediating with the welfare system), and the *advocacy function* (advocating for the interests of people with migration biographies in public and political discourse.

[7] Although migrants in Germany acquired social rights comparatively early on, they were often de facto denied access to them in many areas. Courts often had to ensure that migrants were able to claim their rights (cf. Herbert 2003; Meier-Braun 2002).

[8] However, the Joint Welfare Association (Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband) took on a different role here. As early as 1980, it promoted cooperation with, and the participation and strengthening of, migrant organisations (Toker 2013, p. 80).

[9] An interesting example is the city of Stuttgart. While, at federal level, German governments denied the fact that Germany had become a country of immigration until the year 2000, the city of Stuttgart was already dealing constructively with immigration in the 1970s. In 1976, the city published a 400-page report on the situation of foreigners in the city. It stated that Germany had de facto become a country of immigration and that foreign residents should be regarded as a permanent part of the population (Meier-Braun 2009). It is certainly no coincidence that one of the first larger intercultural umbrella organisations of migrant organisations, the Forum of Cultures, was founded in Stuttgart in 1998 (www.forum-der-kulturen.de, accessed on 20 September

2023). It is an intercultural secular federation that is also a member of BV NeMO and has been a role model for numerous federations founded in Germany.

[10] In the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, MOs were included in the integration policy debate as early as the mid-1990s; at the federal level, they were only included as of 2005 (Toker 2013, p. 76).

[11] See Bourdieu (1983) for the basic concept of social capital, Coleman (1988) for the connection between the social capital approach and the theory of rational action, Granovetter (1973) for a focus on the quality of weak vs. strong ties, and Putnam (1993, 1995) for a democratic theory perspective on social capital.

[12] For an overview of the development and interpretation of the term, see Hoesch (2018, pp. 178–79).

[13] Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge.

[14] Another phenomenon criticised by MOs was that they were often only involved in "target group procurement" without being provided with resources or being involved in important decisions (Hunger and Metzger 2011; own interviews).

[15] For the two most important countries of origin of the refugees at the time—Syria and Iraq—alone, there are numerous examples of MO involvement (Hunger and Holz 2019; Hunger et al. 2017; Hunger and Candan 2017).

[16] Based on a complete survey in four federal states with subsequent statistical estimation.

[17] Other areas include anti-discrimination work (18.6%), political advocacy (14.7%), religion (14.7%), sport (14.5%), cultivation/teaching of the language of origin (13%), development cooperation (12.2%), translation (11.3%), and work with elderly persons (9.7%) (see SVR 2020, p. 23).

[18] The authors explain the different stages and inclusion–exclusion criteria of their selection of relevant contributions. After intermediate steps, 64 texts were selected for further analysis and 17 for in-depth analysis. Although the focus and background of the authors is health science, the approach is transferable and refers to studies from education, ethnology, law, social work, and research policy, among others (Vindrola-Padros et al. 2017, pp. 73–75).

[19] Though the article also focuses on a case study in the area of health care, it widens its scope and explores the possibilities and advantages, as well as the risks and pitfalls, of embedded/collbarotaive research against the background of classical ethnographic instruments.

[20] https://www.vmdo.de/, accessed on 20 September 2023.

[21] https://fluchtforschung.net/arbeitskreise/knowledge-transfer/, accessed on 20 September 2023.

[22] Samo.fa is the acronym for "Stärkung der Aktiven in Migrantenorganisationen in der Flüchtlingsarbeit" (Strengthening those active in migrant organisations in refugee work).

[23] The German expression "Hol- und Bringshuld" refers to the question of who is responsible for a lack of cooperation: the MOs (who, from the point of view of established structures, are not sufficiently involved) or, conversely, the established structures that do not sufficiently involve the MOs.

[24] With "House of Resources", the BAMF initiated a programme in 2015 that supports MOs locally and as unbureaucratically as possible (SVR 2020, p. 66). The aim is to qualify MOs according to their needs and to strengthen them in their association structures. In addition to counselling, further education, and networking offers, this also includes application workshops and the direct allocation of funds for micro-projects. There are currently 20 "Houses of Resources" in Germany, one of which is supported by the authors's organisation.

[25] It cannot be ruled out here that persisting racism also plays a role on various levels (individual, institutional, and structural). For the relevance of racism with respect to civil society engagement in the migration society see (Bostancı and Ilgün-Birhimeoğlu (forthcoming); Ilgün-Birhimeoğlu (2022).

[26] Many migrants experienced forms of institutional racism, a phenomenon that has so far been little discussed publicly in Germany (cf. Graevskaia et al. 2022) but which, according to our observations, also has an impact in the area of civic engagement: while MOs should be proactively demanding and engaging if they want to move forward, they are sometimes intimidated.

[27] Cf. Ilgün-Birhimeoğlu (2022) on the phenomenon of gratitude expectations. I personally remember very tough negotiations at the middle municipal management level when it came to awarding contracts and negotiating personnel costs. Although we already knew that the funds for us had been approved by the top level and that the planned personnel costs were covered, the middle-level negotiating partner kept forcing us to justify ourselves and tried to push down our personnel costs. This was done against the background of already low personnel costs and relatively low salaries.

[28] Own experience within the EU-AMIF-funded project INSIST (Interkulturelle städtische Initiativen stärken), which the author developed and managed.

[29] Another form of organisation that emerged in the 2010s and also experienced strong development after 2015 is the new German organisations (neue deutsche organisationen, ndo). They distinguish themselves from classic MOs and focus on racism, discrimination, and othering in a post-migrant society (see e.g., El et al. 2019).

[30] According to the SVR study, the average number of full-time employees at MOs is 5.7 (SVR 2020, p. 49).

[31] For detailed information on Samo.fa, see Kruse et al. (2018); Hoesch and Harbig (2019) and www.samofa.de, accessed on 10 October 2022.

32 More than 9000 volunteers are active in Samo.fa. More than 100,000 people attended Samo.fa events in 2017, for example, and the numbers have remained almost the same since then.

33 The project duration has already been extended several times but, in 2021/22, with a reduced number of locations. However, the new refugee migration from Ukraine could also change this situation again.

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