The big world experiment: the mobilization of social capital in migrant communities
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Introduction

‘I network, therefore I am.’ This could well be the motto of those of us who are active members of the Internet community. You don’t count if you don’t have a profile on networking websites such as Facebook and LinkedIn\(^1\). These are places which map out the social networks of their users by enabling connections between personal profiles. Facebook is a digitalized version of groups of friends, and facilitates people getting or staying in touch with their (old) acquaintances. LinkedIn has a more instrumental aim, with its core objective being to create a community of professionals who can easily connect to potential new employers, employees or clients, i.e. their personal acquaintances, and the acquaintances of the acquaintances and so on. Yet however promising these potential sources of friends and career improving acquaintances are, in my experience these networks have a major disadvantage: many people create an account, connect to others and form a network, but then do nothing with it. Particularly so far as a virtual network that is intended to be influential in a professional sense, such as LinkedIn, is concerned, the question arises as to whether it achieves its aim. Do people really use their digital networks when they are looking for a new job? And if so, how do they do this?

The positive aspect of these websites is that users can actually observe what their networks look like. You can not only see how many acquaintances you have, and to whom they are connected, but you are also able to garner important information about them, such as their occupation, hobbies, age and interests. Knowing all this is valuable if, for example, you want to ask for help from friends, but in our everyday ‘offline’ lives, it is very difficult to gain this kind of insight. Firstly, how many people does a typical individual know? Pool and Kochen (1978 [1958]) have estimated that an average person has between 500 and 1,500 acquaintances (a more recent estimation by Freeman and Thomson (1989) even puts this figure at 5,000 acquaintances per person over a twenty-year period), while different research has shown that we think we know about 100 other people (e.g. Gurevitch, 1961). In other words, an individual knows five to 15 times as many people as he/she is generally aware of. Yet, if someone has insight into who are friends, and who are friends of friends etc., this person is more capable of actually using his/her network. People can ‘use’ their social connections for different purposes, whether as conversational partners, to find a handyman, or to mobilize a large group to protest against social welfare reforms, for example. If you know who is in your network,

\(^1\) http://www.linkedin.com
http://www.facebook.com
it is easier to be aware of whether there is anyone in it who can help you. Of course, not all contacts are useful in every situation. You wouldn’t really ask your colleague to walk your dog at the weekend, but it would make sense to ask him to take part in a carpool if you don’t possess a vehicle of your own. The kind of help that you ask for, or that you may want to provide, depends on the type of relationship you have with the person offering (or accepting) it. Some are friends, while others are just mere acquaintances.

Knowing your network thus enables you to use it appropriately, which is why networking websites can be invaluable. In the social sciences, individuals’ social networks, the number of acquaintances they have, and who helps who with what are objects of study under the heading ‘social capital’. In cases where your friends, or people with whom you have a different kind of relationship, help you out by watering your plants when you are on holiday, babysitting your children when you are late home from work, or assist in finding you a job, it is said that you have called upon your social capital. Lin (2001) has defined this concept as resources which are embedded in a social structure that are accessed and/or mobilized in purposive actions. The core of this notion is that if you trust and share norms and values with a person, you can call upon him/her to provide help and enable you to achieve the goals that may, otherwise, have been beyond your reach. A great deal of research has been conducted into the issue of social capital. It has been related to many different topics, ranging from the support provided by family to former prisoners, to the improvement of villages in developing countries (e.g. Woolcock, 1998; Mills & Codd, 2008). What is more, this research has also been carried out on both the individual level, examining the advantages that someone can gain from his/her social capital, and on the collective level, when, for example, the benefits that society as a whole can experience from the social capital residing within it are considered.

When reviewing all of these studies, it is striking that most of the work has predominantly focused on the first part of Lin’s definition of social capital, the resources embedded in a social structure. Indeed, the second element, namely the fact that these resources are accessed and/or mobilized in purposive actions, has generally been neglected. Social capital research is often concerned with either the mapping of social networks, particularly a small element thereof, or with the resources a person has at his/her disposal. Whether these resources or networks are actually accessed or used remains under explored. That people encounter situations in which they actually deploy their social capital is often assumed, but rarely tested. It is my view that this is a major gap in the study of social sciences which needs to be addressed. Empirical research is required to test the assumptions that are made in the theoretical accounts of social capital. In this work, I take up this challenge. I want to demonstrate what the

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2 Later in this book I will discuss extensively the way in which social capital is studied. This will show that some authors do not study social capital by means of networks at all, but rather by levels of trust or other indicators.
relationship is between the social capital that is available to actors, and the ways in which they mobilize this potential. The core principles of the concept, and how it is presumed to function, are more or less the same, irrespective of the field in which it is studied. For example, in youth studies, social capital is used to explain child development (Santos, 2007), in developmental studies it is utilized in relation to the development of rural areas (Narayan & Pritchett, 1999), and in economics it is used to explain how people find work (Granovetter, 1974 [1995]). In each of these fields, social capital consists of three aspects (social networks, trust, and norms and values) which are supposed to have a beneficial effect on the actors involved, and more diverse social capital is deemed important. Furthermore, in each of these fields, the presence of social capital (i.e. of either/or social networks, trust, and shared norms and values) is assumed to be indicative of the use thereof. In other words, if one wants to study the use of social capital, there are a wide variety of areas to choose from.

My focus will be on the social capital of ethnic communities in Western liberal democracies. A great deal of research has been carried out into the relationship between social capital and political participation in general, and minority participation in particular. Most of this work focuses on the individual level, where it has been shown that those who have more social capital are also more involved in the political process; for example, they have higher voting rates (e.g. La Due Lake & Huckfeldt, 1998; Teorell, 2003; Bevelander & Pendakur, 2007; Eggert & Giugni, 2007). Less research has been conducted at the group level, but the studies that do exist also reveal a positive relationship between social capital and political participation (e.g. Fennema & Tillie, 1999; Maloney & Roßteutscher, 2007).

For a considerable period of time now, Western liberal democracies have been struggling with the successful integration of native and immigrant groups. Integration is defined as the degree to and the way in which ethnic minority groups become part of the society which receives them (SCP, 2004, p.132), and to investigate this it is necessary to formulate specific domains in which the integration takes place. Scholars vary in the ways in which they unravel the concept (see, for example, Odé, 2002; Gijsberts, 2004; Heckmann, 2004), but I will use a tripartite classification, distinguishing between social-economic integration, social-cultural integration and political integration.

Integration in the social-economic domain refers, predominantly, to the equal inclusion of minority groups in the labor and housing markets and the education system. As this aspect of integration is both the most tangible and the easiest (but not easy!) to influence by policy measures, it is often the main focus of government policies, particularly in the Netherlands and Germany, which are the subjects of this study. Social-cultural integration refers to (the divergence of) cultural and religious views, norms and values, social participation and social interaction between the dominant and minority groups in a society, and it is this domain that is emphasized in the political and public
The third area of integration concerns the political domain. Political integration refers to the equal participation of migrants in the political process. It also concerns the degree to which migrants and their next generations adhere to the democratic norms and values of the host society, for example the extent to which they agree with the principle of equality for men and women, freedom of speech and the separation of Church and State. The third pillar of political integration is political trust, which exists if it is believed that political representatives and government institutions act on behalf of the common good.

The political integration will be considered in depth in this study of social capital, because it is at the heart of the difficulties that host societies, and liberal democracies in particular, have to face. After all, democracy requires that the majority makes the decisions, having due regard for the interests of the minority. Of course, the main way for the minority to voice its interests is by taking part in the political process, and this applies to each community of interests, including ethnic minorities. The question is: how can members of ethnic communities be encouraged to participate?

In most of the studies of the relationship between social capital and political participation, the emphasis is on the role of voluntary associations. These organizations are included in social capital research into political participation, since they are a way for minority groups to voice their interest in the public and political domain. For example, workers have unions which negotiate with employers and governments for favorable labor agreements, the chronically ill come together in patient associations, and in many countries gays and lesbians form pressure groups to fight inequality and discrimination. Moreover, research has shown that even associations that are not primarily interest groups, for example leisure organizations, contribute to social capital and positively correlate with political participation (e.g. Paxton, 2002; Quintelier, 2008).

Voluntary organizations are pre-eminent places, where social capital can be acquired and maintained, because they bring people with different backgrounds together, thus providing a wide variety of potential social connections. What is more, they have a socializing effect since their members need to collaborate and overcome...
mutual differences. In the process of doing so, trust is built and shared norms and values are developed. Hence, social capital is both produced and reproduced.

Voluntary organizations are assumed to not only (re)produce social capital, and thus have an indirect effect on political participation, but to also boost direct political involvement (Almond & Verba, 1963; Verba & Nie, 1972; Moyser & Parry, 1997; McMiller, 2000). They are often referred to as ‘schools of democracy’ (after Tocqueville, 1840 [2004]) implying that their members are ‘taught’ democratic norms, values and habits. Members are supposed to learn to deliberate between themselves on an equal footing, subsequently using the knowledge and civic skills they acquire in wider society by taking part in the democratic system. In summary, voluntary organizations are regarded as breeding grounds for social capital as well as being instruments which spur political participation.

Turning back to the political integration of ethnic minorities, it is understandable that scholars have focused on the presence of ethnic organizations. Over time, Western-European countries have encountered such significant numbers of immigrants that in most of these places one can speak of true ethnic communities. Most of these same communities have established a considerable number of voluntary organizations, which serve the needs of their members, i.e. **ethnic organizations**. In the views of some, these bodies are a barrier to integration because they keep the ethnic community away from mainstream society (cf. Penninx & Schrover, 2001; Rijkschroeff & Duyvendak, 2004). However, mindful of the notion that voluntary organizations in general spur political participation, other scholars ascribe a stimulating effect to them.

A group of European researchers have studied the relationship between social capital, voluntary organizations and the political participation of migrants in a range of European cities (Fennema & Tillie, 2001; Berger, Galonska, & Koopmans, 2004; Jacobs, Phalet, & Swyngedouw, 2004; Koopmans, 2004; Odmalm, 2004; Togeby, 2004). The research was prompted by the findings of Fennema and Tillie (1999), namely that the ethnic groups in Amsterdam, which have a dense network of voluntary organizations also demonstrate significant rates of political participation and political trust. In contrast, the groups with few, and sparsely connected voluntary associations rarely participate politically and have limited political trust. These networks of voluntary organizations are constructed by interlocking directorates, which are comprised of people who have seats on the boards of two or more organizations at the same time. This type of network is regarded as the embodiment of the social capital of a community (note that social capital in this sense is regarded on group level.) Researchers maintain that the relationship between social capital and political participation is in line with the Tocquevillean argument: the (board) members learn how to trust within their

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6 It must be said that some studies reached the opposite conclusion, denying a relationship between voluntary organizations and political participation (for example Clark, Khan, & McLaverty, 2002), but these are largely outnumbered by affirmative studies.
organizations. This social trust then develops into political trust and political participation. Furthermore, what happens within these organizations – members develop social trust and civic skills through interaction – also takes place between them by means of the board members. At this elite level, those on the board are expected to interact and collaborate and, again, simultaneously develop trust and civic skills. Because of their position as leaders of their own organizations, these individuals can pass on all the information, knowledge and habits they have acquired to their members, thus multiplying the learning effect within these associations.

The empirical evidence that Fennema and Tillie, and the authors of subsequent studies, gathered to back up this line of reasoning is, unfortunately, rather weak, with only the measurement of ‘input’ and ‘outcome’ variables being relied upon. Essentially, it comes down to the network of interlocking directorates on the one hand, and the level of political participation expressed as election turnout on the other. The mechanism of how social capital works is hypothesized rather than studied. The research which followed on from this initial work predominantly addressed the individual aspect of the relationship between organizational membership and political participation, without considering in depth the mechanism that connects the two variables. In other words, the studies of the relationship between social capital and political participation suffer from the drawback that is a feature of social capital studies in general: more is assumed than proven, and the research is static instead of dynamic. My aim is to gain insight, in particular regarding the use of social capital, into the ‘black box’ that is positioned between the social capital of ethnic communities and their political participation.

This ‘black box’ contains a number of assumptions that cannot be studied simultaneously. So, in the current study, I had to restrict myself to scrutinizing only those that are based upon the social capital of voluntary associations, and the way in which it functions, instead of, for example, the interaction between organizational leaders and members. There are two main reasons for this approach. Firstly, these assumptions are the logical preconditions for the overall mechanism. Social capital must be present and must ‘function properly’ before it can have any sort of effect. Secondly, by focusing on social capital and the use thereof, I am able to link my research not only to the discussion of the value of ethnic organizations, but also to the wider debate on the use of social capital. My aim is, therefore, to study the social capital of ethnic organizations, and my focus is on the ways in which they use it. The main research question is:

What is the relationship between the social capital that ethnic organizations have at their disposal and the ways in which they mobilize it?
My focus is on the network component of social capital. The social network of organizations can be operationalized in a variety of different ways. In the current study, I will assume that the board of an organization functions as if it were the organization itself. In other words, the organizational board is the personification of the organization, since an organization itself cannot act. It then follows that an organization’s social capital is operationalized by a focus on the social capital of the organizational boards. This is achieved by means of two types of complementary networks. The first, the network of interlocking directorates (recall that these are people who have seats on the boards of at least two organizations), reflects the formal network, whereas the second is an informal network that I call the ‘contact’ network. This is shaped by the contacts that organizations maintain between each other. In other words, it reflects which organizations have socialized with which other organizations, and which associations collaboratively organize events, etc. Together, the network of interlocking directorates and the contact network make up the social capital of organizations.

As this study’s aim is to unravel how social capital is mobilized, I have devised the Big World Experiment (BWE), upon which a mobilization network can be based. A mobilization network reflects the sequential steps that are taken in a community mobilization, i.e. the organizations that have successively mobilized each other. The core of the BWE is that a number of organizations are asked to spread a message throughout the community, and which associations they address in doing so is recorded. This procedure is repeated for each consecutive organization involved in the mobilization, and in this way, a mobilization network appears.

The answer to the research question can be found by comparing the social capital, as shaped by the contact network and the network of interlocking directorates, to the mobilized social capital, as reflected in the mobilization network. The amount of social capital that an organization has probably influences the way in which it can mobilize it. In more general terms, the ways that organizations mobilize their communities could also be influenced by the context in which they operate. The context that is relevant in the current study is the political opportunity structure (POS). This refers to the way and degree to which migrant organizations are looked upon, valued, treated and supported by the (local) government of the city and country in which they reside. For example, in some countries, migrant organizations are seen as vehicles of integration and are, therefore, financially supported. In others, migrants are generally expected to assimilate into the dominant culture, and migrant organizations are not recognized. The citizenship regimes (what are the legal rights of individual migrants?) and integration policies (to what degree can migrants as a group adhere to their own culture, or are they expected to adjust to the dominant culture?) together make up the political opportunity structure within which organizations operate. The POS is expected to influence organizations’ social capital (for instance, more stimulating policies lead to more organizations and more mutual bonds), as well as the way that they use it. I have, therefore, added a supplementary research question:
What influence does the political opportunity structure have on the social capital of migrant organizations and the ways in which they mobilize it?

The influence of the POS is best explored in a comparative study of cases in which this context variable is distinctly different and all other factors remain constant. My focus is, therefore, on the Turkish communities that are present in two cities: Amsterdam and Berlin (cf. Vermeulen, 2006). The political opportunity structures in these two locations are distinct. Where Berlin is known for having a more restrictive regime, Amsterdam is generally characterized as being more liberal and receptive. Their respective Turkish communities do, however, have many similarities. They have a comparable historical/migratory background, given that they arrived during more or less the same period of time and for the same reasons: economic, then political and, finally, familial. In the 1960s, large groups of Turkish workers were recruited to resolve the labor shortages in Germany and the Netherlands at that time. Then, the second wave of Turkish migrants arrived in the 1980s, after the military coup in their country in November 1980, when many (left-wing) natives fled and found shelter in the places where a great number of them already had family. By the 1990s, the influx of Turkish migrants was mainly comprised of women and children who were joining their husbands and fathers within the scope of the family reunification policies. The two cities’ Turkish communities also have a similar demographical composition, as well as comparable educational and occupational skills. The percentage of Kurdish migrants from Turkey is also similar. The Turkish community is larger in absolute terms in Berlin than it is in Amsterdam (in 2005/2006, 117,336 and 38339 respectively\footnote{Data sources: CBS Statline (Amsterdam), Amt für Statistik Berlin-Brandenburg (Berlin)}, but their relative sizes when the cities’ populations are compared are about the same (3.5% in Berlin, 5.2% in Amsterdam). In summary, the similar characteristics of these communities make them suitable for the aims of this study.

Outline of the book

This book has four parts. The first of these contains the theoretical framework. In Chapter 1, I describe the relevance of social capital as represented by migrant organizations in relation to political integration. The research that has been carried out into the relationship between civic communities and political participation is also discussed. Chapter 2 is a theoretical discussion of social capital. I will present a new typology with which to categorize the diverse outlooks on social capital that can be found in the literature. I distinguish two levels of analysis – individual and collective – at which the resources involved in social capital are provided or received. It follows that in
the current study, social capital is provided by individual actors, while the collective profits. The third theoretical chapter discusses the concept of political opportunity structure in detail. It also contains a description of these structures in Amsterdam and Berlin.

The second part of the book deals with the social capital of the migrant organizations in Amsterdam and Berlin. In Chapter 4 I explain how I gathered the data on social capital, and Chapters 5 and 6 I consider the social capital of the organizations in Amsterdam and Berlin, respectively.

The third part of the book begins with a chapter on mobilization. By using the Big World Experiment (Chapter 7), I explain what mobilization is and the way in which it is operationalized. The development of the experiment is discussed in detail, and the results, i.e. the mobilization networks, are presented in Chapters 8 and 9 (again, Amsterdam and Berlin respectively). In these chapters I also compare the social capital to its mobilized counterpart.

In the final part of the book I return to the research questions. What can be said about the relationships between political opportunity structures, social capital and mobilized social capital based upon the data presented in the previous chapters? In Chapter 10, I provide an answer to this question by comparing the results of the Amsterdam and Berlin cases and trying to identify the reasons for any differences or similarities. In the closing chapter, I will return to the wider implications of this study.