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Bridging the state and market logics of refugee labour market inclusion – a comparative study on the inclusion activities of German professional chambers

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Abstract

Due to their high numbers, refugees' labour market inclusion has become an important topic for Germany in recent years. Because of a lack of research on meso-level actors' influences on labour market inclusion and the transcendent role of organizations in modern societies, the article focuses on the German professional chambers' role in the process of refugee inclusion. The study shows that professional chambers are intermediaries between economic actors, the government and refugees, which all follow their own logics and ideas of labour market inclusion (the state, the market and the community logic). The measures taken by professional chambers mainly reflect a governmental logic (to reduce refugee unemployment) combined with a market logic (to provide human resources to economic actors). A community logic (altruism) only comes into play as a rather unintended consequence of measures addressing the other two logics. The measures of two types of professional chambers are compared. Close similarities between them reveal that the organization type is of theoretical relevance to explain the type of measures organizations opt for.

Keywords: Refugee labour market inclusion, Organizational support, Institutional logics, Germany, Professional chambers

Introduction

In 2018 and 2019, Germany was the number one destination of first-time asylum applicants within the European Union.¹ The labour market inclusion² of these refugees is an important precondition for lowering the long-term fiscal costs of refugee

¹https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database?node_code=tps00189

²This article uses the more neutral term "inclusion" since "integration" in German popular discourse connotes a one-sided process of assimilation, an object of controversy and criticism (see e.g. Pries 2015; Schröder 2013). Inclusion is based on the affiliation of all, right from the beginning, whereas integration formulates society's expectations of immigrants, demands active action, and understands integration as a "debt to be discharged" by people with a migration background. Inclusion is based on people's expectations of society to do everything possible to ensure their inclusion, thus describing the guarantee of affiliation as society's "obligation to bring" (see Schröder 2013).

immigration (Bonin 2016) and is a key factor in successfully including them in other contexts of the host society (Heckmann 2015). Inclusion is defined as the opportunity of equal participation in the host society (Pries 2015). Effective labour market inclusion means that refugees are able to secure their livelihood in the long term by their own efforts.

However, to date, refugees in Germany are disadvantaged in comparison both to other migrants and the native population (Brücker et al. 2018; Cangiano 2012; Federal Employment Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit) 2018; Rump and Eilers 2017; Salikutluk et al. 2016). One explanation for this precarious position is the different labour market logics between refugees' home countries and Germany, which often make it difficult to recognize foreign work experience and certificates (Giesing et al. 2018; Martín et al. 2016; Rietig 2016; Ternès et al. 2017). Immigration is often related to a misfit between migrants' resources or capital (Bourdieu 1983) and the national capital (Erel 2010) of the receiving country (Al Ariss and Syed 2011; Erel 2010; Nohl et al. 2010). This is particularly true for refugees (Campion 2018; Eggenhofer-Rehart et al. 2018; Knappert et al. 2018). More precisely, refugees often lack adequate career capital (Iellatchitch et al. 2003), which "consists of the different modes of support the individual obtains and has at his/her disposal and may invest for his/her further career success" (ibid., p. 733) in order to advance in specific career fields in the host country. This misfit refers to different types of capital (Bourdieu 1986): it is expressed by a lack of economic capital (money and property (rights)), social capital (social obligations or connections) and symbolic capital (social recognition and prestige) as well as a misfit between accumulated and host country-specific cultural capital (e.g. educational qualifications). In addition, intercultural capital (Pöllmann 2013) should be mentioned; this aids positioning within an intercultural social field by entailing intercultural skills, competencies and sensitivities.

Studies in refugee inclusion show that refugees' difficulties in accessing the host country labour market mainly refer to a misfit of cultural and social capital. A study by the German Institute of Economic Research (DIW), for example, underlines that many refugees have professional experience, but few have adequately recognized certificates (Liebau and Salikutluk 2016).

Additionally, research highlights the high importance of *social capital* (Nederveen Pieterse 2003; Ryan 2011; Ryan et al. 2008) in refugees' labour market access. In the German context, Gericke et al. (2018) emphasize the particular importance of vertical bridging social capital to span hierarchical differences between actors in order to achieve adequate labour market access. Other studies show that the lack of social capital is sometimes compensated for by ethnic social capital, which leads to employment in ethnic niche labour markets (Schmidtke 2010). As these results show, labour market inclusion depends on a transformation of capital (e.g. Sontag 2018).

Whereas some research has focused on the refugee perspective on labour market inclusion (e.g. Newman et al. 2018; Wehrle et al. 2018) and the mismatch of capital because of migration in general (Erel 2010; Nohl et al. 2010), less is known about the role of organizations supporting labour market inclusion (Landes 2018; Maletzky 2017) and the process of capital transformation. However, since we live in the age of organization societies (Schimank 2005), the transcending relevance of organizations in all areas of life may also be assumed for refugee (labour market) inclusion. Due to its

complexity, refugee labour market inclusion, and the related process of capital transformation in many cases, goes beyond the capacity of individual efforts. Third-party support, for example by organizations, which are often part of cross-sector social partnerships (Hesse et al. 2018), is necessary. There is a stream of research showing that organizations often act as labour market intermediaries helping to overcome labour market integration challenges for disadvantaged employee groups (e.g. Fernandez 2010; Lorquet et al. 2017). Less is known about the activities and logics of labour market intermediaries in the context of refugee labour market inclusion. Thus, this paper poses the overall research question: *how far do organizations act as intermediaries in the context of refugee labour market inclusion?*

The paper contributes to migration research by focusing on the so-far neglected meso-level actors of workforce inclusion. It particularly focuses on a special type of organization: the German professional chambers, one of the main recipients of state funding programmes for labour market integration, offering numerous integration services. Chambers can thus be regarded as key actors in the state-controlled labour market inclusion of refugees. This is because of their proximity to employers: there is compulsory membership, which means that all companies registered in Germany must be a member of one of the professional chambers by law. In some areas, such as vocational training, these member companies are subject to chambers' rules; but members' interests are also represented by their chambers. The article contrasts the activities of two types of German professional chambers: (a) Chambers of Industry and Commerce and (b) Chambers of Skilled Crafts, because they are the two chamber types with the largest range, representing most German companies.³

The structure of this article is as follows. The first section provides an overview of organizations and labour market inclusion. It introduces the concept of intermediary organizations and underlines the fact that organizations are embedded in their social environment and in their actions refer to the institutional logics of this environment. In our context, the institutional logics of refugee inclusion are of interest and further described. Afterwards, the article outlines the methodology of the study, then presents findings regarding German professional chambers' particular intermediary position in refugee labour market inclusion and their measures of labour market inclusion support, as well as a comparison between the two chamber types. Finally, how far the chambers' measures refer to the somewhat contradictory institutional logics of the field of refugee labour market inclusion will be described, in order to show how they mediate between the different expectations of relevant actors. The article closes with a conclusion that highlights theoretical as well as practical implications.

Organizations and labour market inclusion

Definitions of organizations vary depending on the theoretical focus. At a basic level, organizations can be understood as systems of organized action (Ortmann et al. 2000) with rules for membership (Scott and Davis 2007).

³Almost all companies registered in Germany are compulsory members of Chambers of Industry and Commerce. Exceptions include the skilled crafts businesses, which are members of Chambers of Skilled Crafts, and the free professions and farms, which have their own chambers. Chambers are regionally organized. There are 53 Chambers of Skilled Crafts and 79 Chambers of Industry and Commerce.

Organization research is vast but there is only a small field of research on organizations and inclusion, which focuses on migrant organizations and their relation to inclusion in general (Ersoy et al. 2018; Hunger 2004) as well as the influence of organizations on migration politics (Maletzky 2017). Less is known about the role of organizations in the process of workforce inclusion of migrants and refugees.

Identifying the specific role that organizations play in the inclusion of refugees into the labour market is very important, as this process is a complex societal challenge that is difficult for one actor alone to master (Hesse et al. 2018). One reason for the existence of organizations is to address complex objectives by making use of the complementary resources of their members (Abraham and Büschges 2009). Modern societies are organizational societies (Schimank 2005): large multinational enterprises generate more revenue than small national economies, which makes them powerful actors in the world system (Boli and Thomas 1997; Rehbein and Schwengel 2008). Accordingly, organizations could also be important actors in the labour market inclusion of refugees.

Since organizations are meso-level actors that operate between the macro and micro levels of society, in the context of labour market inclusion they may be understood as labour market intermediaries. The following sections give a brief overview of this concept.

Organizations as labour market intermediaries

In the context of industrial relations and human resource management there is a body of research on so-called labour market intermediaries (LMIs). “At the most general level, intermediary organizations are defined by their structural position, namely ‘intermediary’ is any organization that mediates the relationship(s) between two or more social actors (organizations, institutions etc.)” (van der Meulen et al. 2005, p. 3). LMIs are supposed to reduce transaction costs, ease search processes and stimulate networking, and they may “share risks” of selecting the wrong people (Bonet et al. 2013). Different types of LMIs (e.g. public job placement agencies, staffing agencies, executive search firms, professional employer organizations) broker the demand and supply sides of the labour market (Fernandez 2010). They shape the matching of workers to organizations, the performance of tasks and conflict resolution (Autor 2009). Bonet et al. (2013) differentiate between LMIs’ roles as information providers, matchmakers, and administrators for the employment relationship. Thus they compensate for a lack of information on the employer and employee side, supporting the recruitment of employees by performing a preselection or offering support in administrative issues.

Regarding the impact of LMIs, research has generated contradictory results: some studies paint a rather negative picture, showing that clients are stigmatized for not already having been matched to roles (Autor 2009; Burtless 1985), or they object that LMIs are profit-driven (Freeman and Gonos 2009). Other authors demonstrate the positive effects of job matching via LMIs. Fernandez (2010), for example, shows how LMIs compensate for disadvantaged domestic workers’ lack of social capital. Lorquet et al. (2017) show how LMIs help to lessen the incompatibilities of labour market logics and non-standard career paths.

Studies focusing on LMIs in migration contexts are rare, and authors highlight the necessity of more research on the topic as well as the high importance of LMIs in many

migration contexts (van den Broek et al. 2016). The few exceptions focus on migration intermediaries which stimulate and steer migration processes in certain sectors (Findlay and Li 1998; Niu et al. 2016; van den Broek et al. 2016; Xiang 2012). Additionally, the support function of LMIs for migrants is highlighted for some country contexts. Visser et al. (2017), focusing on the US labour market, show that intermediaries such as day worker centres influence the social economic inclusion of migrant day labourers. Additionally, Martin (2009) shows that intermediary organizations assist migrant workers in securing work and fighting against low wages and abusive workplace cultures. However, van den Broek et al. (2016) underline the fact that the opposite may also be the case and it is important to monitor the activities of commercial LMIs.

Less is known about the role of LMIs in the context of refugee labour market inclusion in Germany. As far as the author could find out, there is only one applied study on the workforce inclusion efforts of job centres in Germany (Knapp et al. 2017), describing their role in a network of actors as well as the job search process. In addition, there is a lack of knowledge about drivers of LMIs' behaviour. Research on LMIs in the context of migration is rather descriptive (see van den Broek et al. 2016).

With regards to drivers of organizational behaviour in general, organization theory underlines that organizations are open systems (Scott and Davis 2007), which means that organizations, and in particular LMIs due to their particular interface position, are influenced by the social context in which they operate. Since organizations operate at the interface between the micro and macro levels of society, they reflect social logics (Thornton et al. 2015). According to the neo-institutionalist approach to organizational research, an organization must demonstrate congruence with the institutional logics in which it is embedded and the resulting expectations in order to be perceived as legitimate by stakeholders. Being perceived as legitimate helps organizations to survive (Meyer and Rowan 1977). For example, it helps to establish contacts with key actors and convince clients to buy a product or make use of the services offered.

With regards to refugee integration, Hesse et al. (2018) show that organizations and actors of refugee integration are influenced by three institutional logics, which sometimes may be conflicting: (a) the community logic, (b) the state logic and (c) the market logic. The community logic reflects humanitarianism and altruism, whereas the state logic refers to bureaucratic, political and state interests relating to the desire to be (re) elected and to positively influence public opinion. The market logic reflects economic and market interests. Market interests are characterized by a search for resources and maximization of profit. According to Hesse et al. the market logic in refugee inclusion contexts is influenced by the massive skills shortages in Germany and the economic interests in overcoming them, which is expressed by a search for human resources.

Since intermediaries by definition mediate between several actors, it is interesting to know how and why they relate to the different logics in order to explain their actions. However, the behaviour of organizations is also influenced by the internal pressures (Kostova and Zaheer 1999) of members, financial restraints and organizational aim.

Methodology

Due to insufficient information about the topic and an interest in the subjective, underlying logics of action, a qualitative case study design was adopted. This was seen as the

best choice, because qualitative methods display a high degree of data richness and provide the advantage of being able to trace subjective meaning structures (e.g. Flick 2014), which is of particular importance for discerning the logics of organizational behaviour.

The study focuses on the German professional chambers because, due to their wide reach, they are organizations that have been massively involved in refugee inclusion by the German government and are thus central actors in this context. It comprises *two contrasting case studies*, focusing on (a) the German Chambers of Industry and Commerce (CIC) and (b) the Chambers of Skilled Crafts (CSC). These organizations were selected because they are the two biggest chambers, representing almost all companies registered in Germany, and have substantial outreach. By choosing these cases the study follows the logic of minimum contrastive sampling (Glaser and Strauss 1967). This sampling strategy helps to determine the theoretical relevance of a category. Categories can be regarded as theoretically significant if the phenomena referring to them are repeatedly identifiable in comparative analysis. “Minimizing differences among comparison groups also helps establish a definite set of conditions under which a category exists, either to a particular degree or as a type – which in turn establishes a probability for theoretical prediction” (Glaser and Strauss 1967, S. 56). In our case, two cases comprising similar organization types (professional chambers) were chosen in order to explore the influence of organization-type-specific similarities: being member organizations with compulsory membership, plus their particular intermediary position. However, with respect to their sectoral embeddedness, member company characteristics and the professions represented, they show some differences that may be also revealing.

In order to generate insights about their activities in the context of refugee labour market inclusion, the case studies comprise a *document analysis*. Document analysis is a non-reactive method which does not pose the risk of interview bias (Bowen 2009). Documents are standardized artefacts and can provide data on the context of the operations of research participants (ibid.) and thus allow broad coverage (Yin 1994). On the website homepages of all 132 professional chambers (79 CICs, 53 CSCs) a keyword search with “Geflüchtete” and “Flüchtlinge” (refugees, fugitives) was used to look for relevant entries. Contents were documented. Since inclusion in the labour market on the basis of a literature review was identified as a process of capital transformation, activities were assigned to an analysis grid according to the types of capital they involved.

In order to complement the rather descriptive data generated by the document analysis, as a second stage 12 *expert interviews* (Meuser and Nagel 2010) were conducted in order to gain insights about the underlying logics of organizational action. These included interviews with chamber representatives whose job is to support member companies in the context of refugee inclusion (welcome guides, carers etc.) as well as with one representative of each umbrella organization responsible for refugee inclusion at a strategic level. Interview duration varied between 60 and 90 min.

Regarding the *sampling strategy*, representatives of the chambers’ umbrella organizations provided internal documents which gave an overview of the activities of all chambers. These documents were used to define the sampling strategy. Regional chambers with a large variety of activities were selected as cases. Of these, employees who were

indicated as contacts for refugee labour market inclusion were approached for interviews. Interviews were conducted until a theoretical saturation point was met (Glaser and Strauss 1967).

The interview guidelines contained semi-structured interview questions. By using open questions, novel and unanticipated findings could emerge from contextual understanding of the chamber employees as well as the refugees, which is a strength of qualitative interviewing (Miles and Huberman 1994). Chamber representatives were asked about the particular role that the professional chambers play in the process of refugee inclusion: the activities provided by the chambers in order to support inclusion as well as the perceived (intercultural) challenges of the labour market inclusion of refugees. The interviews were recorded, fully transcribed, and analysed applying a *structured qualitative content analysis* (Mayring 2015).

Findings

Due to their particular organizational form, chambers have always had an intermediary position between government and companies: chambers take on tasks from the state and act as contacts for political and administrative issues but also gather the interests and concerns of the member companies. They are self-governing business entities but also public law corporations and a particular type of member organization with compulsory membership. Chambers represent the interests of their member companies and offer services such as advice on technical, financial or legal matters. Additionally, they provide vocational training and further education through their own vocational training centres. Besides service offers, chambers have a supervisory function. They examine and monitor legal regulations and manage apprentice roles: registering and documenting new apprentices and their vocational training, checking that the training period is adhered to, the occupational title is correct, and the vocational training contract does not contain any prohibited agreements.⁴

The intermediary position of professional chambers in the context of refugee integration

In response to the high numbers of asylum seekers since 2015, governmental funding of programmes for refugee labour market inclusion and funding at federal state level have increased. As economic actors are seen by the government as key to achieving the policy goal of reducing the number of unemployed refugees, the professional chambers (as representatives of economic actors) are one of the main recipients of funding and are actively involved in the process of labour market integration of refugees.

Chambers thus form a bridge between their members, who are potential employers, refugees and the state. For example, in the context of the governmental programme “Passgenaue Besetzung” (tailor-made staffing), around 180 positions for so-called

⁴In this context, Chambers of Industry and Commerce (CICs) control about 250 vocational training professions, divided into industrial-technical professions (e.g. media designer, professional driver, mechatronics technician), commercial professions (e.g. industrial clerk, automobile salesperson etc.), and commercially related professions (e.g. cook, hotel specialist etc.) (see Appendix 1). Similarly, the Chambers of Skilled Crafts (CSCs) control over 130 vocational training professions in the skilled crafts sector, providing vocational training in these professions, which include building and finishing, electrics and metalworking, wood- and plastic-working, clothing, textiles and leather, food, chemicals and cleaning and graphic design. They also cover skilled craft professionals in health and personal care such as opticians (see Appendix 2). Some professions are controlled by both CICs and CSCs. CIC professions are then located in an industrial context and craft professions in smaller companies where the activity is largely carried out by hand.

“welcome guides” (“Willkommenslotsen”) were created and funded by the German government,⁵ most of which are located at professional chambers. Welcome guides are supposed to enhance the labour market inclusion of refugees by matching them with companies and supporting the process of inclusion into vocational training. All chambers have at least one and sometimes up to four staff members who support the labour market inclusion of refugees.⁶ Besides governmental funding, chambers also mobilize own resources for refugee integration. Labour market integration support of refugees has thus become an important topic recently. The following quote from the CICs’ umbrella organization exemplifies the high emphasis on refugee integration:

The CIC action programme “Arriving in Germany – Together we support integration” was launched in December 2015. To this end, the CIC organization invested financial resources amounting to 62 million euros since the action programme was launched. For the year 2019 alone, 12 million euros have been made available. In addition, 120 employees are active on site nationwide.⁷

The receipt of refugee-related public funds has thus expanded the already existing intermediary position between government and economic actors (member companies of professional chambers). They have become LMIs in the triadic constellation of government, member companies as potential employers, and refugees. If necessary, they also span boundaries with other organizations involved in the labour market integration of refugees (vocational schools, job centres, charitable organizations, language course providers etc.).

The following section describes how the chambers fill out their intermediary position in the context of labour market inclusion of refugees.

Chambers’ refugee labour market inclusion activities

Chambers offer services for refugees and employers. Among other things, they recognize foreign certificates. Since 2012 the Federal Recognition Act has given skilled workers from abroad the right to have their vocational qualification checked for equivalence with the relevant German profession. Recognition of foreign vocational qualifications is particularly necessary for 152 regulated professions: those for which it is laid down by law, regulation or administrative action that access to and pursuit of the profession is subject to proof of a specific qualification (Directive 2005/36/EC, article 3.1a). Whereas for migrants it is possible to work in non-regulated professions without the recognition of foreign certificates, the recognition is a prerequisite for working in a regulated profession and for non-Europeans to be allowed to migrate to Germany. With regards to skilled professions and in particular the skilled crafts sector, full recognition, according to the interviewees, is seldom possible, because Germany has a very particular vocational training system for skilled professions and education is to a high degree a national project (Sontag 2018). In Germany, nearly all professions need 2.5- to 3-year-

⁵www.zdh.de/fachbereiche/gewerbefoerderung/passgenaue-besetzung-willkommenslotsen/willkommenslotsen/

⁶For CSCs see: www.zdh.de/fileadmin/user_upload/themen/Bildung/Allianz/Aktivitaeten_der_Handwerkskammern_2018.pdf

⁷www.ihk.de/ihk-bildung-und-beruf/; own translation

long vocational training, whereas outside Germany many of these professions are just semi- or unskilled jobs. Thus, in particular in the skilled crafts sector, a partial recognition, at most, of refugees' vocations takes place or a profession has to be learned from the beginning. Therefore, chambers also offer apprenticeship marketing for member companies in order to support them to find refugees as apprentices. In case of partial recognition, they offer additional training. If refugees do not have official certificates but do have work experience, a competency assessment is offered as the basis of the recognition process. Practical competencies may be recognized and only part of the vocational training has to be undergone.

However, because of the different educational systems and standards in the home and host countries, refugees and employers also perceive training as challenging. Because of that, and in order to avoid vocational training dropouts, which in times of massive workforce shortages according to the interviewees would be catastrophic, chambers offer particular support and training programmes for refugees. They organize (technical) language training, provide guides for trainers on how to design examinations in simple language (e.g. CSC Munich) and train vocational trainers to teach people with limited language proficiency (ibid.); they provide apps for vocabulary book creation (CSC Middle Franconia) or provide vocabulary books with technical vocabulary,⁸ etc. In addition, some CSCs and CICs provide tutoring for refugees in subjects such as basic mathematics, chemistry etc. which have not been sufficiently taught in their home countries:

We then decided to offer basic education. We have started this Easter 2018 as a pilot project (...). They come to us every 2 weeks on Saturday mornings to our educational institutions in order to be taught in the basics. That means it's about learning German with text comprehension, reading, writing, it's about math formulas (...). In the pilot project we had more than 70 participants. (15 interviewee, delegate CIC).

If the chambers are not able to provide training themselves, they act as brokers: cooperation with network partners is stimulated.

In addition to these measures which support the acquisition of expertise, some chambers also support refugees' job applications. This comprises a resumé check or direct job application training. Soft skills are taught such as how to present oneself in a job interview, how a cover letter looks etc. Some chambers also offer intercultural training about German (work) culture for refugees. The CSC East Thuringia, for example, provides six-week-long training about German culture and values.

After all, in addition to language skills and professional qualifications, value communication also plays a decisive role. (...) Over the next few months, the refugees will be taught the understanding of values in Germany in six one-week seminars. Topics include "peace and conflict avoidance", "understanding values",

⁸See "Netzwerk Unternehmen Integrieren Flüchtlinge" (NUIF) (www.unternehmen-integrieren-fluechtlinge.de/news/woerterbuch-gastronomie-hotellerie-touristik).

*“intercultural understanding”, “democracy, fundamental rights and the legal system” as well as “corporate and economic organization”, to name but a few.*⁹

Additionally, chambers organize matching events such as job fairs, “speed dating” events, company visits etc. so that refugees can get in touch with potential employers.

Besides services offered to refugees, chambers try to convince companies to employ refugees. For this it is necessary to minimize employers’ reservations about hiring them. They specifically advertise the hiring of refugees, disseminate best practice examples and promote the employment of refugees. They have testimonials on their websites and other communication platforms highlighting the benefits of employing refugees, advantages such as a reliable and hardworking workforce of refugees and the positive effects of increased diversity: *“Make use of cultural diversity as a competitive advantage! The CSC Berlin offers free counselling about the employment and vocational training of apprentices.”*¹⁰ (CSC Berlin).

In order to achieve getting refugees into employment, chambers also support companies: they offer legal advice about the employment of refugees and troubleshoot problems. Furthermore, they lobby political actors in order to represent the interests of companies. For example, the chambers were actively involved in the introduction of the three-plus-two rule, intended to prevent refugees from being deported during vocational training and thus enable companies to generate a certain return on investment. This activity was an expression of the member companies’ massive dissatisfaction with the fact that there were repeated deportations of refugees during training, thus jeopardizing the return on investment. Member companies expressed their displeasure via the chambers, which act as mouthpieces and representatives, and threatened not to hire any more refugees in the future.

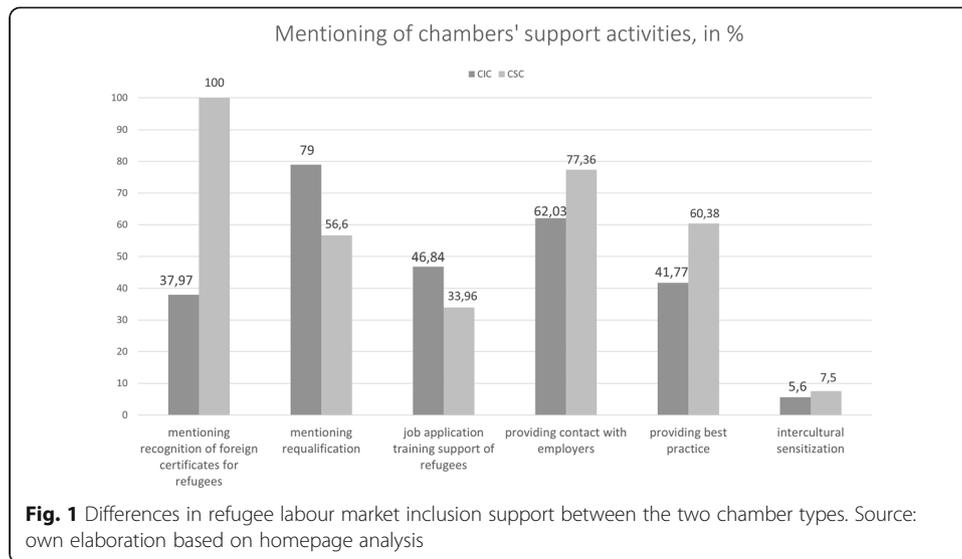
Differences between CICs’ and CSCs’ support activities

Referring to the contrastive research design, differences can be seen between the CICs and CSCs in terms of the focus of the measures (see Fig. 1). These are briefly described below, with possible explanations provided in the section that follows.

In four out of six cases (recognition of foreign certificates, providing best practices, providing contact with employers, and intercultural sensitization) more CSCs offer activities than CICs. The biggest observable difference between CICs and CSCs regards the publication of information on the *recognition of foreign certificates and requalification*. Although almost all CICs on their homepages refer to the recognition of foreign certificates, most of them do not do so when they address refugees, but when they refer to the Specialist Immigration Act. Only 37.97% of CICs explicitly mention the recognition of foreign certificates on their homepages for the target group of refugees, whereas 100% of CSCs mention this possibility for them. Additionally, more CSCs (77.36%) report on matching events and a higher percentage provide best practice examples on their homepages or in publications.

⁹<https://www.hwk-gera.de/artikel/wertevermittlung-als-dritte-saeule-im-ostthueringer-fluechtlingsprojekt-angelaufen-5,0,137.html>

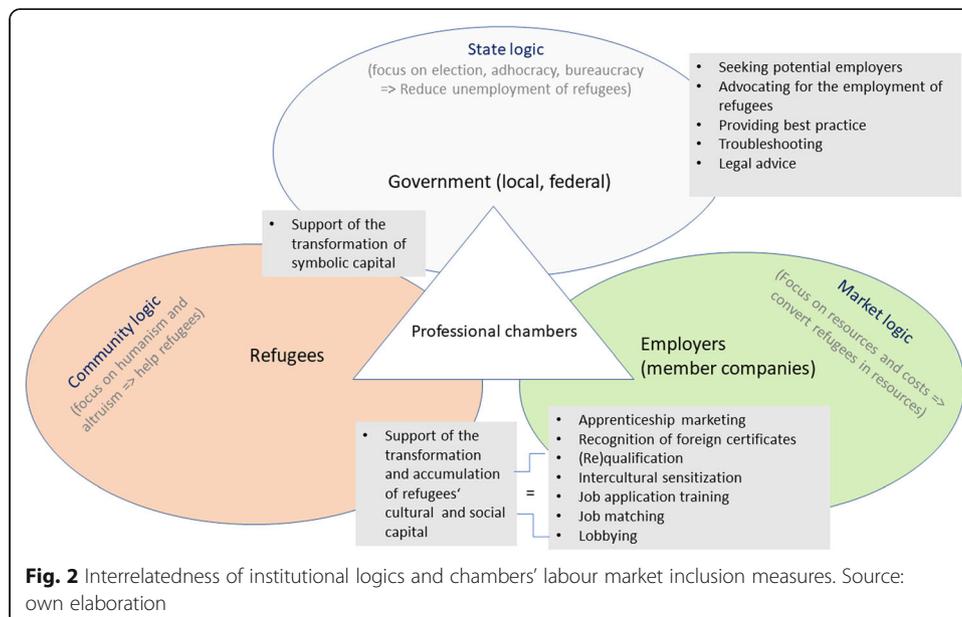
¹⁰<https://www.hwk-berlin.de/service-center/fluechtlinge/>



In the former sections, we have described chambers' activities in the context of labour market inclusion of refugees. The question is, what is the driver behind these activities? This will be discussed below.

Discussion

The general trends regarding labour market inclusion assistance of the two chamber types reflect their particular intermediary position within the triangle of political and economic actors and refugees; the assistance is a result of being embedded in several institutional logics (see Fig. 2) as described by Hesse et al. (2018). The authors show that refugee inclusion is influenced by the state logic contributed by political or governmental actors, the market logic emanating from economic actors and employers, and the community logic propagated by the refugee community and aid organizations.



The characteristics of chambers' support of labour market inclusion suggest that chambers mainly address market logic and try to create a fit with state logic; this seems to be due to public funding. However, most chamber representatives see their main task as supporting their member companies. It is emphasized that tasks that are primarily concerned with the interests and concerns of refugees (e.g. achieving a deportation stop, reflecting community logic) are the responsibility of other organizations, and that chambers must always have their members in mind.

*“There is such an unmanageable number of organizations and actors which are dedicated to support refugees, but **our** main aim is the support of our member organizations.”* (16, delegate CIC) A CSC delegate makes the same point: *“We (...) always have to keep in mind the company's perspective.”* (12, delegate CSC).

The following section describes how the market logic is reflected in the chambers' activities.

Reflection of the market logic

The market logic promoted by the economic actors (chambers' member companies) is characterized by a search for resources and cost efficiency (Hesse et al. 2018). Most of the chambers' labour market inclusion support activities are related to the refugees' cultural capital transformation and generation process (recognition of foreign certificates, (re) qualification, support of vocational training, providing culture-specific job application knowledge). Supporting the generation of adequate cultural capital means generating a fit between individual resources and market needs¹¹ and thus converting the refugees into human resources for member companies. On the other hand, by offering job matching events chambers do address refugees' social capital by providing bridging social capital (Putnam 1995) which is often crucial for getting a job (Gericke et al. 2018) and provides a chance for upward social mobility. However, this social capital is also generated as a result of the market logic, to support organizations in the process of gaining access to their human resources.

Only occasionally or as a by-product do the measures conform with the community logic, as is the case with the three-plus-two regulation which protects refugees against deportation but is tightly coupled with market needs: only economically "useful" refugees are protected against deportation. Here, a certain ambivalence in the work of the chambers becomes obvious: they exclude and include at the same time. Chambers are part of the social construction process of the value of qualifications (see Sommer 2015) through introducing and implementing formal separations, but they also make refugee inclusion or recruitment processable for companies and thus support inclusion under aspects of economic interests.

The *differences between the labour market inclusion activities* of the two different chamber types (CSC and CIC) may also be explained by their reference to the market logic and the related search for human resources. Since CICs and CSCs represent companies from different sectors, their need for human resources and their restraints in

¹¹See, for example, www.ihk.de/ihk-bildung-und-beruf or www.zdh.de/fachbereiche/arbeitsmarkt-tarifpolitik/fluechtlinge

Table 1 Explanation of the differences between CSC and CIC measures

Labour market inclusion support	Difference in % (CIC–CSC)	Possible reasons
Mentioning recognition of foreign certificates for refugees	–62.03	High degree of skills shortages in the skilled crafts sector makes it necessary to be open to all potential employee groups.
Requalification	22.4	Higher degree of possibility of requalification in professions of the CIC sectors vs. high difficulty in recognizing skilled crafts professions due to German vocational training system; strong focus on apprenticeship marketing in this sector.
Job application training support of refugees	12.88	Due to less interest in employing refugees by CIC companies, stronger support from the chambers is necessary to enhance refugees' chance of getting employed by those organizations.
Providing contact with employers	–15.33	High interest in refugees in the skilled crafts sector
Providing best practice	–18.61	CSCs promote refugees as a human resource in order to address the sectoral skills shortages and to comply with their role as member organizations.
Intercultural sensitization	–1.9	No relevant difference

Source: own elaboration. Legend: - means a higher degree of activities at the CSCs

getting access to them varies. Table 1 provides an overview of the possible reasons behind the differences.

The highest differences between measures of CICs and CSCs concern the recognition of foreign certificates, which is more often the case in CSCs, mentioning the possibility of requalifying and the provision of best practice. These differences lead to the conclusion that CICs seem not to see refugees as the primary target group for their recognition process. They rather seem to focus on skilled migrants. This is supported by CIC interviewees, who emphasized that the interest in employing refugees is higher in the skilled crafts sector than for their member companies. This is also reflected in the employment of the so-called welcome guides. Whereas 29 of 53 CSCs employ welcome guides (54.71%), only 16 of 79 CICs (20.25%) do so.¹² Since the funding of welcome guides is upon their own application this shows a lower perceived necessity to engage with refugee labour market inclusion.

In contrast, the CSCs underline the high interest in the employment of refugees in the skilled crafts sector, which goes along with massive skills shortages that force companies to open up to all potential employee groups. Personnel marketing has to be expansive, reaching all groups – including refugees – in order to cover personnel requirements. Skilled crafts companies are more often SMEs and so have greater difficulties in attracting employees than bigger companies.¹³

The lower degree to which requalification was mentioned by CSCs reflects the high difficulty of recognizing skilled crafts professions from outside Germany, since there are only a few countries with a similar vocational training system. In contrast, in most refugee home countries many skilled craft professions are just unskilled jobs and no official certificates exist.

¹²https://www.bmwi.de/Redaktion/DE/Downloads/J-L/kammern-und-sonstige-organisationen-der-wirtschaft-mit-willkommenslotsen.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=13

¹³www.kofa.de/fachkraefteengpaesse-verstehen/auf-einen-blick

You really have to say that in most cases there can be no complete recognition because the [German] training system is simply too unique. (I1, delegate CSC).

CICs represent a wider variety of sectors and the possibility of getting a profession at least partially recognized seems to be greater. Companies registered with CICs (which are nearly all German companies, with the exception of skilled crafts companies, arts companies and agricultural businesses) search for employees in many different types of professions, for example academic professions but also industry and commerce-related apprentice professions (see Appendix 1). These to a higher degree than traditional skilled crafts professions seem to exist as skilled professions in other countries (e.g. commercial professions or other professions which outside Germany are academic instead of skilled (media design, IT consultancy (“Fachinformatiker”) etc.)).¹⁴

Thus, instead of promoting a recognition of certificates and requalification of refugees, the attraction of a skilled foreign workforce seems to be seen as a good option. Due to rather universal professional skills in some areas, the covering of the shortage of skilled workers is easier than in the skilled crafts sector, where the professions outside Germany are often unskilled jobs. In particular, with regard to academic professions (which are nearly non-existent in the skilled crafts sector), the harmonization of the European higher education system (the European Qualifications Framework) and inter-governmental recruitment agreements in some areas such as, for example, the nursing professions make it easier to find qualified employees from outside Germany who do not have to undergo long-term training in order to fit companies' needs, as refugees do.¹⁵ Consequently, the recruitment of foreign labour from a wide variety of countries may be seen as a less costly alternative to the employment of refugees, who due to very different vocational systems often have to be trained from the very beginning.

Another difference is observable with regard to the number of chambers *publishing best practice*. About 20% more CSCs publicize best practice than CICs, which also underlines the point above that the potential of refugees as a target group is rated more highly in this area.

Reflection of the state logic

Since the state logic is focused on (re) election, for governmental actors it is necessary to show that immigration is not harmful for Germany, that labour market inclusion is advancing and the costs of immigration are decreasing. This is achieved by minimizing the unemployment rate of refugees. This state logic is expressed by measures aimed at persuading companies to employ refugees (providing best practice examples, actively asking companies to employ refugees, holding job matching events). Persuasion accompanies a promotion of workforce diversity but also an addressing of companies' anxieties and hesitation (helping them to understand the legal complexity of refugee employment, providing troubleshooting in case of problems and supporting the personnel selection process). In addition, chambers call for the social responsibility of

¹⁴This assumption is supported by the 2019 Report on the Recognition Act of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF 2020). It shows that outside the healthcare professions most applications for recognition were commercial professions and electricians – CIC professions (BMBF 2020, p. 30).

¹⁵For a detailed description of the recognition of certificates and a critical reflection on this see Sommer (2015).

companies: in several statements, chambers refer to the image of “the honourable merchant” who cares for social concerns and the important role of the skilled crafts sector with regard to social commitment.

The companies find new, often very committed and motivated employees, learn a lot about other cultures and thus also about themselves. And last but not least, the owners will follow the model of the honourable merchant who thinks outside the box and helps others. (CIC Munich).¹⁶

Another exemplary CSC argues similarly:

The integration of refugees is a challenge for society as a whole. (...) The South Westphalia Chamber of Skilled Crafts bears a significant share of the responsibility towards refugees and supports member companies through the Welcome Guide. (CSC South Westphalia).¹⁷

Reactions to competing logics

Some of the activities of chambers may be interpreted as an expression of their embeddedness in competing institutional logics. This has its expression in the fact that the chambers’ measures sometimes express a compromise between the market and the state logic. For example, following a pure state logic it would be enough to bring refugees into work as fast as possible, which often is criticized as a typical measure of the state job centres following a pure state logic. Instead, chambers emphasize a sustainable labour market entry strategy which goes along with the market logic. Unskilled work is seen as a short-term benefit for refugees and at the same time does not fit with the market needs of, for example, the skilled crafts sector, where skills shortages are a severe problem. Promoting (re) qualification thus means a win-win situation from a state as well as from a market logic point of view.

What we need are qualified people. And here we have always opposed, for example, doing this modular training or supporting partial qualifications, because at the end of the day this is simply not enough. Persons who only acquired partial qualifications work as semi-qualified workers and this is not sustainable. (I2, delegate CSC).

As another example, some companies and state actors have advocated for a modularization of vocations, making it possible to undergo only a certain amount of vocational training and to get a minor certificate. This would ease and hasten the labour market entry process for refugees. Chambers have been strictly against this solution, arguing that it would go along with a devaluation of professions. Here the chambers’ role of vocational training supervisor becomes visible, which limits the market logic. Instead of allowing a modification of the vocational training standards, they opted for a profound support of vocational training, aiming to reduce vocational training drop-outs. This possibility of resisting certain claims reflects the particular organization type the

¹⁶www.ihk-muenchen.de/ihk/documents/Fl%C3%BChtlinge/integration_best_practice_beispiele.pdf, 3

¹⁷<https://www.hwk-swf.de/artikel/gefluechtete-38,112,64.html>

chambers represent: organizations with compulsory membership. That gives room for a certain degree of freedom of decision. On the one hand, due to member fees, members have certain expectations of the chambers' work. The opinion of the members is important, but on the other hand the fact that members cannot simply quit their membership gives the chambers a certain degree of autonomy.

Conclusion

The aim of this article was to analyse the role organizations play in the complex societal task of refugee inclusion. For this the activities of a particular kind of intermediary organization – the German professional chambers – were described and compared. The data displays evidence that the chambers are intermediaries between governmental actors, providing them funding for labour market integration activities, and between economic actors (the chambers' member companies) as well as refugees themselves.

As is known from organizational theory, organizations align their behaviour with the logics in the organizational field that surrounds them. In the case of this study, because of their particular intermediary position, chambers are embedded in three sometimes contradictory logics: (1) a community logic driven by altruism and humanitarianism (prevalent among refugees and grassroots organizations), (2) a state logic driven by bureaucracy and the pursuit of (re) election (prevalent within government), and (3) a market logic driven by a search for resources to maximize utility (prevalent among economic actors) (Hesse et al. 2018). With regards to their activities, it becomes obvious that chambers act mainly in response to expectations of the state and market logic. State logic in the context of refugee labour market inclusion is reflected in the desire to minimize the unemployment rate of refugees, and market logic is reflected in the expectation of making economic use of refugees as human resources. This is expressed in the chambers' measures of promoting refugees as a valuable workforce and their focus on transforming refugees' cultural capital to create a fit with economic needs. These general tendencies were observable in both chamber types; only some differences between the intensity of the measures were observable, explained by a market logic and thus internal differences (the composition of member companies with particular needs and strategies).

The contribution of this article is manifold. It adds to migration and integration research by addressing a research gap in the role of organizations in the context of labour market inclusion by applying an organization theory approach. Therefore, it expands the dominant individualistic perspective on integration, which focuses on individual challenges and reasons for inclusion by drawing upon the motives of collective actors. By doing so the study shows that individual development opportunities within the context of official labour market inclusion support are restrained by a market logic that understands refugees as a human resource. The dominance of this logic is expressed by the fact that the possibility for refugees to pursue their own interests is only possible if their own interests are congruent with the market logic, e.g. if they have aimed for a long-term labour market entry strategy through training or employment in shortage occupations. Thus, organizations can enable labour market inclusion, but at the same time they are gatekeepers defending the interests of their relevant environment, provoking the exclusion of refugees who do not comply with the dominant logic: those who, in our case, do not constitute relevant human capital. Organizations, by

reproducing certain institutional logics, thus constrain individual choices. In our case, they decide on an equivalence of professional certificates and thus implicitly about membership and stratification within the social system; Sommer (2015) has also shown this, and critically scrutinized Germany's recognition policy in general, demonstrating the inherent power relations she calls symbolic violence and the socially constructed mechanisms of exclusion.

Due to this finding, the study also contributes to current research on LMIs, because it is one of few studies focusing on LMIs in the context of refugee inclusion. In this context, the data displays evidence of an additional role of LMI organizations. As mentioned at the beginning, Bonet et al. (2013) differentiate between LMIs' roles as information providers, matchmakers, and administrators for the employment relationship, which could also be found in our study: Professional chambers provide information for refugees and employers in order to facilitate the employment of refugees; they organize matching events and sometimes support administrative issues related to the employment of refugees. However, as described in the previous section, in addition to assuming these roles the particular LMIs studied here act as gatekeepers for the German professional affiliation by translating between differing vocational and cultural systems and defining which skills are valuable and not valuable, thus reproducing the national project of vocational and educational systems and the implicit logic of more or less acceptable immigrants (Sontag 2018).

In terms of the *theoretical implication*, according to the logic of minimal contrastive sampling which assumes that repetition of certain patterns gives an indication of theoretical relevance, the results of this study support the assumption that the particular organization type (member organization with compulsory membership) and the specific intermediary position (mainly between government and economic actors) is of theoretical relevance when explaining the nature of activities. Further research is necessary to contrast the chambers' activities with those of other LMI organization types.

Using an organization theory lens to analyse labour market inclusion is also helpful to generate *practical insights*: this perspective aims to understand organizational rationales and behaviour, a knowledge which may inform policy makers in making decisions about funding recipients. As mentioned above, this study has revealed the theoretical relevance of organization type and the specifics of organizations' intermediary position as possible predictors or explanantia of the characteristics of inclusion measures. The nearness to state and economic actors brought up a certain type of measure, which in our case may be seen as sustainable because they are aimed at the long-term employment of refugees in areas with a high shortage of skilled workers. Another positioning within the triangle of actors could have brought up other measures: a pure state logic orientation expressed by supporting a fast but not necessarily long-term labour market access (which was criticized by some interviewees, for example in job centre measures); a pure community logic, rather, has refugees' aspirations in mind and might fade out the rational aspects of labour market entry. Actors who mediate several logics seem to be promising multipliers and funding recipients, because they can find synergetic middle paths and thus balance the unfavourable aspects of a single institutional logic. In our case the

particular intermediary position of professional chambers generated a win-win situation for companies, governments and some refugees. Organization theories may systematically guide policy makers when designing the implementation of labour market inclusion programmes. For this it is necessary to understand who are perceived as relevant stakeholders by the organizations (mainly fund providers, members or clients) and what is the focus of their striving for legitimacy in order to predict their behavior.

Supplementary Information

The online version contains supplementary material available at <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-021-00232-6>.

Additional file 1: Appendix 1. List of professions controlled by the German Chambers of Industry and Commerce. **Appendix 2.** List of professions controlled by the German Chambers of Skilled Crafts.

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Declarations

Competing interests

There are no competing interests.

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