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The Overlapping Uncertainties of Film Professionals

On a sunny day in July 2015, I passed a grey-haired man in his late sixties, pushing a buggy with an about three-year-old boy in the center of Geneva. Overhearing him teaching the child Persian language, I became intrigued. The man must have noticed my interest because he greeted me in English. My response in Persian initiated a discussion: loquaciously, he began to explain that he lives in Tehran, and that he and his wife came to Geneva for a month to see their two daughters. Without me asking for details, he said “My first daughter studied business administration at [some university in Switzerland] and her husband is a lawyer. My second daughter studies medicine. What do you do?” Not in the mood for long explanations, I limited myself to telling him that I was a student. He continued “I work for Iran Air at Tehran’s Imam Khomeini Airport. In case you have any issue when you are there, just ask for me.” Then, he told me his name. (Field notes, July 2015)

Education and Western-specific resources, independence, but also cooperation are the values that emerge through this short dialogue. The man put forward his own and his daughters’ professional achievements, calling for my recognition of their resources—in particular those acquired in Switzerland—as capital and invoked comparison by asking me to do the

same. Would he have done so if I had not revealed my Iranian identifications? I think that it is our common Iranian origin that led the man to vaunt in particular those resources created in Western countries and to suggest some kind of cooperation.

Extant research underlines that, for many migrants, education and professional success is a way through which they try to overcome racial barriers to capital creation (Ong 1996; El-Mafaalani 2012; Schneider and Lang 2014; Olwig and Valentin 2015). However, as their new location-specific resources mediate independence, that may contradict the value of cooperation in relations with fellow migrants (Portes and Landolt 1996). In Iran itself, as well, people hail personal accomplishment and competition about professional success (Adelkhah 1998, 199–247; Bromberger 2003, 2009; Sadjed 2012, 90–94), whereby the display of resources that mediate familiarity with Western cultural contexts plays an important role (Mahdavi 2007; Khosravi 2008; Sadjed 2012). It is thus no coincidence that the grid the man used for promoting his own resources and evaluating mine reminded me of the way the film professionals Hushang, Zian, and Milad talked about their own and each other's work. What does the boundary work of migrant professionals who are engaged in several of the same social fields say about the way their strategies of capital creation interact with competing and contradictory systems of value?

The interplay between internal boundary-making and transnational capital creation, I asserted, is motivated by individual and collective politics that engage with systems of value prevalent in local and transnational social fields. So far, the case studies of Iranian carpet merchants and members of association Golestan respectively showed how migrants' collective identifications could bring divergent systems of value to acknowledge the same resources in different social fields, and how intersecting systems of value largely determine migrants' collective identifications. Having thus drawn the different ways systems of value interact on migrants' capital creation across social fields, I change the perspective and use the boundary approach in order to trace the effect of these dynamics on the everyday negotiation of internal diversity.

In this chapter, I take up the intra-relational perspective from Chap. 2 to explain what happens when people who consider themselves friends

and colleagues follow competitive strategies of capital creation within and across local and transnational social fields. To this end, I examine the interactions between three film professionals of Iranian origin—a technician in a precarious occupational situation, an ambitious student of filmmaking, and a newly exiled director—in the context of their professional trajectories. Hushang, Zian, and Milad live in Hamburg and are all engaged in the transnational Iranian and the German social fields of film professionals, as well as in the local Iranian social field. Tehran-grown in middle-class families, they have the same gender and age—they are all in their thirties. As we shall see in the following, what distinguishes the film professionals is the amount and volume of their professional resources and the place of their creation (Germany or Iran), deriving from different professional and migratory trajectories. The analysis suggests that, while the men's success in generating capital in the society of residence strongly shapes their possibilities to do so in the local and transnational Iranian social fields, there is also a great individual variation in the way they navigate these systems of value and their interrelation, depending on their age, their professional position, and in how far their past experiences of exclusion influence their contemporary behavior.

The Social Fields of Film Professionals

Much about the dynamics that shape the social fields of film professionals will become clear in the discussion of Hushang's, Zian's, and Milad's trajectories. However, at this point, I point out two things that form the context of the following analysis.

First, the working conditions in the film business are characterized by a high level of uncertainty—although to different degrees depending on individual positions in professional hierarchies. As I learned through my contact with film professionals, this derives from several sources: first, filmmaking mostly takes place in specific time-restricted projects, for which a team of professionals is constituted and works together intensively, only to be dissolved after the task is finalized (see also Apitzsch 2010, 410ff.). Different work units are thereby highly interdependent, increasing thus, as we shall see below, the social embeddedness of

economic action (Granovetter 1985). Plus, the team has to be efficient quickly, despite long working hours and often while being geographically mobile.¹ Second, as Hushang explained to me, fixed work contracts are very rare. Most of the time, people get employed—for independent “low-budget” or “no-budget” projects also paid—only for the time of a specific project. Third, just as in the carpet trade, the film business has relatively low levels of professionalization. In other words, there are no standardized educational curricula, access to the job market is not based on formal qualification, and there is a lack of institutional supervision. Informal, experience-based learning and access through auxiliary jobs prevails (Apitzsch 2010, 413; Ortner 2013). In a nutshell, with little international variation, working in the film business demands very high flexibility and independence deriving from the unstable demand of film productions, but also, somewhat conflictingly, alliance and cooperation.

Second, for the following analysis, it is important to note that, through their engagement in the transnational social fields of Iranian film professionals, Hushang, Zian, and Milad are indirectly acquainted to or in direct contact with numerous film professionals of Iranian origin, be they actors, technicians, camera operators, directors, or producers, living in Germany, in Iran, or in any other country.

Sonja “Did you watch the movie ‘Women without men’ [Neshat 2009]?”

Probably, didn’t you?”

Hushang “Yes.”

Sonja “How did you like it?”

Hushang “Mmm, so-so. The story was good but the implementation wasn’t. Did you notice that two of the actors also figured in my documentary?”

Sonja “Really? No. Which ones?”

Hushang “One of them was ‘the General’. He was supposed to be the foil of the protagonist [...]. And then Zahra.² Originally, she was my assistant but she appeared once in the discussion round.”

Sonja “Ah ok!” It seemed important to him to have these two actors who acted in internationally screened movies participate.

¹ For an ethnography of independent film sets, see Sherry B. Ortner (2013, 213–27).

² Pseudonym.

Hushang “They shot the movie [Women without men] in Morocco. A friend is now shooting a movie at the same location.” (Field notes, April 2013)

We can see that the transnational social field of Iranian film professionals has specific geographical hubs. Different places in Morocco, for example, serve as sets for the growing number of movies shot outside Iran to prevent government censorship.³ For different reasons, Hamburg is another hub for Iranian film professionals: it has three colleges and universities that offer technical and artistic curricula in the field,⁴ and its international film festival regularly features Iranian movies for many years now. Two local actors identifying as Iranians, Arash Marandi and Ramin Yazdani, work in international film productions. Besides numerous German-run businesses, the presence of Sina, a director of international renown, and the Germany-wide successful film-producing company of Hessam⁵ certainly are another contribution.

Hushang, Between Contesting and Conforming to Assimilation

Hushang is a 39-year-old man, single when I first met him, and always dressed with care. His spacious apartment, decorated with artifacts he brought back from his international travels, is situated in a middle-class neighborhood close to the port of Hamburg. Hushang, who is a friend of the artist Babak (see Chap. 4), loves to learn about history and society. He likes both sarcastic jokes and good coffee. This is why we often met in his preferred café-bar in the central, formerly alternative, now yuppie Schanzenviertel.

³For studies on Iranian cinema, see Hamid Naficy (for instance 2012).

⁴These include the semi-private Hamburg Media School, the public HfBK, the University of Applied Sciences (Hochschule für angewandte Wissenschaften, in short HAW).

⁵To my knowledge, the first filmmaker of Iranian origin who lived in Germany was Sohrab Shahid Saless, who settled in Berlin in 1974, fleeing persecution by the Pahlavi government. He made numerous successful feature movies in German, before he moved on to the USA in 1992 (Langford 2016).

Hushang told me that his father was a gun seller and landowner from Mazandaran, a northern Iranian province, but he himself grew up in Tehran. He came to Hamburg in 1992, when he was 18 years old, together with his older brother. Only much later, I learnt that he did not come as a student but sought asylum—I will come back to this. Most of his remaining four siblings also live outside Iran. His elderly parents, however, still live in one of Tehran's northern high-end districts, which is one of the main reasons why Hushang goes there regularly.

As his Iranian high school diploma was not recognized in Germany,⁶ after obtaining asylum, he had to do a one-year foundation course (*Studienkolleg*) before being able to enter college. He graduated from the Hamburg University of Applied Sciences (HAW) in the early 2000s. Thus, having spent half of his life in Iran, and the other half in Germany, Hushang acquired significant cultural resources that can be considered as Germany-specific, that is, a college diploma and German citizenship, and he speaks accent-free German.

Today, Hushang is a freelance light and sound technician and explicitly claims focusing on capital creation in the German job market, that is, in the German social field of film professionals. Indeed, during the time I was in Hamburg for fieldwork, he accepted more mandates from German than from Iranian employers. His missions often involve traveling within Germany or to other European countries. Several times, he mentioned that the high level of uncertainty inherent in living from short-term mandates is not always easy to bear. However, he prefers time flexibility to financial stability, and therefore refuses full-time employment. He values his independence as a freelancer.

Notwithstanding these career choices, Hushang frequently talks about difficulties to generate capital in the German professional social field. For example, during one of our first meetings in spring 2013, when we took a walk through the Schanzenviertel, he said that some classmates who had done worse in school than him now have a more successful career. He explained this perceived disadvantage by his categorization as Iranian, saying

⁶This is the case for most degrees obtained in non-Western countries (Nohl et al. 2014).

Compared to German colleagues I have to do double: to each new employer I do not only have to prove my qualification, but I also have to show that I am not as they expect Iranians to be like. (Field notes, April 2013)

In particular, he has to prove accuracy and punctuality—values employers would take for granted in German competitors. In other words, just like Yara in Chap. 4, he reported that his assumed cultural and perceived racial difference impeded on his capital creation. Hence, in his professional social field, accuracy and punctuality are subordinated to the key value of familiarity with German cultural elements. In Chap. 4, I showed that the assimilationist approach to immigration leaves little space for culturally pluralistic identifications, the perception of cultural or racial difference often leads to the exclusion even of those migrants who have with significant Germany-specific resources (see also Sadeghi 2018). Hushang's gender certainly adds further disadvantages. According to Aihwa Ong (1996), in the USA the trajectories of migrant men, more than those of women, are measured against neoliberal ideals of self-sufficiency and efficiency. In addition, people tend to associate men from predominantly Muslim countries with patriarchal domination, which fails to mediate the value of equality and thus reinforces barriers to their capital creation (Khosravi 1999; Çelik 2015). Based on these experiences, Hushang developed a certain reluctance and cynicism in his engagement in the German social fields of film professionals.

However, contrary to his claims, Hushang is not simply passively being Othered. Indeed, earlier in the same discussion, he mentioned that his relations with German colleagues never go beyond a certain level of acquaintance. For example, he criticized that German film professionals have a sober attitude at work, and restrain from enjoyable leisure activities, even when abroad. His tendency to seek distinction from German colleagues is reflected in a picture Hushang took during a shooting in the south of France and posted on his Facebook account. It shows three pairs of men's feet leisurely positioned on a low table—he and his colleagues enjoy a *Feierabendbier* (literally: “after-work-beer”)—a ritual frequent in German work contexts. Hushang exposes his blue plastic slippers (*dampâi*), which look as if he brought them from Iran. In the Iranian urban middle class, such slippers are worn mainly at home or during free

time. In this photo, Hushang underlines a laid-back ethos that contrasts with his German colleagues' street shoes. In short, in wearing these slippers and, more importantly, publishing the photo, Hushang sought to differentiate from his German colleagues. The latter probably saw in his slippers the value of exoticism, while his Iranian friends on Facebook likely understand it as a comical critique of the system of value that pushes racial Others to perform cultural difference.

Yet, Hushang's stressing cultural difference does not only aim to mediate the value of exoticism, nor does it always a critique of the prevalent system of values. In some situations, it is also a way for him to create capital from his Iran-specific resources by mediating cultural expertise that is sought after in the German social field of film professionals. For example, in August 2013, I joined Hushang at a beautiful, old cinema in the city center at the premiere of a documentary shot in Afghanistan. Except for the two of us, all attendees seemed to be of German origin. A middle-aged woman, probably a member of the crew, came to tell him "Without you the movie wouldn't have been the same" (field notes August 2013). Later, he explained that he had taken the initiative to find and interview locals in order to enrich the documentary, building on his Persian language skills, his Middle Eastern physical appearance (he also donned Afghan clothing), and his professional know-how. Thus, he succeeded to have his Iran-specific resources valorized as capital. However, he told me that during the premiere, the presenter introduced him as an Afghan—an inaccuracy that renewed his feelings of discrimination. Hushang corrected the presenter, explaining that he was from Iran. Building on his cultural difference for capital creation is risky, as the meaning of his Iran-specific resources easily switches from expertise to a lack of familiarity.

Thus, in the German social field of film professionals, depending on the project and the team, Hushang's Iran-specific resources may mediate a lack of familiarity and exoticism, or convey cultural expertise. Although he claimed not to believe that integration is possible, his politics of value consist in circumventing the barrier posed by his lack of familiarity by putting forward Germany-specific resources within the limits of his racial othering. Simultaneously, he exaggerates the performance of exoticism as an indirect critique, and mediates cultural expertise by acting as a broker in missions connected to the Middle Eastern context or migration in

Europe. His boundary-making toward Germans also serves to build on Iran-specific resources for finding employment through cultural brokerage.

To return to our original discussion, I thus asked Hushang whether he thinks that the reason for the limitation of his professional opportunities could be that these colleagues have been able to build up more social capital among people in important positions in combining professional with friendship ties than him. Other than in classical, stable working relations, where “weak ties” serve for professional ascension but are not essential to employment (Granovetter 1973, 1373), in the face of the high uncertainty that structures the film business, professionals need to rely on their social networks both to secure employment and to recruit a crew. Thereby, not only professional qualifications, and social skills, but, in order to increase work efficiency, also matching personalities, working morals and, in general, sympathy are taken into account (Apitzsch 2010, 414f.). Hushang acknowledged my point but insisted that he could not build such private ties with his colleagues. As we shall see later, his boundary-making toward German colleagues does not only derive from his feeling of cultural alienation or his efforts to act as a broker, but it also relates to the characteristics of work relations in the film business. Let me note at this point that Hushang and his German colleagues dispose of unequal potential for acting on the system of values that shapes the German social field of film professionals; both contribute to the creation and maintenance of social boundaries based on the idea of cultural and racial difference. Yet, in a context where “weak ties” are crucial for capital creation, their mutual boundary-making happens at the expense of Hushang’s professional success.

Hushang also works within the transnational social field of Iranian film professionals: he occasionally accepts mandates from two successful directors living in Germany, whom he first met at an (today dissolved) association for Iranian film professionals in Hamburg in the mid-1990s. The producer Hessam offered him the only full-time job he ever accepted at his production company in Hamburg. Hushang also collaborated with Iranian film professionals outside Germany, in Iran and England. For example, he contributed to a video for an art gallery in Tehran. Besides, he sometimes does the German subtitles for internationally screened

Iranian movies, some of which are produced by Milad. Finally, in his short documentary on the onward migration of an Iranian couple that does not find inclusion in Germany, he relied mainly on Iranian professionals. He claimed, that, in contrast to people he qualifies as his acquaintances, his friends are all Iranians.

It seems like a contradiction that Hushang claimed preferring sociability with Iranian colleagues, but also told me that he seeks to limit his relations with Iranian film professionals to the professional domain. The separation between the two is, of course, blurry, but, for instance, while he welcomed Milad to a day out with his close friends, he did not want to invite him to his home for dinner. This type of relation is reminiscent of his reluctance in ties with German colleagues, but the reasons he put forth are different:

You always have to see to move on yourself. Also, with Iranians, private and professional things often get mixed up. For me that's a reason why I don't want to get involved with Iranians too much. Everything gets mixed up. I just want to get along with you job-wise. But there everything works with relationships. Just like in Iran. "You do this for me, so I do that for you" I'm not up for this. I am very clear with that. (Field notes, April 2013)

Hushang's conflict between closeness and distance in relations with Iranian professionals results from his engagement with systems of value in the local social field of Iranian migrants and the German social field of film professionals.

First, through his boundary-making in his relations with local Iranians, we can see that Hushang values accurateness and punctuality. For example, he critiqued that Iranian working environments are chaotic and stated having adopted more structured German work ethics. Further, Hushang values economic independency and familiarity with German cultural contexts. We can see this reflected in the following discussion, when he told me that he had a new girlfriend.

Sonja "Nice! I'm happy for you! What does she do?"

Hushang "She is a salesperson for a pharmaceutical company. She moves around a lot."

Sonja “So, she’s from Iran as well?”

Hushang “Yes, she has been here for five years. But she speaks German fluently. That’s important to me.”

Sonja “That means, she’s financially independent, does not wait for you to help her...”

Hushang “Simply, there are so many Iranians here who depend on welfare, don’t speak German and so on.”

Sonja “Oh, really? A lot?”

Hushang “Yes.” (Field notes, February 2016)

His evaluation of other people’s resources mirrors the values he himself tries to convey, which are some of the same he also seeks to mediate in his relations with German colleagues.

As we saw in Chap. 4, the system of value that prevails in the local Iranian social field coincides with those that shape numerous fields in Germany in prioritizing familiarity with German cultural contexts. The interpersonal perspective indicates another reason for this intersection, besides the historical valorization of anything Western among the transnational Iranian intelligentsia: the actual overlapping of social fields in everyday life. If German colleagues associate him with people who lack familiarity with German contexts, for example, by accidentally meeting him in their company on the street, this would stress Hushang’s own unfamiliarity and enforce barriers of capital creation he meets in German contexts. In other words, what he does in relations that connect to the local Iranian social field may be perceived by agents with whom he shares an engagement in the German professional social field and thus influence his chances to create capital there. Patricia Ehrkamp (2006) observed a similar influence of the German hegemonic system of value on relations among Turks living in a socially disadvantaged neighborhood in Duisburg. However, in contrast to Hamburg’s Iranian-Germans, Ehrkamp’s interlocutors tend to reject the idea of assimilation and exclude Turks who convey too great a familiarity with German cultural context.

Second, Hushang’s tendency to refrain from taking his relations with Iranian colleagues to the private level is inherent to the characteristics of Iranian film professionals’ transnational social field. I suggested in the previous chapters, multiplex relations based on trust are an important

element in Iranian sociability in Hamburg, not least as a reaction to the experience of barriers to capital creation in German contexts. Research observed similar trends in other migrant labor markets (Faist 1998; Bauder 2005, 92; Bloch and McKay 2014). In professional domains lacking formalized mechanisms of evaluation, the role of informal ties is similarly important as among migrants. Just as in the case of Iranian carpet merchants, the transnational social field of Iranian film professionals is both shaped by the context of international migration as well as by increased personal interdependency typical for the professional field. In both cases, cooperation and alliance are key values. As a result of these overlapping uncertainties, trust developed in multiplex relations is more important among Iranian film professionals compared to ties with and between their German colleagues.

Yet, social capital has its downsides. Alessandro Portes (1998, 15ff.; see also Portes and Landolt 1996) is among the first social scientists to study them in the context of migrant economies. Tight social networks often rely on boundaries that may also impede on insiders' engagements in other social fields. Furthermore, in what he calls "downward leveling norms", the valorization of alliance and cooperation within the group may engage the more successful in important material and immaterial social obligations that come at the expense of their own capital creation. For such reasons, migrants sometimes take distance from their peers (Zontini 2009; Cederberg 2012). Strikingly, Apitzsch (2010, 420) observed similar negative dynamics among German film professionals. Here, informal ties, in particular hierarchical ones, create obligations that prevent professionals from diversifying their resources and reduce their ability to adapt to changing conditions on the job market. These social obligations contradict the value of independence, which is central to Hushang's strategies of capital creation both in the local Iranian social field and among German film professionals. Thus, he seeks to separate professional and personal ties in order to mediate both collaboration and independence in the transnational social field of Iranian film professionals.

In doing so, Hushang tries to avoid the conjunction of uncertainties in the social field of Iranian film professionals. Significantly, he thinks about doing business with his two closest friends, Hossein and Amir, who are

not in the film business. Moreover, both migrated at about the same time as him and dispose of an amount of Germany-specific resources more or less equal to his own. Based on these considerations, Hushang's relations with Iranian film professionals are analogous to relations between brothers discussed in Chap. 2: while ties between those who try to generate capital from the same resources tend to be ridden by competition, relations between people whose strategies of capital creation do not concentrate on the same social fields, like distant relatives or friends, may more easily be shaped by collaboration and solidarity (Bourdieu 1990, 170; Monsutti 2004, 2012). Hence, the idea to avoid obligations is the third reason, besides exclusion, cultural alienation and the aim to find employment as a cultural broker, why Hushang does not engage in friendship relations with German colleagues, either. Therefore, concentrating the main of his efforts to create capital on German contexts not only helps him to retain a greater independence, but, as we shall see later, paradoxically also sustains his chances to generate capital among Iranians.

While Hushang's struggle with the idea of assimilation contains his effort to balance dependence and independence in his relations with German and Iranian colleagues, how do the other film professionals engage with the conditions to capital accumulation in German and Iranian professional fields?

Zian: What Barriers?

Aged 34, Zian is the youngest of the film professionals, with least professional experience but great confidence in a successful career. Short and thin with black hair and eyes, he wears a designer-stubble, black-framed Ray-Ban glasses, speaks very fast, and preferably tells jokes. When I first met him, in May 2013, he lived in the HafenCity, a prestigious newly built high-end neighborhood in downtown Hamburg in a flat he shared with a friend, an Iranian who runs an international retail company. For financial reasons, he moved to Barmbek, an off-center middle-class neighborhood a few months later.

Tehran-grown, his family is originally from the northern Iranian province of Gilan. In Iran, he had studied natural sciences. During our first

meeting, which was a formal interview, he told me his migration narrative: as he wrote articles for a regime-critical newspaper, he was persecuted and several times imprisoned by the Iranian state. In 2006, he came to Germany where he joined his brother and father who live in Frankfurt but then came to Hamburg and successfully applied for asylum. Since then, Zian did not return to Iran. He did the same foundation course as Hushang to study filmmaking, explaining the shift in his curriculum with the objective to find a different way to express political critique. At first, he applied to the renowned HfBK, where Hessem had also studied. As he received a refusal, Hessem and Hushang recommended him to study at the HAW. When I met Zian, he was finishing his bachelors and argued that university was mainly about building a professional network, as he could gain the skills through practice. Ambitious, for his masters he hoped to switch to a more prestigious university in Germany or abroad. Indeed, in 2014, he went to pursue his studies in Zurich for a few months.

Like Hushang, Zian mainly aims at creating capital in the German social field of film professionals. Stressing the value of professionalism, he discursively dissociated himself from Iranians whose company he shared during his early years in Germany:

Zian “There are many weird people here (*Âdambâ-ye ajib-gharib ziâd dâre injâ*).”

At first, he got to know people who helped him in the asylum process, “miserable people (*âdambâ-ye badbakhti*)”, who struggled with their own asylum request. At that time, he got to know many Iranians who were in the same situation as himself. “You have much free time and rush into mischief.” The way he talks about them suggests that he does not think of these contacts as positive.

I ask “What do you mean?”

Zian “Drugs and such kind of things.” Before, he often went to Iranian discos. But today it annoys him that many women are highly dressed up and had gone under the knife (*amal kardeh*). He prefers natural beauty. Besides, they would also directly ask where you live and what kind of car you drive. “What business is it of theirs?” (Field notes, May 2013)

During his studies, in contrast, Zian got to know other students who were acquainted with the local conditions. “There you entered a different

level” (field notes, May 2013). Through his contact with German and international fellow students and through professional experiences, he generated Germany-specific social and cultural resources. The fact that he is not yet officially on the labor market also preserved him from its competitive environment. A cover photo⁷ he posted on his Facebook account in early 2013 testifies to his good relations with young German professionals. It shows him amidst the crew of a short movie he directed. Most of the team look like Germans or at least Europeans, and two or three may be Middle Eastern. Among them is his close friend Parham who came to Germany at the age of 16, today speaks German without an accent, studies sound technology and is, like Zian, involved in Golestan association. Thus, he has good professional contacts with some of his German classmates, which probably also extend to the private domain. Significantly, I once met him at a local film festival, and he was accompanied by a German colleague.

Putting forward Germany-specific social and cultural resources, he stated that, instead of going to Iranian discos, he now preferred to go to bars in the Schanzenviertel. Clearly, since several years, Zian endeavored to move out of exclusively Iranian social circles, not only in professional, but also in private life. While we talked, he played with a leather pocket full of cards in his fingers. It opened through the movement and I saw a German identity card inside.

Sonja “Did you become German?”

Zian “Yes.” He took out the ID and showed it to me. ‘So fast, after only six years!’ I think. Without his glasses, without the beard and his hair appearing more brown than black, he somehow looked more German on the photo.

“I also changed my name into Mark Bar.”

Sonja “Why?”

“Because I wanted it to sound more German.” ‘Why did he choose this name?’ I ask myself. Mark sounds like *mard*, which means “man” in Persian, and *bar* is German for “devoid” – a free man. Only someone who speaks both Persian and German can understand this signification.

⁷That is, one of the two most visible pictures of his account.

Sonja “So, do you identify as German?”

Zian “No. In Germany, one always remains a stranger. I have many German friends. Good friends. They are also not very satisfied with the society and would like to go away. However, I also have many Iranian friends. In many other places, people are more open. It is still not ‘normal’ when someone is not from here. Many of my friends live in Canada and if they are asked where they are from, they say ‘Canada’. Everybody there is from elsewhere and therefore people do not constantly ask you [where you are from].” (Field notes, May 2013)

In trying to generate capital from Germany-specific resources, Zian not only became a German citizen, but he also “Germanized” his name. His friend Parham did the same. They continued to use their Iranian names in Iranian contexts, however. Thus, not all Germany-specific resources are recognized as capital in the local Iranian social field. Such name changes are very rare among my interlocutors, compared to Iranians in other locations (Bursell 2012; Khosravi 2012). Zian also met limits to his capital creation among Germans, but, unlike Hushang, he does not draw boundaries based on cultural difference in order to convey exoticism or cultural expertise. He pointed out that he shares his feeling of alienation in German society with some of his friends who are of German origin; their relations are shaped by a system of value in which familiarity with German cultural context is not a key value, but cooperation and cosmopolitanism. Let me clarify that I understand the value of cosmopolitanism as distinct from that of diversity in that the willingness to engage with unfamiliar cultures is paired with a certain personal autonomy from the cultural context(s) one grew up with (Hannerz 1990). Thus, despite experiencing social exclusion in certain German contexts based on his cultural and racial othering, Zian successfully generates capital among German fellow students and junior film professionals.

Zian’s engagements among German film professionals did not keep him from building up relations in the local Iranian social field. Many of his close friends, like his fellow student Parham, and his girlfriend, are Iranians. However, like Hushang, he privileges contacts with Iranians who dispose of important Germany-specific resources. For example, he told me that he now only goes to Iranian parties which are open to a

selected public, such as the high-end “platin lounge”. Thus, like Hushang, he is conscious about the importance of resources conceived of as Germany-specific for capital creation among Germans and possible downsides to tight social relations with Iranians who dispose little of these.

Nevertheless, he is not as wary as Hushang of social obligations in Iranian professional social fields. On the contrary, Zian is rather anxious to create ties among Iranian film professionals. In these professional contexts, the volume of their Germany-related resources is a priori secondary. Significantly, in his relation with Hushang and Milad, who are seniors in the field, he valorizes both their Germany- and Iran-specific resources. For example, when he first joined a meeting of Golestan association at which Hushang was also present, he told the group that a German short movie in which Hushang had collaborated was nominated for an international student award. Another example is a photo he posted on Milad’s Facebook page in February 2013, when Milad was still based in Iran. It pictures himself, Milad, and his friend Parham discussing technical details on the set of Zian’s short film. Following comments accompany the post:

Milad: I really liked the backstage of your film, Zian, and I am waiting for the shooting of your [first] motion picture. Say hello to everybody and well done!

Zian: Dear Milad, it was your presence that enriched our backstage.

Milad: My pleasure! (translated from Persian by the author)

Interestingly, Zian mobilized Milad’s support for a movie realized with primarily German staff. This suggests that he must have created enough cultural and social capital among the team for him to be confident enough not to fear that his association with Milad, who disposes of important professional know-how but barely of Germany-specific resources, would enforce barriers based on his racial Othering.

Zian’s valorizing his seniors’ knowledge, and mediating cooperation, but also Germany-specific resources, helped him to create capital in the social field of film professionals: thanks to Sadegh’s support, he got a mandate for making a documentary about Golestan’s FusIran festival in the fall of 2013. During the event, he got to know two Iranian musicians, who subsequently hired him for realizing music videos or filming con-

certs. Also, thanks to Yara, he became one of the presenters of the local film festival's section for historical Iranian movies in the same year. Thus, he does not shy away from building multiplex relations with Iranian professionals. His openness toward new contacts in the film business relates to the fact that he is a newcomer both in the German and in the transnational Iranian social fields of film professionals. Possibly because of his newness, he does not seem to expect obligations that follow from close relations.

In sum, solidarity and competition among Iranian film professionals, the tendency to build boundaries toward fellow Iranian film professionals or to deconstruct them is not only related to the primary importance of Germany-specific resources for the generation of capital among Germans and among local Iranians. It is also influenced, first, by their trust in the stability of inclusion in German contexts, that is mainly created in long-term multiplex relations with Germans, and, second, by their position in professional hierarchies.

Milad, and the Protection of Façades

I got to know 37-year-old Milad a mere few weeks after he came to live in Hamburg, in May 2013, during an afternoon we spent hanging out with Hushang and some other mutual acquaintances. The stout single with brown hair at shoulder length and blue eyes is rather introverted. As a passionate cook, he likes to talk about recipes. Milad does not speak German and has only a quite limited command of English. In the beginning of his stay in Hamburg, he mostly wore checked shirts and stone-washed jeans as they can be frequently seen on Tehran's streets. However, after one year, he cut his hair and adopted plainer, more local fashion. During the time I stayed in Hamburg, he lived in different places. First, he rented a room in the flat of a German cultural professional in Altona, an arty middle-class neighborhood. Then, he subleased a grim apartment full of dusty seventies furniture, situated in Hamm, a monotonous residential neighborhood. He liked to precise that the owner of this flat was a German professor at Oxford University. In between, he did not have his

own room but squatted at different friends' places for a few weeks, mainly at Hossein's, who is also Hushang's friend.

Milad told me that his family is part of the Turkish-speaking Azeri minority, but I did not notice ethnicity to play a role in his relations with local Iranians. Back in Tehran, his hometown, he studied sociology before entering the film business. Milad made much of his career in collaboration with Sina, who is a director, just like himself. Together, they made several movies critical of the Iranian government some of which were rewarded at international film festivals. They shot the latest film without a government license. When the movie's participation in an international film festival was announced unexpectedly early, Milad left Iran on the spur of the moment to avoid imprisonment and came to Hamburg. Contrary to Hushang and Zian, he does not have family members in Germany. Still, he told me that he knew Hamburg well: as Sina had developed a foothold there, since 2008, he frequently came for festivals. Hamburg was also a location where they did shots for scenes of movies for which they did not have a government license.

At his arrival in 2013, however, Milad knew that his stay would have to be longer than the ones before. Nevertheless, he decided not to apply for asylum. Over a coffee we had in a bakery in spring 2013, he explained that he does not want to depend on German social services, and, distancing himself from asylum seekers, he argued that it is not truth, but a good story that is the basis for asylum decisions. Indeed, as I explained in Chap. 3, being considered a refugee (*Flüchtling*) can represent an important stigma and barrier to capital creation in German social fields, and, as a consequence, also among local Iranians. Moreover, he said "There is no point in being a filmmaker outside Iran" (field notes, June 2013); the sense he saw in his work was related to the socio-political situation in the country. He hoped for political change after the elections in June 2013, which may allow him to return. Thereby, an asylum request would have been a hindrance. Thus, he applied for a one-year work and residence permit with the help of a lawyer, instead. In late August 2013, he proudly presented me his newly issued document in the queue of a supermarket checkout. Thanks to his international professional success and to his economic capital, the German institutional system considered him a desir-

able immigrant (Nohl et al. 2014, 3ff.). However, by that time, he already had new plans, and told me:

I want to have a base (*pâgâh*) in Hamburg, and the residence permit (*eghâ-mât*). Ideally, I would like to travel back and forth between here and Iran, and besides it is much easier to travel with a German residence permit. (Field notes, July 2013)

Indeed, with the idea to build on the cultural and social resources he had acquired through his work in Iran, as well as thanks to international rewards, he declared that his long-term aim was to open a film production company in Germany.

Therefore, he tried to invest in capital creation in the German social field of film professionals. As he once told me, he thought it was important not to limit his social life to contacts with Iranians. Through his previous stays, in particular thanks to Sina, he knew a few Germans in Hamburg working in the cultural sector and tried to build on these relationships. Indeed, Hans, the German editor of a local cultural magazine in his mid-fifties, not only rented out to him a room in his flat, but also remained a reliable friend after Milad moved out. For example, Hans invited him to spend Christmas together with his family. Through the older man, Milad tried to make new professional connections. For instance, once

he told me that he cooked *âb-gusht* [a very popular hearty mutton soup] for his landlord's guests. Hans had invited some friends, mostly Frenchmen. He showed me pictures (most of them seemed to be around fifty years old) and explained that, aside for a small remainder of rice, there were no leftovers. (Field notes, June 2013)

Putting forward Iranian recipes, his cooking talents, and hospitality, he sought to create capital among his invitees. Familiarity with German cultural contexts is, as we saw in Zian's case, not always a central value among German film professionals. Iran-specific resources may be interpreted as mediating the value of cosmopolitanism. However, his lack of language skills was an important obstacle to this effort. Arguing that he had lim-

ited financial means, he did not go to language school, but tried to learn German by himself. He once went to a free class organized by a refugee help center, but he said that it was not well organized. After a year in Hamburg, he was still not able to have a simple conversation in German.

Instead, however, he had developed a knowledge of prevalent trends in German films: he told me about a plot he had in mind for a movie that seemed to represent the mix of comedy and romance that characterizes successful northern German movies made by, and dealing with, migrants and their descendants, such as *Kanak Attack* (Becker 2000), *Kebab Connection* (Saul 2004), *Head-On* ('Auf der anderen Seite') (Akin 2004), and *Soul Kitchen* (idem 2009). Indeed, Hessam also adopted this type of scenario in his productions. However, Milad told me that, before he could realize such a film, he had to get to know German infrastructure and working methods—"culture" (*farhang*), as he said—better. Frustrated, he added that he only began to understand the social life of Iranians in Hamburg, not to speak of getting to grips with that of Germans. Indeed, the locally successful producer Hessam once told me that he had known many Iranian film professionals in Germany who could not "adapt to the tastes of the German public". He said, "You can't make films in Germany the same way as in Iran. You have to have an understanding of German taste and what the German public likes to see" (field notes, April 2014).

Contrary to Hushang and Zian, Milad did not complain about meeting barriers to capital creation based on his cultural or racial othering by Germans. What he did complain about is that he did not have access to German contexts other than the small circle of already acquainted internationally orientated film and cultural professionals. Instead of questioning the importance of conveying familiarity through Germany-specific resources, Milad put the blame on himself, for example, in saying that he is too old to learn the language. In sum, to his disillusion, Milad had to find out that his lack of Germany- or Western-specific resources impeded on the acknowledgment of the social and cultural resources he had generated among film professionals in Iran and among international film critics as a capital in German contexts.

The barriers Milad encountered in the social field of German film professionals increased his expectations in relations with Iranians in general,

and local Iranian film professionals, in particular. Significantly, when I once found him lonely and depressed, he argued

Sonja “I know, being new in a country is difficult. You need time to find friends and find your way around.”

Milad “Yes, but it is not as if I started from scratch. Luckily, I was in Hamburg and Europe many times before and I know many people here. I know Hushang for six years, and Yara for three years. That makes it easier.” (Field notes, September 2013)

Upon his arrival in Hamburg, Milad thus hoped to build on social relations he had created during his previous stays. However, this turned out to be much more difficult than he thought, especially in the professional domain. The analysis of his relationship with Hushang will offer insights in the different reasons for Milad’s difficulties.

Hushang was one of the persons Milad said he was closest to when he came to live in Hamburg. When Milad still lived in Iran, they met during Hushang’s visits and the technician acknowledged the director’s professional success, maybe with a hint of envy. To Milad, Hushang was one of the persons he looked up to as he thought he had realized to find his place in Hamburg. From the moment Milad immigrated there, however, an imbalance slowly developed between the men. Milad hoped for Hushang to help him create capital both among Germans and Iranians. For his part, however, Hushang was disappointed, as Milad had failed to employ him in his successful projects. Significantly, Hushang told me that it would always be a surprise when Milad and Sina released a movie. It was through his contact with local Iranian film professionals that Milad created Germany-specific social and cultural resources, such as knowledge about the dynamics of the German film business and its key figures. However, Milad told me that he was very secretive about his own projects and he did not involve these people in his professional projects although he was more advanced in the occupational hierarchy. He told me that this was because these films were illegal, “the team needed to be held small” (field notes, June 2013). Nevertheless, he continued to do so when he lived in Hamburg. For a documentary he wanted to realize in September 2013, he rented a camera from an Iranian friend who was based in Dubai

and decided to film himself rather than to collaborate with Hushang or Zian. Thus, Hushang probably had the impression that their exchange was imbalanced—to his disadvantage.

As time passed, Hushang took his distances, and the two men saw each other ever more rarely. For example, in late August 2013, I was at a bar with Milad when Hushang called to invite me to the premiere of a documentary later on the same evening. He suggested me to bring Milad along, but when I told Milad, he was surprised that Hushang had not invited him personally and found some excuse why he would not be able to join.

In reference to the two dimensions of Hushang's boundary-making with Iranians, the first reason why the two men drifted apart was related to their strategies of capital creation in German contexts. In contrast to Zian, Hushang was insecure about his inclusion among German film professionals and did not want his association with someone lacking Germany-specific resources to add further difficulties. Milad, however, was dependent on contacts with people like Hushang in order to find an entry into the German social field of film professionals. The second reason is related to the important obligations in the field of Iranian film professionals: Hushang sensed that Milad had developed expectations from their relationship he was not ready to fulfill, on the one hand, because, as mentioned above, he evades important engagements with Iranian colleagues to maintain his independence. On the other hand, because, in Hushang's view, their exchanges were imbalanced. Tellingly, when I asked Hushang whether he had heard of Milad in February 2016, he told me:

Hushang "No, he did not get in touch. I contacted him once when I was in Iran [after Milad had temporarily returned there], but he didn't answer. Another time I met him on the street in Hamburg by chance."

Milad had told me the same.

Sonja "But did you argue?"

Hushang "No, it's just like this. I don't want to talk badly about Milad, but I realized that, in general, people who come here from Iran expect that you do this and that for them. But that's not the way things work here. I first have to take care of my own life before I help others. They don't understand that." (Field notes, February 2016)

Crucial to the argumentation of this chapter, the third reason for the dissolution of their relationship is related to the role of Germany-specific resources in boundary-making in the local Iranian social field. A discussion I had with Milad over a coffee almost a year after his arrival in Hamburg was revealing in this regard. At this point, the men had already stopped to see each other and Milad was disappointed by Hushang's lack of emotional support:

Milad "Hushang is always pessimist (*bad-bin*). He gives me little hope for professional success in Germany."

Sonja "He probably made bad experiences, feels disadvantaged in relations with Germans."

Milad "But he always says how good Germany is!"

I think 'Well, he can hardly admit that.'

Milad "Does he actually have a strong accent (*lahjeh*)?"

Sonja "Hushang speaks really well [German], almost without an accent."

"And Zian?"

"Zian... yes, Zian has an accent. He does not speak very well. It's funny, in Persian he always speaks so fast."

"Yes, and he eats his words."

"Hessam also speaks almost without an accent."

"Yes, they all came here as twenty-years-olds. As refugees."

"Hushang and Hessam came as refugees?"

"I don't know for Hessam, but Hushang yes."

"He never told me about this!"

"Then better not tell him I told you. But Zian also came as a refugee and tells everybody. He doesn't have a problem with that." (Field notes, March 2014)

To understand the complex dynamics this quote reveals, Erving Goffman's (1990) concept of "impression management" is useful: we can conceive of Milad and Hushang as actors in a performance of self that was destined at each other. Other Iranian friends and acquaintances, as, for example, Yara and Hossein, sustained the impressions each one created of himself. Within these dynamics, Hushang tried to generate capital building on his actual Germany-specific cultural resources, while creating a fiction of having social capital in German contexts he actually lacked, because, as

we saw earlier, he was not close with his German colleagues. Significantly, Hushang once told me

Iranians learnt how to adapt throughout the history of the region. So, they do it here [in Germany] too. But this often is only superficial. In work and everyday life, one gets along with Germans, but in private that's often different. Here, people treasure Iranian ways, but often Iranians don't want others to know or find out. (Field notes, April 2013)

Importantly, by “others” Hushang meant not only Germans but also people he categorized as Iranians. Thus, some of the Germany-specific resources Hushang had put forward and Milad had acknowledged as capital were not actually at his disposition. In the previously quoted discussion, I unwittingly created a disruption to Hushang's performance: in his absence, I offered insights into its “backstage”, revealing his difficulties to generate capital in German contexts.

Correspondingly, Milad was truly surprised, inquired on the validity of his Germany-specific cultural resources (language skills), and revealed a part of Hushang's impression management he had sustained so far, namely the fact that he came to Germany as an asylum seeker. As he gained a greater insight into Hushang's backstage, he probably felt betrayed in his trust, because he contrasted Hushang with Zian's honesty, and thus greater trustworthiness. This also explains why Milad withdrew from his commitment to this performance and told me Hushang's “secret”. In leaving out this episode of his life in our conversations, Hushang probably tried to suspend this categorization, as he had often experienced it as a reason for exclusion (Goffman 1963, 54ff.).

For his part, Milad also tried to manage the image Hushang (and other Iranians) had of him: in refusing professional collaborations with local Iranian film professionals, and building on resources he had created in Iran, he tried to sustain the image of himself as a successful producer. At first, I think that Milad was not completely aware of, and later tried to hide the fact that he was an even newer newcomer to the social fields of German and transnational Iranian film professionals than Zian. Once, Milad and I went to the Imam Ali mosque together, where we met an Iranian who told us boldly that he had lived in many different countries

before settling in Sweden. He must have recognized Milad as a recent migrant from his way of speaking Persian and his clothes, and asked whether he was in a different country before, or came to Hamburg directly. To try to create Western-specific capital, that is, in this case capital other than Iran-specific, Milad explained that he had been in Turkey before, although this was only a two-month sojourn. As he tried to hide his unfamiliarity with Germany, he emphasized his independence and failed to convey collaboration, which, as we saw earlier, created barriers to his capital creation in his relation with Hushang.

The two men's impression management reveals a crucial observation. As we saw earlier, cultural and social resources which mediate familiarity with German cultural contexts are central for Iranians' capital creation both in most German contexts and among themselves. Therefore, most Iranians favor creating ties with people who have at least as much Germany-specific resources as themselves. These dynamics, however, may represent a vicious circle for people who experience barriers to the generation of capital in German contexts, as Hushang and Milad: to overcome barriers to capital creation among Germans, you try to generate capital among well-established Iranians, which in turn requires Germany-specific resources. In this situation, people may resort to impression management. This, in turn, leads them to be warier of close relations with other Iranians in fear that, through these exchanges, they discover the backstage of their performance. Beyond the key value of familiarity with German contexts, to create capital in the Iranian social field, people need to balance the mediation of both independence and collaboration. The equilibrium between these contradictory values, however, gets disturbed with such a withdrawal, as we saw in Milad's case. To sum up, the need to keep up impression management is the third reason why people like Milad and Hushang keep greater distance from other Iranians, in particular those engaged in their professional field.

In the light of this analysis, how can we explain Hushang's defeatism regarding Milad's professional plans in Germany? One, two, or maybe all of the following three reasons played a role in Hushang's discouragement. First, it may be the well-intended council of a friend, in which Hushang tried to tell him—based on personal experiences but without letting go of his own façade—that creating capital among Germans is not as easy as

Milad thought it was. Second, it may be motivated by competition over professional success, insofar as it reflects Hushang's expectation that, if Milad realized his goals, he might outperform him without offering him any benefit from this success.⁸ Third, the fear may have played a role that, if Milad gained professional success among Germans, he might discover Hushang's true uncertainties in German contexts, which would devalue the capital he holds in Milad's eyes. Thus, in alignment with my previous argument, as Milad and Hushang tried to generate capital in the same social fields, and reacted similarly to difficulties, that is, in trying to dissimulate them, their interests began to conflict and they ceased their exchanges.

Resuming shortly with Milad's trajectory, Hushang was not the only person who took distance from him. Yara, for example, also took her distances and even excluded him at several occasions. Looking back at his first year in Hamburg, he told me

that this period was difficult for him. That he spent much time being alone. That at the beginning he hung out more with the people, but then they all returned to their own businesses [*donbâl-e kâr-e khodeshun budan*]. He said that the people did not support him, the other Iranians. Most of them said "You won't find work here anyways." Hossein was supportive that is why Milad spent more time with him. He said his problem was that he was too old to learn the language well and that he did not know enough people. This was why anybody wanted to collaborate with him. He was not able to reach enough people. (Field notes, March 2014)

As the difficulties he met in creating capital both in local German and Iranian social fields impacted on his psychological well-being, he retired even more from sociability among Iranians. Of course, a few people did support him. One such person was Sina, with whom he was linked not only through long years of professional collaboration, but also through personal confidences. However, Sina soon returned to Iran. The other

⁸This was Milad's explanation: "It is difficult to make good movies abroad. But I want to try. Several people tell me: 'You are not going to make it; this won't work.' They are those who did not make it themselves. If they do not support me, then they should at least not discourage me. It's not as if I made €200,000 with that movie and I lead an easy life in Hamburg, as some people may imagine" (field notes, June 2013).

helpers were not involved in the transnational social fields of Iranian film professionals. None of these efforts however allowed Milad to create enough capital to feel comfortable in Germany. After one year and a half, he decided to return to Iran temporarily to renew his social ties and bring more money with him, despite the risk of travel and occupational bans. To his luck, Milad met mildness from the part of the new Iranian government, and today, he moves between Tehran and Hamburg as he wishes.

What happens intra-relationally when friends and colleagues pursue individually competitive strategies of capital creation within and across local and transnational social fields?

The analysis of cooperation and competition between Hushang, Zian, and Milad showed that the local and transnational social fields of Iranian film professionals are marked by overlapping uncertainties deriving from migration and from the characteristics of the social fields of film professionals. Trust and reputation play an important role in sustaining cooperation in social relations among these professionals. We can see here an analogy to the structure of the transnational social fields of Iranian carpet merchants. At their difference, however, film professionals' professional success does not depend on their engagement in transnational networks, nor is it necessarily based on Iranian identifications. In contrast to carpet merchants who tend to maintain tight knit and multiplex relations, these film professionals rather seek a personal balance between cooperation and independence in order to navigate flexible capital creation in diverse professional social fields simultaneously.

Just like in the context of association Golestan, the generation of capital from Germany-specific resources was a major aspect of all three men's relations in the German and transnational Iranian social fields of film professionals as well as in the local Iranian social field. In Chap. 4, I showed that the importance of such resources is the result of the interplay of systems of value structuring social fields in Germany and Iran. The analysis of interpersonal boundary-making in this chapter indicates a second reason for the valorization of familiarity with German cultural contexts among Iranian, namely the actual overlapping of social fields in everyday life: Iranians tend to privilege being associated to others who have at least as much Germany-specific capital as themselves, in order not to enhance the Germans' perception of cultural and racial difference. In

contrast to research among socially disadvantaged Turks (Ehrkamp 2006; Çelik 2015, 2017), this research joins extent studies in that my Iranian interlocutors reluctantly comply with rather than question the prevailing systems of value and the requirements of assimilation in their contact with Germans (Sanadjian 1995; Sadeghi 2018).

However, the comparison of the three men's boundary-making also shows that, while systems of value shape social fields, their effect on each agent may vary depending on his own professional position, but also on his gender, racialization based on individual physical features, but also on the extent to which past experiences of exclusion influence contemporary behavior. Comparing the two men's trajectory, we see that Hushang's own boundary-making toward Germans and his staging of Iranianness contributed to his (self-) exclusion. Brokerage, just like staging Iranianness, has relatively limited potential for changing existing systems of value. In contrast, the social ties Zian was able to create with Germans diluted the importance of perceived cultural difference and allowed him to present his Iranian identifications in a complementary, that is, non-exclusive, way. Thus, familiarity with German cultural elements does not have the same weight in all the German social fields of film professionals: among students and among higher ranked professionals in which Zian and Milad are involved, cosmopolitanism to a certain degree outweighs familiarity.

It is important to note that not all kinds of Germany-specific resources are similarly efficient in generating capital. In the German social field of film professionals, cooperation is a crucial value and disposing of Germany-specific *cultural* capital alone does not help migrants to mediate familiarity. As we saw in the case of Hushang, to overcome these limits, cultural need to be combined with *social* resources. Thus, depending on the social field, not only the volume but also the distribution of location-specific resources conditions successful capital creation.

Finally, the conflict between Hushang and Milad showed that the lack of Germany-specific resources may create a vicious circle. To avoid stigmatization and exclusion from their peers, migrants may resolve to impression management (Goffman 1990), in which problems in the generation of these kinds of resources become tabooed. This is also why, as in the introductory anecdote, narratives of successful Iranians rarely contain

the difficulties they actually needed to overcome in order to create these educational and professional achievements.

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