



# 6

## A Festival at the Interstices of Value Systems

It is a sunny but chilly day in April 2013. Behruz, a 27-year-old student who carries out his first project as a cultural organizer, his sister, his girlfriend, myself, and two other volunteers are on a promotional tour in Hamburg's commercial center. We distribute flyers and ask people to take pictures with the festival poster. We just reached a moment of disorientation, as we wait for Behruz to decide where to go next. He is hesitating.

I see three women in their late fifties and approach them spontaneously in Persian "Are you Iranian?" They are plainly but elegantly dressed, and one of them has a broken arm. Their hair is dyed in black. They stop. "Yes."

Sonja "*Mâ ye festivâl...* [I switch to German] um, sorry, I cannot say this in Persian too well. We organize a festival, three days in June, classical Iranian music." They look interested.

The one with the broken arm asks in Persian "Please say it in Persian, if possible."

I comply "Okay, I'll try. We want to make a festival –"

One of them corrects me "Organize."

Sonja "Organize. Iranian music at Hochsieben, during three days in June."

The same woman says "Hochsieben is very good, it's a very good place."

I hand them a flyer. “This is our chef [sic!]” I point to Behruz, who was talking to Jan, a German friend of his. He was crouched down, and stands up.

“How young he is!” they say.

The one with the bandaged arm “When is the festival?”

Sonja “June 11 to 14.”

“Oh, what a pity, I’ll be back in Canada!” Behruz still keeps himself in the background. I show them the flyer and read the names of the musicians.

They know [one of the bands] and the woman with the bandaged arm cheers when hearing the name of Taghi,<sup>1</sup> the headliner coming from Iran

“I would have loved to come.”

The one in the middle asks me to give her some more flyers “I have many friends; I’ll give it to them.”

Afterwards, Behruz asks me “How did you know they were Iranians?”

Sonja “You could see it. Besides, they spoke Persian together.” (Field notes, April 2013)

In this situation, I was struck not only by Behruz’ lack of planning and professionalism, but also of the fact that he was reluctant to approach Iranians and speak Persian—a language I thought was his mother tongue. I assumed that displaying familiarity with Iranian cultural contexts was necessary to create capital among Iranians. Significantly, two months later, one of these women indeed came to the festival on two evenings. She greeted me and told me that our friendly encounter had inspired her to come. Even though the exchange was short, my personal interaction and my trying to speak Persian thus displayed Iran-specific cultural resources that mediated familiarity as well as cooperation. Behruz, however, was not as interested in putting forward Iranian cultural elements. Which were Behruz’ politics of value and how did they inspire his strategies of capital creation aiming at the organization of an Iranian cultural festival? How was his approach received by Iranian stakeholders, German cultural organizers, and the visitors?

In the preceding chapters, I have highlighted a certain number of factors that play an important role in the way social boundaries are drawn between Iranians in Hamburg, which include, first, personal trajectories,

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<sup>1</sup> Pseudonym.

that is, the experience of doing kinship, place of birth, time and conditions of migration; second, the way they mobilize resources, in particular Iran- and Germany-specific social and cultural resources, in their strategies of capital creation; and third, the politics of value agents pursue within intersecting, partly contradictory systems of value that shape the social fields in which they are engaged. However, the interactions I analyzed so far were between people who shared an engagement in at least two of the same social fields. As agents that appeared in previous chapters come to interact in the context of Behruz organizing the Color festival, this chapter offers a perspective on the way alliances and confrontations emerge when each agent's strategies of capital creation relate to a variety of different systems of value.

This chapter is based on my active participation in promotional activities in the three months run up to the Color festival as well as in organizational tasks at the event itself in the spring of 2013. The argumentation will follow the way the complexity of the events was revealed to me, from the initial information I found about the festival in the internet to Behruz' fundraising strategies, and to the reactions of his interlocutors. The analysis allows me to situate arguments I made in the previous chapters and show that people of Iranian origin's interactions refer to multidimensional social fields shaped by competing regimes of value. Their social boundary-making thus needs to be understood as a tool that helps them to navigate barriers to capital accumulation they face in diverse local and transnational social fields.

## The Festival's Concept

I first learnt about the Color festival through its presentation on a crowdfunding website. Crowdfunding is a method to finance independent artistic or otherwise innovative projects that was initiated in the late 2000s and reached much popularity and success in the early 2010s. Via an online platform, people make a donation for a project of their choice. Necessary funds, however, have to be raised within a specific time frame. If the budget target goal is not reached, donations must be restituted to the donators and the project cannot be realized. The 2013 event was

supposed to be the first edition of an annual festival, promoting intercultural understanding. The festival's concept was described as follows:

The Color festival is about a different country each year, and wants to present its melodies, its nature and its people through concerts, screenings and exhibitions. The goal: To change the perspective, to look beyond horizons, to inform and make people curious and, finally, to breathe new life into a long-established image. ([www.startnext.de/000](http://www.startnext.de/000), assessed 17/03/2013)

The Color festival was scheduled on a three-day weekend in June. This kick-off edition was to be dedicated to Iran. The organizers presented the event as a reflection of and a contribution to Hamburg's diversity:

Our aim is to establish the festival [...], whereby the promotion of the hanseatic city's interculturality is paramount. We want to achieve this goal by organizing transnational cultural co-operation between the Orient and the Occident. It is the young and emergent artists in the domains of film, photo, music and plastic arts who have the possibility to influence intercultural co-existence. ([www.startnext.de/000](http://www.startnext.de/000), assessed 17/03/2013)

The aim of the online crowdfunding campaign was to raise the amount of €30.000—a particularly high budget for crowdfunding projects as the site stated. To incite the interest in the festival, it promoted a picture of Iran that is different from the negative image forged by Western mass media:

Each country has a beauty of its own. Iran's beauty however is too often concealed by misconceptions. The Color festival takes its spectators/visitors on a trip to Iran that will surprise, fascinate and ultimately change them. As the famous poet Hafez once said: "If you are not traveling and on the road, how can you call yourself a guide?" ([www.startnext.de/000](http://www.startnext.de/000), assessed 17/03/2013)

Thus, in order to present an allegedly alternative image of Iran, the festival's program featured an exhibition of portrait and landscape photographs by Sebastian, a Bavarian who had spent a year in Iran, as well as three concerts of Iranian classical and folklore music, one each evening.



**Image 6.1** Hochsieben’s main hall with Sebastian’s photo exhibition. (June 2013, author’s picture)

It was constituted of two contrasting elements: romanticized rural life and folklore and Iranian classical music—a complex musical tradition whose audience and practitioners are mainly members of the urban cultural elite. Strongly supported by the Iranian government, this music tradition has experienced a revival since the Islamic revolution. Yet, the event’s publicity was devoid of any political reference, if it was not promoting Iranian culture as apolitical. The event’s location was Hochsieben,<sup>2</sup> a former factory and one of Hamburg’s most important local venues for avant-garde theater, dance, and music performances. The picture below (Image 6.1) shows the exhibition of Sebastian’s photos in the location’s main hall.

The project’s presentation as an opposition to prevailing “misconceptions” about Iran reflects a somewhat educational way to counter barriers to capital creation based on the lack of familiarity in the German society, frequently observed in this research (see also Lamont et al. 2013, 132);

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<sup>2</sup>Venue name changed.

Behruz, in particular, sought recognition for his knowledge of Iranian classical music as a capital, which is, alongside Portuguese Fado, his preferred music style. Through his collaboration with a fairly successful German photographer and the locally well-reputed venue, the presentation also set forth important social resources that can be conceived as Germany-specific. While the crowdfunding campaign was devoid of any personal references, taking a closer look at the organizer's trajectory helps to understand how the project emerged and how this presentation targeting a rather German public fits into the project's concept.

## Introducing the Organizer

The first volunteers' meeting that took place three months ahead of the festival in a café located in the main street of the yuppie-and-alternative-culture Schanzenviertel was where I first met Behruz in person. Fashion-conscious in a down-to-earth way, Behruz wore a neatly trimmed designer stubble, chino trousers, flashy green sneakers, and a plain shirt. Tellingly, Karim, a 31-year-old volunteer of Iranian origin, once commented that "funnily enough, Behruz dresses a bit like rich kids but does not think like them" (field notes, May 2013).

The young man introduced himself as a German with Iranian and Iraqi roots, but stressed his identification with the city of Hamburg. Later, I learned that his parents grew up as Iranians in Bagdad, migrated as adults to Tehran in the frame of the Iran-Iraq war (1980–1988), where they lived in a district in southern Tehran popular with people from Iraq. Finally, they moved to Bavaria in the mid-1980s, where Behruz was born. Two years later, they came to Hamburg. Behruz told me that his father had been a lawyer in Iran and, according to his cousin, his mother's father had been a diplomat. Probably because his Iranian diploma was not recognized in Germany, he became self-employed as a carpet merchant like many other newly arrived Iranians in the 1980s and early 1990s. Research on Iranian migration observed this tendency toward self-employment also in other Western countries (Khosravi 1999; Moallem 2000). As Behruz' father did not have a bazari background, he worked outside the established merchants' system of reputation (Chap. 3). Behruz did not

say it explicitly, but I could sense that his carpet import company went bankrupt in the late 1990s, at the time of the market crisis. When I got to know Behruz, his father worked in a bookstore, but allegedly expected early retirement for health reasons in the following year. Behruz' mother worked as a physiotherapist. Thus, Behruz' family had experienced downward social mobility as they struggled with barriers to capital creation in German contexts.

Maybe as a reaction, family relations are very close, even spatially: Leyla, his 25-year-old sister who just finished her studies in French and Islamic Studies, lives with their parents, while Behruz and his girlfriend Maria, who is of Portuguese origin, live in a separate apartment in the family's semi-detached house in Bergedorf, a provincial middle-class residential suburb. Together, the family speaks both Persian and Arabic, and Behruz told me that he had been to Tehran to see his family a few times already. Not the father, but all three women took over much work for organizing the festival.

In a private conversation during that first meeting, Behruz told me his own professional trajectory: after graduating from high school, he wanted to study medicine. Both in Iran and among Iranians abroad, being a physician is one of the most prestigious professions, potentially generating much cultural and economic capital. As Milad, a film director, insightfully told me in another context, it is also a profession that offers relative economic stability, and therefore it is particularly interesting for people whose family does not have much economic resources. However, due to his low grades in high school, he had to wait before being able to enter this course. He ended up studying law instead, but quit after a year in favor of political science as a course of study. He was still an undergraduate when he decided to become an independent cultural organizer. The Color festival was his first project and he paused his studies to realize it.

His professional disorientation reveals both insecurity and high ambitions that are probably related to his parents' difficulties to create capital in German social fields—and as we shall see later also among Iranians. This is even more the case as he is their only son: assumedly, Behruz felt his parents' expectations over gaining upward social mobility. Engaging the German social field of cultural organization as a self-employed was

surely daring, because Behruz and his family had relatively limited financial resources, he had no experience in event management or degree that would prove his qualification, neither, beyond sparse individual contacts, a professional network to rely upon for support. In sum, he barely had any resources from which to create capital. Plus, both his person and his project bore the danger of facing barriers as a consequence of their Iranian and foreign resources failing to mediate familiarity with German cultural contexts. As mentioned in the vignette that introduces this book, the staff at Hochsieben had almost refused his festival, if it was not for the support of a senior member, Anna. The analysis of his fundraising strategies will offer us an understanding of the way his strategies of capital creation in the German public sphere and the local Iranian social field interrelated with the systems of value by which they are shaped.

## Fundraising Through Sameness and Difference

Back at the first volunteers' meeting, I found Behruz sitting around a table with Melanie, a German woman in her early twenties who had just returned from a long trip to Iran, and, to my surprise, with Yara, the psychologist and representative of the Golestan association (Chap. 3). He told us that he only raised a modest amount of donations, so far: his efforts to raise funds in the social field of the German public sphere through crowdfunding were of little success. Plus, the city-state's government denied his project subsidies. As a matter of fact, in the light of the approaching federal elections in fall 2013, Hamburg government's hands were tied when it came to any project having to do with Iran. This situation was not only due to the country's international political and economic marginalization under President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, but also to the fact that the Social Democratic Party (SPD) in power at the Hamburg Senate had won the last local elections in 2010 partly thanks to its opposition to the former Christian Democratic Union (CDU) government's collaboration with the Union of Iranian Entrepreneurs (BIU) and the government of the Islamic Republic (Chap. 3). Significantly, in the same period, the cultural senator refused to grant BIU subsidies for organizing the performance of a Tajik ballet.

In the local Iranian social field, Behruz complained, his fundraising barely gained attention, although, here too, he consciously presented the festival as politically impartial. At this occasion, he told Yara that he had contacted the Golestan association several months earlier to suggest collaborating, but did not receive an answer. Meanwhile he learnt that Golestan was preparing its own festival and proposed to present these events as two parts of the same festival. Yara politely refused the collaboration and stressed that Golestan had the support of the most important cultural organizer in Hamburg, as well as that of a well-known Iranian-German actress. The association obviously had been more successful in creating capital in the local social field of cultural organizers than Behruz, not least thanks to the resources of Sadegh and some other artist members, as well as the anti-Iranian-government rationale of the festival, supporting exile and underground musicians.

Yara, who is much more familiar with the local Iranian landscape and the power relations by which it is shaped than Behruz, advised him “If you want to get support from Iranians, you need names behind the project” (field notes, April 2013). She thereby pointed to the previously observed fact that cooperation, alongside independence and familiarity with German cultural contexts, is a key value and implied that people would be much more willing to support a project financially if it was patronized by someone they know and trust. In sum, in contacts with German institutions, it was the failure of his Iran-specific resources to mediate the values of democracy, human rights, equality, and ultimately familiarity, and among Iranians it was Behruz’ lack of cooperation that impeded on his fundraising at this stage.

In the course of the discussion, Behruz announced how he wanted to deal with these constraints to capital creation, namely in putting more effort in raising funds among Germans through the crowdfunding campaign. Behruz wanted to build a career in German contexts. However, although he was not explicit about this, in attracting a German audience he also hoped to gain the interest of Iranians. Significantly, during the presentation of a fundraising concert in front of a largely Iranian public of about 60 people, he stated, “Tonight, all the event is in German only, because it is also the aim of the festival to address Germans” (field notes, May 2013). How did he try to generate capital in these two social fields

simultaneously? A look at his agency in the local Iranian social field will offer the necessary insights.

First, Behruz built the festival's concept on an opposition to established Iranian cultural organizers whose events are typically designed for an exclusively Iranian public. Several times, notably in a discussion with Yara during our first meeting, Behruz critiqued another organizer of Iranian classical and folklore music concerts as "unprofessional" for inefficient time management during the event and bad sound quality. Moreover, he despised the annual pop-music concerts of famous singers from Los Angeles, the ex-territorial hub of the Iranian pop-music industry, for their festive atmosphere as shallow entertainment.

Behruz "I find it stupid just to party. That's also what all people in Iran want. I want to convey content. I don't understand the sense of it."

Sonja "Well, it serves to cultivate social contacts."

Behruz "Honestly, I don't know how *you* party, but *I* don't cultivate social contacts with it. You cultivate contacts in a café during the day, or in a restaurant in the evening. Partying, that comes from the West, from Europe and America." (Field notes, July 2013)

Behruz' evaluation shows a correspondence with the system of value put forward by the Iranian regime. It idealizes the image of the modest and profound "authentic" Iranian and opposes it to the superficiality of people under Western cultural influence (Khosravi 2008, 32ff.). Simultaneously, his despise for pop music converges with the system of value that shapes the social fields of Iranians who identify as "intellectuals". I heard Yara and Nazanin, a 60-year-old educational advisor and daughter of a professor, make similar judgments. Thus, Behruz argued that his festival would introduce "a new level" to the repertoire of Iranian cultural events in putting forward resources that mediate familiarity with German as well as Iranian cultural contexts, professionalism, independence, and education.

Concretely, that meant that he marked the event off through a neat layout of publications in German and an avant-garde venue, which, until then, had never hosted any Iran-related events. Before, Iranian classical or folklore music concerts mostly took place in the more traditional

Laeiszhalle, a neo-baroque concert hall, or at the Hamburg University auditorium. Their publicity is mostly in Persian language and displayed only in shops and enterprises that are primarily frequented by Iranians.

We, instead, distributed flyers in middle-class and student districts such as Altona, Schanzenviertel, and round Hamburg University. Once, in a group of volunteers, we discussed the possibility of printing Persian and German bilingual flyers, when Behruz objected “Have you already seen Iranian flyers? They are completely overloaded. My design is minimalistic, that’s how it stands out” (field notes, April 2013). The festival logo was in two colors only, and publications were almost exclusively in German (and partly in English). When I distributed flyers among Germans, I noticed that the design was well received, maybe because it reminds that of a British government World War II poster “Keep calm and carry on” that became a very popular decorative theme since the 2000s.

The festival slogan, in locally spoken Low German and Persian, symbolizes more than a statement of local diversity. It represents Behruz’ claim for culturally pluralistic identifications, which expresses his politics of value in German contexts aiming at making the exoticism conveyed by Iran-specific resources familiar through cultural education. In contrast to Afshin, who tried to promote diversity *beyond* cultural and ethnic identifications as familiarity (Chap. 4), Behruz advertised diversity in the sense of interculturality, thus maintaining cultural and ethnic categories. Significantly, according to a magazine article, Behruz said that “Iranians would not succeed in presenting themselves with cultural self-confidence as part of the German society” (Brehmer 2013).

As precedingly discussed, mediating familiarity with the German cultural context is an important factor in boundary-making among Iranians in Hamburg. Thus, in putting forward important Germany-specific resources and attracting a German public, Behruz wanted to address Iranians who have been successful in creating capital in German contexts. His attracting successful Iranians was part of the aforementioned politics of value. In Chap. 4, I showed that the German assimilationist approach to immigration leaves little space for pluralistic identification. In very simple terms, either you are German or a foreigner, but you cannot be both. In order to claim culturally pluralistic identifications, Behruz thus

needed to mediate familiarity with Iranian cultural contexts, but also professionalism, lest he would fail to convey familiarity with German contexts. Revealingly, at the end of the first concert, Hassan, a short Iranian man in his sixties, who distributes publicity and sells tickets at every Iranian event, spontaneously stepped on the stage and danced. The mostly German public clapped their hands and I laughed, but Behruz, who sat next to me, was angry and told me that he “did not find that funny” (field notes, June 2013). Considering these conditions, having Iranians with important Germany-specific resources attend the festival sustained Behruz’ politics of value in German social fields that aim at making the exotic familiar. However, there was another important reason to Behruz’ limited performance of Iranianness as we will see in the following paragraphs.

The second aspect of his agency in the local Iranian social field was that Behruz presented himself as a German-Iranian but was reluctant to put forward Iran-specific social and cultural resources. As noted before, Behruz lacked social capital among Iranians, that is, contacts who could vouch for his trustworthiness. Plus, he disposed of only a very limited time frame to raise funds. Following Marcel Mauss (1966), to build up trust, time, frequency, and reciprocity of exchange are needed in which honesty and reliability can be put to the test. Yet, although he wanted and needed the support and attendance of Iranians, Behruz was loath to collaborate with Iranians. Significantly, he explained during a volunteers’ meeting, that calling or writing to Iranians to ask for funds was his mother’s task “because he would not know how to talk to them” (field notes, April 2013). There are two main reasons why Behruz quite consciously limited his contacts with Iranians.

On the one hand, as discussed in Chap. 5, tight social relations between migrants often also entail interdependence and social obligations that may impede on a single individual’s strategies of capital creation. For example, Behruz told me that if they were to support him, Iranians would be expecting something in exchange. He thus offered free entries to economic stakeholders such as Abtin—mostly people he did not know—hoping that they donate money or bring their family and friends along. On the one hand, in avoiding establishing multiplex (i.e. professional and personal) relations, Behruz tried to escape obligations he would have

to fulfill after the festival. On the other hand, building too close relations may have mitigated his own strategies for generating capital in this festival. This is certainly one of the reasons why, besides Behruz' mother and sister, among the 14 members of the festival team, there were only two Iranian volunteers including myself.

On the other hand, ironically, Behruz had social obligations through his engagement in multiplex relations with certain people and institutions, which were interwoven with his personal identifications. Indeed, while he presented himself as German and Iranian in any public context in the frame of the festival, he often spoke of his Arab origin to me in private. He thus elided his Iraqi identity in his contacts with Iranians. Yet, he created boundaries toward Iranians each time someone did not give him the support he hoped for. The reason is that he emotionally distanced himself from the people by whom he feared being rejected.

Revealingly, after the festival, Behruz told me "Iranians provided zero support. My mother told me so from the beginning, but I didn't want to accept it" (field notes, July 2013). Strikingly, he never attributed similar behavior by Germans to their national or cultural identity. It appears thus that Behruz' mother maintained important social boundaries toward Iranians. This is probably because their Iraqi identifications may have led people to categorize them as Arabs, which is a highly discriminated population in Iran (Elling 2013, 167f.). Behruz' cousin also confirmed: among Iranians abroad, she frequently meets barriers to capital creation based on her Arab name failing to convey familiarity with Iranian cultural contexts.

As argued in Chap. 2, ethnic and national identifications are fluid and shifting, contextually shaped by social and institutional categorizations and the experience of kinship. In concealing his Iraqi identifications, Behruz tried to suspend the creation of ethnic boundaries which could impede on his capital creation in the local Iranian social field. However, as family relations were tight, and his mother and sister were highly involved in the organization of the festival, loyalty to the family negatively influenced his generation of capital: proving his mother wrong would have endangered the family cohesion that was built on differentiation from Iranians. In Alejandro Portes' (1998, 17) terms, Behruz' family obligations thus became "downward levelling norms" (see Chap. 5). In concurrence with my observations among the children of early merchants

(Chap. 2), Behruz' engagement in Iranian social fields was thus shaped by his family history and involvement in kinship relations. Focusing on capital creation among Germans was hence a way for Behruz to circumvent family conflicts and overcome the barrier his Iraq-specific resources would create by failing to convey familiarity with Iran.

Besides his family, Behruz had engaged in another alliance that made him doubt of his inclusion in Iranian contexts. First, I did not understand why, in our last preparatory meeting in June 2013, he said "some people would think that we collaborate with the Iranian government and therefore won't come" (field notes, June 2013) or even vandalize. However, on the second day of the festival, just before the headliner's concert, I noticed that Behruz was particularly nervous. When a family of five with veiled women hurried inside, and I saw Behruz relieved, I guessed that they were invitees linked to the Iranian government. A discussion with Karim after the festival confirmed my supposition. When I asked Behruz afterward who he had asked for support, he was straightforward:

Behruz "We contacted the [Imam Ali] mosque, of course. They couldn't help us, but they referred us to Berlin."

Sonja "Why Berlin?"

Behruz "The department for cultural affairs of the embassy. They helped."

Sonja "What did they do?"

Behruz "They paid for Taghi's flight."

Sonja "Ah, okay."

Behruz "That's just normal. That's what they usually do. Also [the embassies of] Portugal and France." (Field notes, July 2013)

The Iranian embassy had contributed with a €10,000 grant to the festival's budget. In this context, I understood why Behruz repeatedly defended the Iranian government and political system in our conversations. When I met him on the day after the Iranian presidential elections in 2013, he was outraged at having seen the Iranian Consulate General's entry decorated with green tags and toilet paper, and stressed that "after all, this is *our* consulate, the representation of *our* country, no matter what government there is." On the same day, we met a Marxist, the 60-year-old daughter of a binational couple who tested our political

allegiances: “In Iran, people are unfree.” Behruz answered “People are more happy in Iran than here. The people you see on Sebastian’s pictures are not oppressed” (field notes, June 2013). Besides, while Behruz was not religious, his mother and sister were practicing Muslims. Nationalism is here intertwined with regime-loyalty and religious adherence.

Political and religious orientations often give rise to social boundaries between Iranian migrants (Nassehi-Behnam 1991; Sanadjian 2000; Moghadam 2013). Islamophobia and the promotion of “non-Islamiosity” is widespread among the majority of middle-class Iranians in England and Sweden (Gholami 2015; Khosravi 2018). Religious adherence is thereby often conflated with government loyalty, in particular among long-established migrants. In Iran just like among migrants, the relation between these interests as well as differentiation between political factions is much more complex (Adelkhah 1998; Bajoghli 2019). Fragmentation based on ideological convictions have been observed among migrants from other countries, too, in particular those, who, like Cuba and Armenia, are shaped by important political changes or conflicts (Pedraza 2003; Kokot 2009). “non-Islamiosity”, we can see in this context, is an important value in the local Iranian social field that connects to the values of democracy, human rights, and equality, not least because of growing anti-Muslim racism in Germany (Fekete 2004; Shooman 2014) and because Hamburg hosts numerous institutions of the Iranian government. Thus, if Behruz concealed his collaboration with the Iranian government, it was because he was apprehensive that it conveyed a lack of non-Islamiosity that would create a barrier to his capital creation among Iranians.

Erving Goffman (1963) identified practices of concealing as ways to circumvent social exclusion. Similar to dynamics observed among film professionals, Behruz’ individual convictions as well as his familial and political allegiances led him to engage in complex impression management (Goffman 1990). The fear of people discovering the backstage of his performance, in turn, contributed to his wariness of collaborating with Iranians.

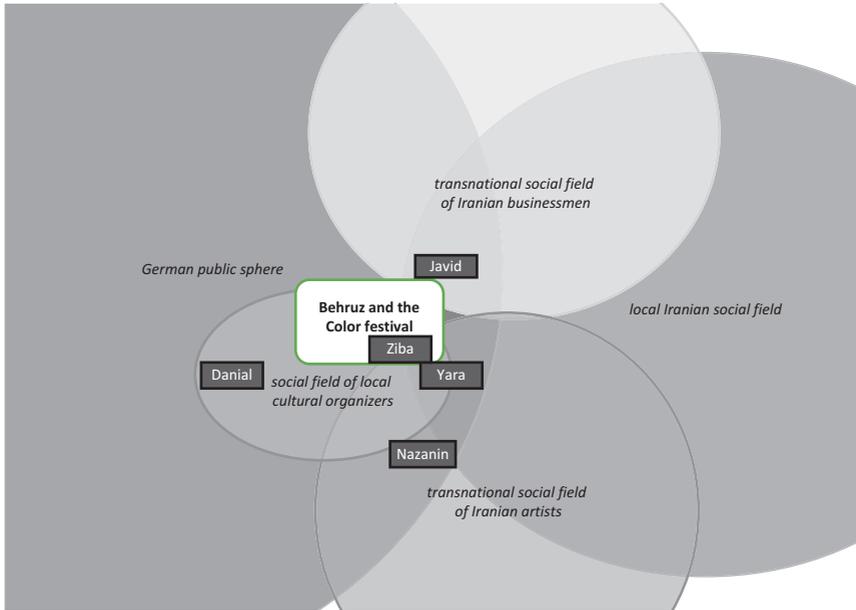
In sum, Behruz focused on capital creation among Germans in order to follow his politics of value both in the German public sphere and in the local Iranian social field. First, in the German public sphere, he put

forward Germany-specific resources to convey assimilation and familiarity. Simultaneously, he set forth certain Iran-specific resources to claim culturally pluralistic identifications and cultural expertise. In doing so, he hoped to overcome the limits posed by his lack of professionalism, financial capital, and social contacts and bridge the prevailing conflict between the values of exoticism and familiarity by making the exotic familiar. Second, in conveying familiarity with German cultural contexts in the local Iranian social field, he targeted an Iranian public that disposed of important Germany-specific resources. Their presence in the festival, in turn, sustained his politics of value in the German public sphere. Third, he mediated independence and evaded cooperation with Iranians because, on the one hand, he wanted to circumvent interdependencies and social obligations in internal relations. On the other hand, he tried to conceal his Iraqi identifications and his collaboration with the Iranian government in order to prevent the emergence of barriers to his capital creation both among Iranians and among Germans.

Discussing the way Behruz' festival was evaluated by different Iranian interlocutors will allow me explain why he was not satisfied with the festival's outcome.

## **Discrepant Reactions: Competing Systems of Value**

While preparing the Color festival, Behruz contacted many Iranians for different motives and with various objectives. Danial, the entertainer; Yara, the Golestani; the businessman Javid; Ziba, the cultural organizer; and Nazanin, the educational advisor, are all engaged in some of these social fields: the German public sphere, the social field of local cultural organizers, the local Iranian social field, as well as the transnational social fields of Iranian businessmen and artists. As you can see in the graphic below (Fig. 6.1), these social fields intersect in very particular ways for each of these agents, and so do the systems of value by which they are shaped. In this section, we will see how their involvement with these conditions influenced their relation with Behruz.



**Fig. 6.1** Behruz' potential Iranian allies and their positionalities at the intersection of tridimensional social fields

Danial started his career as an entertainer by hosting literature competitions geared to a mainly young and rather German public. At the time of the festival, the eloquent 32-year-old began to extend his work to the national level, as well as in other German-speaking countries. Iranian-born, he came to Germany at the age of five. Putting forward Iranian identifications is a crucial part of his professional image. On shows, he gets usually introduced as “the great mogul of all Persian wordsmiths” (field notes, June 2013). His important local identifications, which he expresses in a dry, straightforward humor, an articulation that mixes Low German enriched with youth culture slang, however, are just as central to his persona. Behruz wanted him as a host for the festival because the values Danial puts forward would sustain his endeavor to make the exotic familiar by claiming pluralistic ethnic identifications. But, to his great disappointment, Danial’s fee was higher than Behruz could afford. Plus, the entertainer rejected the plea for gratis publicity in one of his shows. In an interview, Danial told me why he refused the collaboration:

Danial “I work, um- I mean, I *never* work with Iranians.”

Sonja “Okay.”

Danial “I decline all offers, because – most of it is always, I mean, most, in my experience – so far all they wanted was always very *brazen* and very *insolent*: ‘Come, Iranian, we are also Iranians, help us!’ [...] I’m no Iranian artist. I’m an artist, and I’m, like, from – from *here*. [...] In my domain, in what I do, I’m absolutely leading. I don’t need any Iranian to tell me – like for the um... what was the name again? For the Color festival.”

Sonja “What do you mean?”

Danial “He contacted me, he contacted me, the agency ... five, six times.”

Sonja “Okay.”

Danial “‘Yes, do this, and wonderful...’ and my agency writes – see, they are Germans, they are no Iranians! Well! And he writes back ‘Yes, of course, three days, and how much does Danial charge?’ They said ‘So-and-so much.’ ‘Oh, well. That’s a lot, but okay, we would like to have him for three days’ and then, five days later another email ‘We have to see if we can get the money.’ Then, after two weeks he says ‘We don’t have enough money.’ This was evident from the beginning! ‘Um, can’t he do it *like this* [i.e. for free]?’ Then, the agency answers ‘That’s asking a bit too much, don’t you think? Doing a festival presentation for three days in a row *like this*?’ And then, in the end: ‘But this will get him *very far*’ or ‘much farther.’ ‘It is an experience he...’ That’s why I’m happy to have an agency, because that’s when I hang up! When people say such things! With Iranians – I don’t like Iranians. I work... Except if they are professionals and very good in what they do – which is very rarely, very, very, very rare, but otherwise they always think you owe them something.” (Interview, July 2013)

The transcript strikingly shows that Danial did not acknowledge Behruz’ Germany-specific resources as capital and thus created a boundary, distancing himself from the young man. As the graphic above indicates, Danial positioned himself in the social fields of the German public sphere and the local social field of cultural organizers. He did not want to be involved with Iranians in his professional life in any way. He thus evaluated Behruz’ resources based on the systems of value that dominate these fields: Behruz’ Iran-specific resources, plus his putting forward the value

of cooperation together with a lack of solvency, in Danial's view, hinted to a lack of professionalism, independence, and ultimately familiarity with German cultural contexts.

It is thereby important to consider that Danial's and Behruz' politics of value in German social fields were quite similar, just like the reason why both evaded collaborations with Iranians. Danial told me that he had experienced social obligations and downward leveling norms in contact with people he identified as Iranians—including his parents—as hampering his professional advancement among Germans. Significantly, he also refused to host Golestan association's FusIran festival, but accepted to present an Iranian festival in 2017 which was organized by two Germans, when his career was much more advanced. At the difference of Behruz, however, Danial did not need Iranians' collaboration to create capital among Germans. Therefore, their strategies of capital creation were incompatible.

With Yara, it was quite the contrary. Behruz' and Yara's politics of value did not coincide, but their strategies of capital creation were similar, with the exception that Yara was much more involved of the Iranian social field than Behruz. We saw in Chap. 4 that, just like Behruz, Yara was a newcomer to capital creation among Iranians. Thanks to her involvement in Golestan, she just began to engage in the transnational social field of Iranian artists and that of local cultural organizers. At the intersection of these social fields, Yara strove for upward social mobility by cooperating with Iranians who disposed of particular Germany-specific resources. She valued Behruz' effort to make the exotic familiar, which resonated with her own strategies of capital creation in German contexts. At that time, the former oppositional activist, who could probably tell Behruz' political views by the festival program, also did not bother that they failed to mediate democracy.

Therefore, she initially offered Behruz her help, even though she did not have the time to create trust, and even though her association refused an official partnership: Yara lent Behruz her car so he could flypost and introduced him to Iranian cultural stakeholders. In return, they convened that Golestan would be allowed to distribute publicity for the FusIran event during the Color festival. Yet, the exchanges with Yara were exactly the kind of engagements that the young man sought to avoid.

Thus, he soon began to refuse her help, creating boundaries that impeded on Yara's capital creation. She, in turn, critiqued his lack of cooperation, and, after the event, she also condemned his collaboration with the Iranian government. On an afternoon we spent together at obsequies (*khatm*) in September 2013, I mentioned that Behruz wanted to organize an event to take place at the same time as the FusIran festival.

Yara "He always makes very unclever moves. I don't understand why he absolutely wants to organize the small festival in October, although the date of our festival has been fixed a year ago? He is no real competitor to us, but nevertheless, it's a matter of principle. We offered our help many times, but he never accepted it."

Sonja "Did he actually ever propose his help for your festival?"

Yara "No. He always says, he is no Iranian, yet everything in him is *so* Iranian." (Field notes, September 2013)

Yara's comment hints to Behruz' contradictory approach to cooperation with Iranians: he may put forward Iranian identifications in order to stimulate alliances, as he did with Danial, and (sometimes even simultaneously) deny both, depending on whether or not these collaborations (continue to) foster his strategies of capital creation and comply with his politics of value. As we saw in Chaps. 2 and 3, time is an important factor in internal relations, as temporalities of cooperation determine and are determined by the level of compatibility of two agents' strategies of capital creation and politics of value. The longer the collaboration, the more important it is that not only strategies of capital creation are compatible, but that also politics of value coincide. Behruz' and Yara's cooperation was short-lived, as strategies of capital creation among Germans were similar, but they did not share the same politics of value among Iranians.

Behruz' failing to mediate cooperation was also why Javid, the president of BIU, refused his support. After the festival, Behruz told me indignantly that he had presented the project to the corporate consultant, asking for financial support and to borrow a few Persian rugs for the decoration. However, he was left without an answer and learnt later that Javid did not even discuss the offer with the members of the association, as promised. In an interview on the telephone, I asked Javid for his point of view:

Basically, they came to see me and they got me excited, but I don't get anything out of it – if I spend money, as it were, I don't get anything out of it. Um, that means, you should analyze your sponsors. What do they *get* out of it, if they give me money? That means, you have to – two hands: one washes other [sic!]. What does the donor get? Besides a donation receipt and this restitution. If this is not the case, you don't get anything. (Interview, June 2014)

Contrary to Yara, Javid evaluated from the outset that the restitution Behruz offered was not worth for him to invest in this project: as an international entrepreneur active both in Germany and Iran, and as the president of BIU, Javid successfully creates capital in the transnational social field of Iranian businessmen, in the German public sphere, and in the local Iranian social field. He considered Behruz' request for cooperation, because the festival presented resources that convey both Germany- and Iran-specific resources which were relevant to him. However, not having any restitution of interest revealed a lack of professionalism and autonomy. Based on this failure he judged that the project would be an unprofitable investment. In contrast to Yara, who wanted to create capital through long-term exchanges, Javid looked for immediate economic benefit. Besides, what Javid did not mention was that his refusal also relied on their competitive strategies of capital creation: Behruz tried to establish himself, alongside Javid, as a coordinator in local projects with the Islamic Republic of Iran. Nevertheless, to confirm his importance as an Iranian stakeholder, Javid anyways made an according to him "moderate" donation of €500.

Ziba, a cultural organizer and Ayurveda therapist in her mid-forties who came to Hamburg as a teenager, did not care much about the restitution in cooperation with Behruz, nor about his solvency, nor his professionalism, despite being involved in the German social field of cultural organizers and in the local Iranian social field. She provided infrastructural and social support, for instance by inviting him to her Persian-German language broadcast on an independent local radio station. I also witnessed her taking Behruz' defense in front of critiques from Hochsieben's staff.

Her support relied on the fact that Behruz' strategies of capital creation among Iranians suited her politics of value in this social field. Significantly, in an interview after the festival, she told me that

she offered Behruz her help because he does not belong to any group, just like herself. She works with different groups, and people frequently accuse her jokingly of cooperating with “competitors”. She does not like this, but she likes people who are courageous and try something new, and that’s why she supported Behruz. (Field notes, July 2013)

Ziba told me that in her experience, Iranian representational activities in Hamburg were often dominated by older people whose political views impeded on their creating sustainable collective strategies of capital creation in German contexts. As you could read in the introduction to this book, the unmarried woman also likes to challenge the prevailing evaluation of gendered behavior in the local Iranian social field. Moreover, in the German public sphere, they shared an interest of “making the intercultural a normality”, as she put it (field notes July 2013). Thus, the value she saw in Behruz and his project was indeed its novelty and its promotion of the exotic as familiar. Strikingly, the fact that they were engaged in the same social fields followed similar strategies of capital creation and had similar politics of value—apart from his involvement with the Iranian regime which she never mentioned—did not create a barrier to her helping him create capital both among Germans and among Iranians. Just like Zian in Chap. 5, she seemed to be confident enough of her inclusion in both social fields not to fear competition. Thereby the economic success of the festival was of secondary importance to her.

Finally, there was the volunteer Nazanin. It was through me that the educational advisor in her early sixties heard about the festival and became engaged as a volunteer. Living in Germany since the 1960s, she is married to a German lawyer, has only very few Iranian contacts, and did not travel to Iran since several decades. Nazanin mainly focused on creating capital among Germans. The daughter of a professor attributed much importance to her social standing. She lived in an upper-class neighborhood, cared to be always well-dressed, and discursively sought distinction from Iranians who had less Germany-specific resources as her, as, for example, her beautician. Therefore, she cultivated an interest in Western high culture, and her close friend, Anna, worked at Hochsieben. She cooperated in the festival because, just like Yara and Ziba, she shared Behruz’ politics of making the exotic familiar in German contexts.

However, she withdrew her participation abruptly after we had the following conversation on the telephone:

Nazanin “Last time I asked Behruz for the pink flyers, I wanted to distribute them. I spent the whole Saturday handing them out the city center and at the very end an elderly lady called me back, [and told me that] no date was indicated on it. This really frustrated me. I spent so much time distributing the flyers. I don’t understand why he gave them to me.”

Sonja “That’s true. I also noticed that he is quite chaotic. That’s a pity. He is still very inexperienced.”

Nazanin “Yes, but then you have to be behind such a project. I had a call with Anna, again. She said that people [at Hochsieben] already laugh about Behruz. First, he wanted to reserve several concert halls, and then always less. Why did he start off so ambitious? Now we still have a hall fitting 800 people.”

Sonja “Oh, 800? That’s a lot!” (Field notes, April 2013)

Thus, Nazanin’s evaluation of Behruz and his festival shifted when she perceived a lack of professionalism and saw it confirmed by the judgment of German cultural organizers. As we saw in Chap. 5, social fields may physically overlap and it is for this reason that Nazanin withdrew as a volunteer. Insecure about her inclusion in German social fields, she began to fear that instead of sustaining her revalorization of Iran-specific resources, the association with an unsuccessful project would renew barriers to her capital creation due to her cultural and racial Othering.

In sum, these five Iranians with whom Behruz interacted had different professional and private trajectories, disposed of different resources, and were involved in different social fields. Consequently, they followed different strategies of capital creation in the local Iranian social field, which were motivated by politics of value that varied between rejection (Danial), contestation of (Ziba), and committed engagement (Yara) with the system of value by which it is shaped.

Consequently, for each of them, different resources Behruz disposed of, or lacked, became decisive in the way they interacted with him. Interestingly, contrary to Behruz’ expectations neither—except for Yara—took his collaboration with the Iranian government or his Arab identifications as a reason to refuse a collaboration. This may be due to Behruz’ successful impression management ahead of the festival. Certainly,

numerous people, like Milad, Hushang, and Babak did not come to the festival in the first place because they had decoded Behruz' political orientation before, as the singer Taghi is known for collaborating with the government.

These Iranian stakeholders based their decision to collaborate with him on the compatibility of his strategies of capital accumulation with their own engagements. Their interactions with Behruz highlight the way diversity among Hamburg's Iranians evolves: people are engaged in multiple, overlapping social fields shaped by competing systems of value. Through their interactions, they constantly confirm, modify, and contest the predominant system of value in the local Iranian social field; these individual and collective politics of value influence, and are influenced by, their potential for action within a multitude of other local and transnational social fields in which they individually are also engaged.

Hence, the ways in which they responded to Behruz' approach reveals their strategies of capital creation within and across these social fields and hints to their respective politics of value. The previous chapters already showed that, for people to work together in one way or another, it is the compatibility and not necessarily the closeness of their strategies of capital creation that is important. Relying on the same strategies of capital creation may rather encourage competition. However, the discussion of this chapter underlines that the parameters for successful collaboration shift with different temporalities: the longer the collaboration, the more important it may be for agents to follow, through their strategies of capital creation, similar or at least complementary politics of value.

## The Color Festival: Success or Failure?

As Pnina Werbner (1999) reminds, there is no universally valid evaluation of failure and success. It is always relative to and evolves with the specific social conditions in which interactions take place. Was the festival a success from Behruz' point of view?

Two years after the festival, in 2015, the organizer commented on a social media website: "These were eight months of very practice oriented occupational training – only that they cost me 25.000€" (<https://www>.

[facebook.com/TheFUNHamburg/posts/000](https://facebook.com/TheFUNHamburg/posts/000), assessed 14/03/2015). As a matter of fact, economic success seems to have been a crucial element in Behruz' retrospective evaluation. Indeed, the crowdfunding campaign, which mainly targeted Germans, did not even raise a third of the €30,000 budget. Behruz decided that he would pursue the project anyways, hoping, as he said, to at least break even through ticket sales, his own and his family's savings—and the secret Iranian government's contribution. However, this goal could not be reached: the Color festival took place in a hall fitting 800 people. However, on the three evenings altogether, only about 600 tickets were sold. It was Taghi's concert that reached the greatest audience, and it was also the only concert where the public was dominantly Iranian.

Given the barriers of capital creation that prevail in the German public sphere in relation to Iran-specific resources, Behruz' lack of resources in the social field of cultural organizers and his half-hearted engagement in Iranian social fields, the number of festival-goers was actually not that small. A few months later, the FusIran festival, although being a collaboration between Golestan association and one of the most important cultural organizers in Hamburg, did not gather a greater public than the newcomer Behruz. The financial failure Behruz deplores was rather related to the choice of a too big and too expensive festival venue.

Behruz put the main blame for the festival's failure on Iranians, arguing that they did not support him. Revealingly, in an interview after the festival he said:

I don't really see myself as an Iranian. I know this saying: "You need to keep Arabs satisfied and Iranians hungry" [*Arabhâ bâyard sir negahdâshteh bâshi, irânihâ bâyard goshneh negahdâshteh bâshi*]. Iranians are always unhappy. Even if you give them everything, they want more. (Field notes, July 2015)

Thus, the experience of barriers to capital creation in German social fields had stirred in Behruz the hope to compensate the lack with the support of capital generated in the local Iranian social field. This was further encouraged by the fact that, in conformation to the prevalence of boundaries based on assumed cultural differences and notwithstanding the multicultural dimension of the event promoted among Germans, the staff at

Hochsieber and some of the German visitors mainly perceived it as an event for Iranians. His politics of value had thus failed to be efficient enough in making the exotic familiar. Yet, this was a shortcoming about which Behruz did not speak.

Its consequence was that Behruz' expectations toward Iranians grew, while his strategies of capital creation remained the same. They were deceived, in great part, because his ambiguity about cooperation with Iranians caused him to be loath to put forward Iran-specific resources. As we see in the quote, in response, Behruz resolved to enforce boundaries based on ethnic identifications by devaluating Iranians and putting forward his Arab identifications. Correspondingly, the board of the festival's second edition in 2014 comprised only Germans and people of Arab origin and the program featured, besides Iranian, also Arab and European artists. However, Behruz failed again to raise enough funds and abandoned the project as a whole.

Just as we observed in Chap. 4, where Afshin had similarly ambitious politics of value in German social fields, in order to redefine the value of Iran-specific resources, important Germany-specific resources, time, and collective action are needed. Behruz, however, lacked Germany-specific resources, such as financial assets, a professional network, and experience, relevant to convey professionalism and solvability, and his fear of interdependency impeded on the emergence of durable collective action with Iranians. He thus found himself at the intersection of different systems of value creating barriers to his capital creation.

This chapter aimed at drawing the preceding findings together, in examining Behruz' strategies of capital creation in the social fields of the German public sphere, the local social field of cultural organizers and the local Iranian social field in organizing an Iranian cultural festival. In doing so, I traced his underlying politics of value and explained how different Iranian stakeholders engaged with him through boundary-making, in order to show why he perceived the festival to have been a professional failure.

The analysis of the interactions around the Color festival brought up—and thus stressed the relevance of—numerous factors which I showed play a role in social boundary-making among people of Iranian origin living in Hamburg in previous chapters: the agents' fluctuating

and flexible ethnic and national identifications, their experience of kinship, the relevance of Germany- and Iran-specific resources in conveying crucial values in sometimes overlapping local and transnational social fields marked by historically rooted systems of value.

The discussion of this chapter showed clearly that there is no single system of value along which people of Iranian origin try to generate capital. Instead, their interactions take place at the intersection of multidimensional, convoluted, overlapping, dynamic, and interdependent social fields shaped by systems of value that are at times contradictory, intersecting, or complementary.

Behruz evaluated which people he asked for support on the basis of the compatibility of their strategies of capital creation with his—and so did the stakeholders when deciding whether to collaborate with him or not. Thus, social boundaries can not only represent imposed barriers to capital creation. People also actively use them to improve their capital creation: one can create or reinforce social boundaries if they generate capital, or try to deconstruct them, through impression management, if they impede on the valorization of resources.

Internal diversity, I suggest, is determined by the effect of a social relationship on the involved agents' respective strategies of capital creation and, more importantly, its coherence with their politics of value in the social field in which they meet, as well as through its possible impact on their agency in other social fields. Thus, although, for instance, non-Islamiosity is an important value for many people involved in the local Iranian social field, its relevance is never fixed but dependent on the agents' own politics of value and deriving strategies of capital creation in different social fields.

These arguments end the ethnographic component of this work. To close the circle, all that remains for me is to posit a few concluding remarks.

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