

Practices of Organising Migrants' Integration into the European Labour Market

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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the editor-in-chief Michael Morley and the former editor-in-chief Yochanan Altman for their continuous support throughout the process of bringing this Special Section to publication. We would also like to thank eight associate editors of EMR who anonymously provided constructive feedback and recommendations on the initial proposal and Michael Morley for peer-reviewing this article. All remaining errors are ours. Last but not least, we thank our reviewers and contributing authors for their time, effort and collegiality. Vedran Omanović wishes to thank FORTE (Swedish Research Council for Health, Working, Life and Welfare) for its financing to the research program Organizing Labour Market Integration of Immigrants, which provided him with the time for the work on this article and the Special Section.

Abstract

Organizational practices of migrants' labour market integration have by and large been overlooked in favour of research on societal/macro-level factors, policies, rules and regulations, and their impacts on migrants' positions and perspectives on the labour market in the host country. Organizations are conceptualized as key sites that can open doors for meaningful employment and career progression or close them by way of producing inequalities. This change of focus, which we advocate, has a potential to not only increase our understanding of how migrants' labour market integration is organized and practiced at the organizational level, but also shed light on migrants' own mobilizations and agency in these processes. Research on organizational practices of workplace integration of migrants is also relevant as economic and political migration is still high on the agenda in many European countries, particularly since the so-called "refugee crisis" in 2015, when hundreds of thousands of refugees made their way to Europe. Unfortunately, the war in Ukraine in 2022 reminds us the heightened importance of this issue. In this article we start by outlining what has motivated this Special Section. Next, we briefly review the relevant literature that directly

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or indirectly focuses on practices of organizing migrants' labour market integration in European host countries. We then introduce the two contributions to this Special Section, presenting and discussing their main lines of reasoning and how each of them answer our call for papers. We conclude by elaborating what is, from our point of view, still missing and suggest possible avenues for future research.

Keywords:

Migrants, Labour market, Organizational practices, Organizational inequality, Employment, European labour market, migrants savings and investments, migrant voices and agency

Introduction

Many European countries are experiencing considerable flows of both economic and political migrants, many of whom are forcibly displaced as a result of war and human rights violations (UNHCR, 2019). This is nonetheless coupled with steadily high unemployment levels among migrants and especially refugees in Europe. Ironically, there still exists a pressing need for migrant labour caused by the demographic challenges of an aging population and a shrinking volume of younger people entering the labour market in European countries. All these dynamics make migrants' labour market integration a pressing question (Bucken-Knapp, Omanović, & Spehar, 2020; De Lange, Gesthuizen, & Wolbers, 2014; Hirst, Curtis, Nielsen, Smyth, Newman, & Xiao, 2021; Konle-Seidl & Bolits, 2016).

Considerable and steady flows of migrants, and in particular refugee/asylum seekers in host European countries are often construed by populists as strains, burdens and problems on European economies, labour markets and welfare systems (Wodak, 2015), despite empirical evidence to the contrary (Soroka Johnston, Kevins, Banting, & Kymlicka, 2016; Manthei, 2021). These perceptions worsen as host country economies and labour markets suffer from national and/or international economic cycles (Knocke, 2000). For instance, Vassilopoulou, Kyriakidou, Pascal de Rocha, Georgiadou & Barak (2019) elaborate how economic and financial crises affect human and social rights and diversity gains in the workplace, noting the disproportionate impact of these events on migrant workers and labour markets and their ability to keep their jobs or get access to employment. They also review recent studies that

document how migrants even in apparent normal times may be at a disadvantage compared to the majority workforce in terms of employment and career progression, including skill/qualification recognition and training (Vassilopoulou et al., 2019).

Bearing in mind the considerable numbers of migrants in Europe, and their poor labour market outcomes and associated problems of differential treatment towards them, migrants' successful and sustainable labour market integration is a topical issue to address. How is migrants' labour market integration organized and practiced in organizations? What are the process drivers (e.g. ideas, interests, and ideologies), manifestations (e.g., artefacts, plans, activities and strategies) and outcomes? What are the relevant public, private and civic partners involved in the process of integrating migrants to the labour market? And finally, what are migrants' own agency and tactics to cope with exclusion/inclusion and find meaningful employment and career paths? These were some of the unanswered questions we wanted to ask when we started working on this Special Section of *European Management Review* during the summer of 2017 some three years before our Call for Papers (CfP) was launched in 2020. Since then, the relevance of these questions has been confirmed in several conference tracks on issues related to workplace diversity, gender (in)equality, migration and workplace integration that the three of us have organized together or with other colleagues at international management conferences, and in the research published since we launched our CfP.

However, as we started writing this article, we could not have imagined that the issues related to migration and labour market integration would be even more relevant in such a dramatic way because of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Although, unfortunately, history seems to repeat itself and we can rightly ask ourselves whether we have learned anything from recent wars and mass displacements in Europe and elsewhere (e.g., Bosnia and Herzegovina, Syria), migrants' integration issues will not disappear of their own accord. As of April 2022, for over 5 million people from Ukraine who have already fled to many European countries (UNHCR, April 2022) the most important priorities are security, food, accommodation, health care, and continuing the education of children and the youth. However, the time is not far off for

Ukrainian refugees, as has been the case with other refugees before them, to start thinking about and organizing their labor market and workplace integration in European countries and companies. Therefore, we really hope that our positioning article and the articles in the Special Section will further increase management research's burgeoning interest in these issues and inspire future research on the possibilities and potentialities of more transformative practices of organizing migrants' labor market and workplace integration.

Our theoretical starting point in focusing on practices of organizing migrants' labour market integration has been that such practices are organizational arrangements that are socially (re)produced, and as such, always in a state of becoming. At the same time the social (re)production of these organizing practices depends upon the power relationships among participants (Benson, 1977; Holck, 2016; Omanović, 2013; Oswick & Noon, 2014). When consulting the otherwise burgeoning exploratory literature on labour market *outcomes* for migrants, we saw a neglect in research on how and why practices of migrants' labour market integration were organized in the way they were. Following this theoretical line of reasoning, we also argued that migrants' agency is too important to ignore and we thus encouraged contributions on migrants' own practices of organizing their own labour market integration. We asked our contributors to look beyond business expatriates, defined as individuals who are assigned to an international post by their employers (Al Ariss & Özbilgin, 2011). We find that the majority of literature on business expatriates deals with a business management phenomenon that is too narrow to shed light on broader migration and integration dynamics that have dominated policy and popular debates, but also accentuated the question of whether migrants are indeed *integrable* to the new host country culture, languages and skills profile. We therefore broadened our scope to what we refer to as migrants or *self-initiated expatriates* - those travelling internationally to find job(s) on their own initiative. We have also welcomed contributions that focus on refugees and asylum seekers/grantees.

In designing our CfP, one of our starting points was the organizing practices of host country and migrant actors within and across organizational boundaries towards migrants' labour market integration. Organizations – through their managers and other employees – engage in

practices of staff selection, recruitment and employment, and thereby organize socialization of new employees in the workplace and offer career opportunities. Some of these practices involve developing policies and criteria that govern these practices that are not necessarily always governed by these formalized procedures or fulfilled according to their aims. Several critical studies demonstrate how, for instance, policies of diversity management meant to integrate a diverse group of employees and further their career possibilities can even have the adverse impact of remarginalization (Holck & Muhr, 2017; Janssens & Zanoni, 2014; Romani, Holck, & Risberg, 2019). Accordingly, critical diversity scholars have documented how gender, race/ethnicity, able-bodiedness, age, and heterosexuality (jointly) function as principles of the unequal organization of work (van den Brink, Holgersson, Linghag, & Deé, 2016) while legitimizing an unequal social order (Holck & Muhr, 2017; Romani et al., 2019). In sum, earlier studies focusing on diversity in organizations show how practices of organizing both open and close doors of employment and career progression for different groups and individuals (including migrants), since they condition which people can or cannot be hired, progress or stagnate in their careers (Holck, 2018; Knights & Omanović, 2016; Omanović, 2013; Oswick & Noon, 2014; Romani et al., 2019).

Our CfP and article draw on these earlier studies and also resonate with what recent management and organizational studies on the topic show (e.g., Hirst et al., 2021; Loon & Vitale, 2021; Omanović and Langley, 2021; Tharenou & Kulik, 2020). That is, in spite of an increasing interest, there are still very few management and organizational studies that examine what organizations *actually do*, when they do organize workplace integration of migrants. Despite the need for more research on the area, this Special Section only comprises of our positioning article and two subsequent articles. Nonetheless, we hope that we can kick start a much broader debate in academia on what organizations and migrants actually do, how these actions or activities are mutually related in the process of migrants' labour market integration and what the implications are (or could be) for organizing it, and for migrants' positions and chances in the labour market and career development.

In the following section, we make a thematic review of the extant literature on migrants in the labour market, with a particular focus on studies that we believe will expand our understanding of relevant organizing practices of migrants' labour market integration. We

then introduce the two articles that have been selected for this Special Section and discuss how they contribute to research on this topic, and conclude by elaborating what is, from our point of view, still missing and then suggest possible avenues for future research.

State of the art: Research on migrants' labour market integration

Our understanding of migrants' integration

We start with an understanding of migrants' integration in the workplaces as a multifaceted and relational phenomenon related to different domains such as employment, housing, education, health, social relations, language and cultural knowledge (Ager & Strang, 2008; Holmqvist, Omanović, & Urban, 2020). Notwithstanding its multifaceted and relational nature, policy and popular debates tend to reduce integration of migrants to easily detectable markers such as culture and lifestyle attitudes, values, norms, religion, and language (Ager & Strang, 2008; Bijl & Verweij, 2012). For instance Bucken-Knapp et al. (2020) show how this is underpinned by a misplaced and simplified understanding of integration as an unproblematic, uncontested and one-way social-psychological process, with the onus put on migrants' *ability to adapt* to the host society and its dominant majority in different domains including employment.

This simplified view overlooks the multifaceted, relational and practice-based nature of integration of migrants in a context of increasing transnational ties (Schiller, Basch, & Blanc, 1995). It also runs the risk of reducing integration to a mere "acculturation strategy" of migrants, who can succeed with the *right* type and amount of effort, and even worse, that of conflating it with other factors like imposed acculturation strategies such as "assimilation" and "the melting pot" (Berry, 2003; 2011). Bucken-Knapp et al. (2020) observe how, in studies with a macro focus, migrants are placed in specific categories, such as occupation, income, education, and reported crimes, whose average values are compared with the rest of the population in a variety of ways (ibid 9). These understandings on migrants' integration in host countries, including their labour market integration, not only have a tendency to treat

migrants as a homogeneous group, but also to *individualize* integration as a matter of their ability and *willingness* to engage in cultural and linguistic adaption to the host country. Overlooking the multifacetedness and relationality, these understandings suppress the subtle but nonetheless structurally anchored discrimination and exclusion mechanisms in terms of power disadvantages and barriers that migrants face when entering the labour market (Omanović & Langley, 2021; Romani et al., 2019; Van Laer & Janssens, 2011). They also neglect migrants' own agency in these processes (Bucken-Knapp et al., 2020), a point which we will return to below.

It is these simplified understandings on migrants' labour market integration that we hoped that this Special Section would challenge, with a more multilevel, relational, processual, power sensitive understanding. By advancing such an understanding, we steer away from a focus on migrants' labour market integration as either located in the individual minds and doings or external to human agents at societal level. Instead, we see migrants' labour market integration as “brought into being through everyday activity” (Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011, p. 1241). This understanding puts power at the center of analysis, as “the natural” order of things are being questioned “through uncovering how practices and their connections produce and reproduce a certain social order like the emergence and stabilization of an inclusive social order or, in contrast, the very resilient discriminatory unequal social order of many diverse organizations.” (Janssens and Steyaert, 2020, p 1149). Furthermore, as the focus shifts from the individual or macro-level to practices or *how things are getting done*, this understanding necessitates a multilevel and relational focus, which is still missing in the literature. Our approach focuses on the flow of organizing activities as the unit of analysis, which helps us to understand migrants' labour market integration as a relational-dynamic activity across levels (see e.g. Lee, Szkudlarek, Nguyen, & Nardon, 2020; Omanović & Langley, 2021; Syed & Özbilgin, 2009). By emphasizing this understanding on the topic of migrants' labour market integration, we aimed to attract, in particular, contributions that investigate the interplay between micro-level practices of organizing and macro-level contexts and institutions in Europe.

Societal level policies and (organizational) outcomes

Extant labour market research at societal level has predominantly focused on different factors that affect the integration of migrants (e.g., Bevelander, 1999; Dahlstedt & Bevelander, 2010; Knocke, 2000; Peterson, 2014), including historical analyses of integration policies and their measured effects in relation to migrants' positions in their host country (e.g., Koopmans, 2010; see also Klarsfeld, Traavik & van Dijk, 2020 on their elaboration on the Migration Integration Policy Index -MIPEX). More specifically, studies have evaluated the effectiveness of labour market policy measures and regulations aimed at limiting unemployment effects, stimulating job creation, and improving pay and working conditions for migrants (e.g., Bengtsson, 2016; Stenberg & Westerlund, 2014). These studies, which focused on the macro-level patterns, policies and outcomes, have helped us to better understand the institutional backdrops and market level dynamics for migrant workers. Indeed, they have documented how migrant workers are systematically excluded from entering the labour market in the host country (Knocke, 2000; Knapp et al., 2020) or from its upper segments (Bauder, 2003; Girard & Bauder, 2007). Furthermore, other macro-level studies show how social and wage dumping policies also create new spaces for an increased precarious situation for migrant workers in terms of lower wages, poorer working conditions, and limited possibilities to join trade unions or enter jobs in unionized workplaces (Bengtsson, 2016; Hyland, 2015; Woolfson, Fudge, & Thörnqvist, 2014).

Despite their relevance, these macro-level studies can inadvertently lead us to overlook a variety of organizing practices that generate, apply and/or diverge from business models and strategies, such as staffing, socializing, and related practices. For example, training, internship and mentorship all have implications for migrant workers' positions and chances in the labour market and career development. Moreover, although they document discrimination and exclusion of migrant workers, we do not have insights as to how these outcomes are generated, for instance, how discrimination and exclusion are organized and practiced. These types of organizational or meso-level studies on practices of organizing integration can help to scrutinize the potential of local, relational and processual resolutions to the more static, *snapshots* type of macro/societal level studies. They can also increase our understanding of how organizational practices are embedded in, and influenced by, the socio-historical and

organizational context, by uncovering, for instance how macro policies and regulations are implemented and/or challenged in local level practices (see for example Nkomo & Hoobler, 2014) .

Organizing practices of labour market integration, inequality and agency at the workplace level

Management and organizational research has long demonstrated how migrants are disadvantaged when entering workplaces and disadvantaged in their careers because of challenges such as discrimination during recruitment processes (e.g., Fernando & Cohen, 2016; Holgersson, 2013; Kang, DeCelles, Tilcsik, & Jun, 2016; Olsson, Behtoui, & Leivestad, 2018), and regulatory mechanisms by which foreign educational and professional credentials are evaluated (e.g., Diedrich & Styhre, 2008; Risberg & Romani, 2021). Migrants are also shown to be ethnically marked (Holck & Muhr, 2017; Holck, 2018) and, as a result, encounter discrimination at the workplace at the hands of employers (Van Laer & Janssens, 2011). Moreover, employers are shown to stereotype migrants as lacking necessary cultural and linguistic resources that would otherwise ensure successful workplace integration (Romani et al., 2019).

One prevalent explanation given for this unequal treatment of migrant workers in the labour market is the notion of “ethnic penalties” which highlights how ethnic minorities achieve poor labour market outcomes, not based on demographic or socio-economic factors, but due to ethnic/racial bias that creates societal barriers for migrants and their descendants (Heath et al., 2008; Kislev, 2017). Another prevalent explanation is what Acker (1990) calls the “ideal worker”, which all employees are measured up against. The ideal worker manifests as a gendered and raced subtext of the organization, based on a preference for white, native (Western) born, male, and able-bodied workers. This notion of the ideal worker especially disqualifies the non-Western migrant worker as less desirable and employable (Zanoni & Janssens, 2015).

Lately, critical organizational scholars have also started to uncover unequal treatment as deeply rooted in the structures of contemporary neoliberal and globalized organizations too, which exploit vulnerable (migrant) workers (e.g., Schierup & Jørgensen, 2016). These studies suggest that organizations are far from the neutrally operating meritocracies they claim to be (Romani et al., 2019). In fact, Tolbert and Castillo (2017) highlight how “racial and gender segregation are intertwined with the very fabric of work” and that workplaces are “key sites in the production of social inequality” (p.4). Such disparities of race, ethnicity, nationality and gender in employment outcomes have been demonstrated in the form of wage gaps (Abendroth, Melzer, Kalev & Tomaskovic-Devey, 2017; Castilla, 2015), disadvantages in career mobility (e.g., Stainback & Tomaskovic-Devey, 2012), skewed hiring practices (e.g., Fernandez-Mateo & Fernandez, 2016; Brands & Fernandez-Mateo, 2016; Kang et al., 2016), promotion decisions (e.g., Bull & Scharff, 2017; Pager & Pedulla, 2015), singular focus on the business case rationale for supporting “diversity” (e.g., Knights & Omanović, 2016) and unequal assignments of organizational roles (e.g., Holck, 2018; Ortlieb & Sieben, 2014; Zanoni & Janssens, 2015). Some recent studies base their analyses on migrants’ experience of entering the labour market by examining their expectations and perceptions of fairness at work (Cross & Turner, 2012), as well as their active agency in the process of trying to *qualify* for a first job in the host society (Bucken-Knapp et al., 2020). In addition to migrants’ own agency, external stakeholders’ engagement in refugee workforce integration (e.g., job-readiness training, development of cultural expertise and workplace aptitude) and their active collaboration with employers have been identified as important contributors to migrants’ employment and labour market integration (Lee, Szkudlarek, Nguyen, & Nardon, 2020)

The focalization of organizations as key sites of production of inequality and as arenas where different ideas, interests and (reciprocal) actions also makes organizational level practices relevant to the study of migrants' labour market integration. While we have growing research documenting the unfair integration processes experienced by migrants, we still lack comprehensive knowledge on employers’ practices of integration, including how organizations understand and facilitate migrants’ integration processes.

Organizational socialization, as a common practice of organizing and a well-established stream of management and organizational research, is one important process to look into when exploring how newcomers learn “the ropes” of an organizational role (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). There are, however, very few studies specifically focusing on organizational socialization of migrants (Tharenou & Kulik, 2020; Omanović & Langley, 2021). One exception is Hurst, Kammeyer-Muller & Livingston’s (2012) conceptual study in which they develop a model of how newcomers, who are perceived as “different” (e.g. demographics) from their co-workers, become – as the authors label it – “adjusted” to the workgroup. The authors emphasize how social support in terms of assistance in performing work tasks, advice on how to improve performance, and general social acceptance are important for successful adjustment during newcomers' socialization process. In another conceptual study, Malik and Mandroop (2017) propose a dual approach – a combination of collective/organizational socialization practices, such as training, development, teamwork, job rotation, and mentoring, and migrant newcomers’ tactics, such as “change role”, “mutual development”, and “learning or changing oneself” (ibid 391)– that contributes to the conceptual literature on mutual adjustment strategies towards improved workplace integration. A third study is made by Tharenou and Kulik (2020), who develop a conceptual “phase model of socialization” to explore how skilled migrants experience the socialization process and to identify how organizational strategies facilitate that process. The authors highlight how the process of socialization of skilled migrants, especially in the “accommodation to adaption” phase, is exposed to the risk of discrimination if the organizational culture is not characterized by inclusiveness. Finally, by drawing on a dialectical perspective and a meta-synthesis of a collection of qualitative case studies, and considering the power relations embedded in the macro-social and organizational contexts that seems lacking in the above conceptual and review studies, Omanović and Langley (2021) propose a framework of organizational socialization of migrants that is grounded in a dynamic-relational view characterized by tensions and contradictions. Following this line of reasoning, practices of organizational socialization (or in general labour market integration) of migrants should not be understood as static and permanent as they may be conditioned and transformed by the situational conditions including power relations and human practices.

Apart from these conceptualisations of organizational socialization, there are also empirical studies such as Mohamed and Leponilemi's (2009) study of induction training in organizations in Finland and Månsson and Delander's (2017) study of mentoring programs offered to unemployed refugees in Sweden questioning whether or not these programs accelerate the job-seeking process and increase migrants' probability to secure a job.

As we discuss below, the study of organizational socialization of migrants resonates with the contributions to our Special Section and our call for future studies too. A practice-oriented lens on organizing integration gives researchers the possibility to distinguish and develop knowledge on labour market integration of migrants as a multifaceted and processual phenomenon based on non-linear relations among the macro/societal, organizational and individual levels. This perspective makes labour market integration a highly complex but theoretically and empirically rewarding process to study.

Migrants' savings and investment practices as mediated through labour market organizations

Last but not least, as we identified in our CfP, migrants' savings and investment practices for their future in the host country have been relatively overlooked in favour of a well-trodden research path on migrants' remittances to home countries (Ratha, Plaza, & Dervisevic, 2016) and to a lesser extent dynamics of migrants' access to financial services in host countries (Datta, 2012). We argue that migrants' savings and investment practices constitute a relevant labour market integration phenomenon. This is because they act as a financial security buffer that shape how migrants can cope with uncertainties and challenges such as unemployment and (lack of) career progression in host country workplaces and labour markets. More generally, migrants' labour market integration, by facilitating or disrupting savings and investment in the host country shape migrants' burgeoning roots (e.g., access to pension schemes for retirement, paid for education and training as self-investment for career progression) (Tarim & Ag 2021). Similar to the literature on discrimination and exclusion in labour market processes and outcomes for migrants, we know a great deal about patterns of financial access, and savings and investments among various demographic categories,

including being a migrant in host countries (e.g., Piracha & Zhu, 2012; Heinen, Alberts, & Biter, 2015; Abdul-Razzak, Osili & Paulson, 2015). These survey studies illustrate migrants' saving and investment preferences and outcomes, and not inconsiderable comparative disadvantages among specific migrant groups concerning financial services access and real and financial asset ownership. Nonetheless, we do not know how practices of migrant employees, employers and financial service providers may be shaping the outcomes observed by survey studies and whether and how these outcomes may have a bearing on migrants' labour market integration experiences. Few studies look into this practice dimension, but those that do concern those practices of migrants and how they cope with the types of disadvantages they face in accessing financial services by organizing alternatives such as rotating credit groups to facilitate consumption and asset accumulation (see Koku, 2015 for a review). This is only one part of the complex picture of the migrant labour market integration process viewed through savings and investment and how employers and financial organizations shape that aspect of migrants' experiences in the host country and its labour market.

The above literature review gives a brief overview of the current literature on migrants' labour market integration. As such, it captures the state of the art's broad contours and important points with reference to the organizing practices approach that we aim to advance with this positioning article and the Special Section's two articles that we introduce below.

The contributions to this Special Section

This Special Section opens with an article by Ortlieb & Ressi who focus on what happens after asylum seekers and refugee migrants with low skills take their first tentative steps towards career development in their new country of residence. More specifically, by exploring organizational socialization practices, the authors pay attention to different measures designed by employers to enable these migrant groups' labour market integration. They examine how these measures get intertwined with migrants' experiences of time and what the authors describe as “progress”, which concerns establishing firmer roots in host countries in terms of legal status, employment, and some other domains of integration. Empirically, it

is a longitudinal study based on data collected in a supermarket chain in Austria. The case organization is actively engaged in workplace integration of refugees through an apprenticeship program to cope with the recent influx of asylum seekers to Austria.

The article delves into the experiences of asylum seekers and refugee migrants which have their own twists and turns during their apprenticeship integration program. Based on these experiences, the authors inductively generate a new concept of organizational socialization labelling it “polyrhythmic socialization”. In doing so, Ortlieb & Ressi make an analogy with music, or more precisely with a particular type of music, *polyrhythm*, where musical pieces comprise of different, and often contrasting rhythms simultaneously. Based on their empirical data, the authors show how different organizational practices both benefit and create tensions for migrants with a refugee background, which in turn impact these newcomers’ progress in their socialization process. As a solution to these tensions and utilizing their music analogy, the authors propose that practitioners ensure recognition and tolerance of contrasting rhythms between different organizational members. Ortlieb & Ressi highlight how monitoring these contrasting rhythms is important, especially when newcomers have to adopt to strict organizational requirements and/or expectations. Instead, all organizational members including the newcomers should allow space for other rhythms, which is where mutual learning for newcomers and other employees can be found.

Ortlieb & Ressi’s focus on the time and multi-domain aspects of organizational socialization makes a novel contribution especially to the burgeoning literature on socialization processes in relation to migrants' labour market integration. Their polyrhythmic analogy gives new nuances and depth to socialization processes in organizations and serves as an illustration of what practitioners can and should do to improve workplace integration of migrants. Their notion of “polyrhythmic socialization” and associated insistence on the recognition of contrasting rhythms among organizational members, makes tangible the complex, multifaceted and relational aspects of migrants' labour market integration including time and multi-domain aspects as new factors in organizational socialization.

The second contribution to the Special Section is by Bešić, Foti & Vasilieva who explore a prominent actor type within migrants' labour market integration- namely public service organizations (PSOs) such as employment offices. More specifically, the authors explain how changing institutional backdrops and migrants' particular journeys in host countries are intermediated by organizing practices of PSOs and their non-governmental organization (NGO) partners in four European countries. The authors, who are cognizant of the differences in migration and integration landscapes across the four countries as well as the difficulties that migrants face in labour markets owing to entry modes (i.e., asylum-seeking) propose a relational framework that is inspired by the earlier relational, holistic and multilevel literature on diversity in organizations (Syed & Özbilgin, 2009; Lee et al., 2020). This relational framework aims to sensitize scholars to the multilevel nature of migrants' integration processes by accentuating the workplace and other organizational domains such as PSOs and NGOs as key sites of the interplay between the institutional, organizational and individual factors and practices. This interplay matters as it has the potential to disrupt or facilitate successful workplace integration.

Bešić et al. make use of interviews with key informants in PSOs and partner organizations (e.g., NGOs) in Austria, Sweden, Germany and Finland. This data is used to explore, how the macro-level policy responses to recent refugee flows to Europe are put into practice at the organizational level. Their empirical data is informed by meticulous desk research on macro-level policy responses and by the identification of what they call “measures”, namely specific programs that PSOs and NGOs design and implement to achieve intended national policy outcomes for recent refugees' labour market integration.

Their exploration of PSOs' role in labour market integration makes a distinctive contribution as the studies on national legal frameworks and regulations generally ignore the practical involvement of PSOs in implementing and acting on these regulations. The multiplicity of PSOs and their partner organizations in the third sector together with the numerous national programs demonstrate the complexity and multifacetedness of refugees' labour market integration in the case countries. More specifically, the authors capture how national policy

frameworks can quickly evolve and how these changing frameworks and migrants' personal life journeys (e.g., diversity in skills and educational background, mental health issues) merge. This throws the programs off balance, as they were initially designed with certain assumptions, resources and targets to address various migrant integration domains, including the labour market.

Apart from their contribution in terms of generating a comparative case study with a focus on the role and challenges of PSOs, the authors also make another significant contribution by developing, exemplifying and insisting on a relational framework in order to understand the organizing practices of migrants' labour market integration. The change dynamics in institutional backdrops and the diversity in migrants' unfolding life journeys have implications for public, private and third sector organizations that are involved in various formal and practical capacities. Relatedly, the authors' list of practical recommendations for PSOs and NGOs demonstrate how these organizations can better cope with the challenges stemming from the multilevel and multifaceted labour market integration phenomenon. Like the Ortlieb & Ressi article, Bešić et al.'s study serves to distinguish and develop our knowledge of the workplace integration process as a matter of practitioner activities and practices that are embedded in and conditioned by the local dynamics and relevant partners involved.

Possible avenues for future research

Summing up, the two articles demonstrate the value of conceptualizing and studying migrants' labour market integration as a complex, practice-based process. As such, both studies make a highly relevant and timely contribution to the literature on migrants' labour market integration and the topic of refugees and migrants in Europe. Nonetheless, we see our Special Section and its two contributions as a starting point to explore and better grasp the relationality and complexity of practices of organizing migrants' labour market integration. In taking this forward, we suggest a non-exhaustive list of avenues for future research: *agency and migrant voices as methodology; alternative ways of organizing migrants' labour market integration; migrants' saving and investment practices as mediated through labour market organizations; and finally, migrants' labour integration in times of crisis and Covid-19.*

Migrant voices and agency

As we have substantiated before, we see that migrants' voices and agency are all too often ignored in organizational and management studies of labour market integration of migrants. Hence, there is a lack of studies on migrants' practices of organizing their own labour market and workplace integration. As illustrated in the literature review, research predominantly investigates the barriers and discrimination that migrants experience rather than the agency that they deploy to overcome these to find meaningful employment and career paths. This calls for more research with a focus on migrants, and in particular on one of the most vulnerable migrant-groups, refugees, who are directly or indirectly the subjects of such practices of organizing. As reflexive agents in their own right, they can actively detract from, distort, or even hijack acts of discrimination hindering their labour market integration, and progressively attempt to advance their position and career possibilities. Thus, this perspective on migrants' agency has the potential to not only counteract dominant managerial and populist views, but also avoid reproducing the widespread exclusion of migrant voices in management and organizational research (Bucken-Knapp et al., 2020). As the Ortlieb and Ressi's article touches upon in this Special Section, this perspective can also shed light on an often overlooked but important vehicle of transformation at local level, as (refugee) migrant employees can employ material and symbolic resources in order to empower themselves to fight against their own marginalization in their labour market integration process (Holck, 2016; Romani, Zanoni & Holck, 2021). In this way, migrants are portrayed not as mere passive victims of the cruelties of discrimination or exclusion, but as agents who reflexively act in more or less compliant ways.

Methodologically, in addition to the already-mentioned need for including migrants' voices, we believe that more longitudinal studies, inspired for instance by (critical) ethnography (e.g., Thomas, 1993) and related methodologies may be able to capture even more of these relational dynamics of migrants' labour market integration, and allow for addressing social injustice and inequality. Such methodologies may also allow us to better uncover power and domination, and identify alternative and more just and fair ways of organizing labour market integration of migrants.

Alternative ways of organizing migrants' labour market integration

Alternative ways of organizing practices of migrants' labour market integration can also be identified, studied and/or developed to alleviate the inequalities and establish new pathways of integration. For instance, Balliester & Elsheikhi (2018) highlight how moving towards more precarious employment, sub-standard living conditions, along with general marginalization may lead to the emergence of unconventional, community-based initiatives to protect vulnerable workers such as newcomers with a refugee or migrant background. Fine (2015) concludes that such new, alternative forms of worker representation and collective action are likely to shape the future of organized labour into a varied mix of organization types.

Apart from alternative organizing practices to mobilize and ensure collective action to the benefit of migrants' labour market integration, more traditional ways of organizing workers can be revisited. For example, one obvious partner in the process of labour market integration is the trade union movement. Trade unions traditionally have had a cautious stance towards representing and advocating on behalf of migrant workers owing to fears of wage dumping (Wright & Clibborn, 2019). Indeed, the history of labour migration into Europe includes several cases of trade unions creating barriers for migrants (Hyland, 2015). However, as migration patterns and societies, have become more diversified in recent years, union policies and practices have been shifting towards more inclusive approaches to unionize migrant workers in many European countries (Marino, Roosblad, & Penninx, 2017). In this respect, social dialogue with union representatives at both organizational and national levels can play an important role in the promotion of decent employment and social justice for migrants. Despite these, the study of the role and practices of unions in terms of migrants' labour market integration is in dire need of attention in the literature. This particular perspective also raises questions about how solidarity between different workers can be achieved in alternative organizations like workers' collectives and institutionalized in formal organizations like trade unions; and how effective these alternative and solidarity-based ways of organizing migrants' labour market integration are in redressing discrimination and ameliorating the labour market situation of migrants.

Migrants' saving and investment practices as mediated through labour market organizations

As we have highlighted above, we still do not have any meaningful insights into employers' practices (e.g., contracting, remuneration, and workplace socializations) that may facilitate and hinder migrants' access to financial services, and their savings and investment in host countries, and how these in turn shape migrants' practices and standing in workplaces and labour markets (e.g., saving or borrowing for training and education towards career progression, retirement planning and pension savings). Equally important but missing in the literature is research on financial service providers and market regulators and their approach to migrants' financial service access and savings and investment in host countries. What are the practices, including those that generate strategies, policies and regulations and those that implement or sway from those formal frameworks that influence migrants' access to financial services and savings and investment in host countries? How do all these affect migrants' experiences in labour markets in general, and in workplaces in particular, and more generally their journeys of putting down roots in host countries? Answering these questions will help us build a better scholarly understanding of an important aspect of the multilevel, relational and practice-based nature of migrants' integration to not only the labour market but to other institutions of host countries. After all, a great deal of motivation for migration happens for economic reasons (Djajić & Vinogradova, 2015). How migrants earn a living in host country labour markets and how labour market organizations (e.g., banks and financial services companies) mediate migrants' relations with money is too important to overlook in our understanding of migrants' labour market integration.

Migrants' labour market integration in times of crisis and Covid-19

The Covid-19 crisis has been invariably described as unprecedented in our life span. It overshadows, for instance, the 2008 Global Financial Crisis when it comes to severity, speed and impact on institutional change (Hwang & Höllerer, 2020). During and after the financial crisis many organizations worldwide had to restructure and dismiss employees (Mitsakis & Aravopoulou, 2016). The same has happened during the ongoing Covid-19 crisis where especially the service industry has been heavily impacted, leading to an overall employee

reduction globally. The service industry has traditionally served as the main labour market entrance for migrants and refugees, and this group must be especially heavily impacted because of fewer guests and tourists in hotels, restaurants and bars, and, with remote working employees, workplaces not requiring cleaning and other services. We still cannot predict the far-reaching consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic on labour market integration of migrants, but we can confidently argue by drawing on experiences from previous crises that vulnerable groups are often the first ones to lose out when there is volatility and uncertainty in the economy (see for instance Katou, 2013; Teague & Roche, 2014).

Covid-19 and its implications for migrants' labour market integration have not yet been explored sufficiently. In that respect, and given the uneven impact of crises on migrants, it is important to explore different aspects of the labour market integration of migrants during the pandemic. For example, how have migrants and employers organised and practiced labour market entry and workplace integration under circumstances which have predominantly favoured remote and digital working and organising? What novel barriers and/or opportunities have migrants encountered in labour markets during the pandemic? How have they tried to overcome/utilise them? What are the implications of new ways of organising migrants' labour market integration during the pandemic for organizational and human resource management research?

Conclusion

With this introduction and the two contributions to this Special Section on practices of organizing migrants' labour market integration, we aim to examine and emphasize how migrants' labour market integration practices actually unfold at the organizational level and get entangled with dynamics at individual and institutional levels. While most research on labour market integration has been either at the individual or macro/societal level or rather conceptual in nature, we need more complex, relational and practice-based studies to progress our knowledge on what goes on at the organizational level. As discussed in this positioning article organizational arrangements are embedded in and impacted by organizational and societal-historical contexts, and practices such as migrants' integration to

labour markets always occur in, and are shaped by, social contexts and relations within them. The two articles in this Special Section demonstrate these situational and relational dynamics. That being said, we can still benefit from future studies that focus on the dynamics and mutuality of organizational practices, migrants' agency, and national historical, legislative, political, social and economic contexts concerning migrants' labour market integration.

With this Special Section we advocate for a more nuanced perspective to understand why some organizational practices open the doors for migrants in workplaces and labour markets, while others close them, which should be sought in the labour market situation(s) and dialectical dynamic(s) of organization(s) and migrants. These include the (un)willingness of migrants to accept assimilative and possibly discriminatory practices of organizing due to the availability of job possibilities/alternatives in the host country labour market; the very histories of the organizations we study, including the type of products or services they offer, the specific situation in that industry, and also the organization owners/leaders and their (un)willingness for a diverse workforce. As such, the agency of migrants can neither be understood nor studied in a vacuum. It should be seen as part of this complex dialectical process.

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