Capital is key: a case for migrants’ cultural capital

P.I. Echa

University of Amsterdam (UvA),
P.O. Box 19268,
1000 GG Amsterdam, Netherlands
Email: echaiye@gmail.com

Abstract: In this paper, I argue that possession and utilisation of capital are at the centre of migrants’ success and the ability to thrive in their new environment. Pierre Bourdieu’s ‘Forms of Capital’ serve as a starting point in this research. While Bourdieu’s capital accounts for the structuring of the social world completely, this article concentrates on migrants’ experiences in the Netherlands. This article shows how Bourdieu’s concept of capital illustrates how migrants’ capital brought from their home countries becomes a source of power, as well as the difference(s) between just surviving in their new environment and thriving. Ethnographic research, published works on the subject of the appropriation of capital by migrants, and statistical accounts in the Netherlands are used. These sources illustrate that migrants face challenging circumstances in the Netherlands due to discrimination, racism and lack of capital. I show how West African musicians thrive amidst these challenges through the possession of cultural capital (e.g., musical skills).

Keywords: capital; Bourdieu; West African musicians; djembe music; migration; transcultural; discrimination.

Reference to this paper should be made as follows: Echa, P.I. (2018) ‘Capital is key: a case for migrants’ cultural capital’, Int. J. Migration and Border Studies, Vol. 4, Nos. 1/2, pp.125–143.

Biographical notes: P.I. Echa is a Musicologist and Cultural Analyst. His research interests include music and migration, music history and expression in performance, music in world cultures, jazz improvisation and music education. He is currently at the finishing stages of his doctoral program at the University of Amsterdam in the Netherlands. His doctoral research is on Djembe Capital: The Role of Cultural Capital for West African djembe Musicians in the Netherlands. His research investigates the artistic contributions of some West African djembe musicians who have migrated and settled in the Netherlands.

1 Introduction

This paper emphasises the link between capital/cultural capital and power. It extensively discusses the challenges faced by minority groups in the Netherlands. This research builds on studies on migration that could be categorised into three complementary areas; international migration, demography of migration and the socioeconomic positions of people who migrate (Shier et al., 2011; Das-Munshin et al., 2012; Kabbanji, 2014). There are studies that uphold that migrants pay ‘occupational penalty,’ the cost of leaving their home countries (Heath and MacMahon, 2005; Platt, 2005). Several studies conducted on
migrants address the social and economic challenges as well as a widening skills gap among minority groups (especially migrants) that has usually resulted, in most cases, in migrants fairing poorer than their hosts (Klaver et al., 2014; Tinghög et al., 2007; Vasta 2007). Other studies investigate migrants’ mobility, their translocal, transcultural and transnational ties (Gaudette, 2013; Kiwan and Meinhof, 2011; Triandafyllidou, 2009).

Some scholars have produced works on migrant capital that have a broad thematic emphasis, yet focussed on a particular country or region (e.g., Maurizio Ambrosini and Magdalena Nowicka). With focus on the Southern part of Europe, most notably Italy, the works of the sociology of migration scholar, Maurizio Ambrosini, bring out the complexities and dynamics of immigration and especially migrants capital, their networks and the policies governing their integration in Italy (Ambrosini, 2015a, 2015b, 2014, 2013, 2012, 2001; Ambrosini and Triandafylliodou, 2011). In contrast, the focus of the works of migration scholar Magdalena Nowicka is on Polish migrants in Germany and Great Britain (Nowicka, 2014, 2013, 2012, 2008, 2007; Nowicka and Krzyżowski, 2016). Both scholars are influential in that their works bridge many aspects of migrancy such as integration, welfare, government’s policies and the role of capital in the migrant experience, and present a starting point on the discourse on migrants’ capital.

In recent music and migration research, some scholars have focussed on the experiences of migrant musicians, especially the artistic and socioeconomic reasons why they move (Watkins, 2009; Perullo, 2008; Widmaier, 2007). Some scholars focus on cultural encounters and the exchange of musical ideas (Roberts, 2013; Rommen, 2009; Diethrich, 2002). Scholars have also studied how migrant musicians construct social and ethnic identities (Landau, 2012; Sakai, 2011; Lu, 2011; Post, 2007; Bohlman, 2007; Leante, 2004; Yating, 2004; Knudsen, 2001; Um, 2000).

As with most of the studies highlighted above, this study focuses on the socioeconomic situation of West African migrants; how these migrants adopt cultural capital to survive or thrive and how they comprehend their lives in their new settlements. It seeks solutions to the challenges faced by migrants by focussing on the skills of migrants as a lever for their socioeconomic liberation. My aim is to show that the possession of useful cultural capital could benefit migrants and assist in alleviating some of the socioeconomic challenges they face in the Netherlands. I demonstrate how West African djembe musicians in the Netherlands exemplify how cultural capital can give migrants an edge to create their own jobs instead of competing with their hosts for employment opportunities. Migrants may possibly have an edge if they can create their own jobs through the use of cultural capital, that is, if they focus on the skills learnt in their home countries, and if they put their efforts into appropriating such skills in their new settlements.

The findings of this research stem from a study of West African djembe musicians based in the Netherlands. I conducted in-depth interviews with 17 djembe musicians (all men) from 2012–2016 and conversed with some African migrants living and working in the Netherlands. All the musicians interviewed originate from West Africa but have been living in the Netherlands for an extended period (usually more than ten years). They all speak the Dutch language and some of them (especially the Guineans) had come to the Netherlands as part of the Les Ballets Africains (National Ballet of Guinea).

The interviews took place in two cities: Amsterdam and Utrecht. These interviews afforded me the opportunity to interact and observe the musicians in their locations. These interviews also gave me the opportunity to compare experiences of these musicians with their colleagues in other parts of the Netherlands.
The second method used involved surveys carried out annually and archived in Dutch databases such as Trimbos Instituut, Nationaal Kompas Volksgezondheid and Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek. I searched these databases for information about the welfare of minority groups, which I then compared with the interviews from my fieldwork. I present the data from the survey as part of my findings of the socioeconomic circumstances of minority groups, but more importantly the surveys function to illustrate the arguments used by some migrants with cultural capital about why they cling to their cultural capital at all odds.

This article addresses the matters that affect mostly first-generation immigrants in the Netherlands, although some of the examples given may apply to other minority groups. I concentrated on first-generation migrants because these groups have the advantage of having lived in their country of birth and in their new environment. This dual attachment could be a lever for the development and utilisation of capital. This research focuses on cultural capital because it (cultural capital) is distinct from the other forms of capital and is not easily transferable, unlike economic capital.

It is important to distinguish the various minority groups in the Netherlands; this will inform the reader of the diverse migrant groups that have settled in the Netherlands. Similarly, I describe the various groups here because I refer to them again during the discussion on factors affecting migrants in Section 3. I want to show that West African migrant musicians (the case study in this paper) are a small group usually absent from governments’ radar. In the Netherlands, there are gastarbeiders (guest workers), who are mostly Turkish and Moroccan people. This group arrived in the Netherlands in the 1960s and 70s. There are also Surinamese, Antillean, Indonesian and Moluccan people who arrived during colonial eras or have other ties with the Netherlands. In the 1990s, political refugees from Yugoslavia, Iraq, Iran, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and the Soviet Union also arrived (Nationaal Kompas Volksgezondheid, 2016). The Netherlands economy grew astronomically between 2003 and 2007, and as a result, the Netherlands became an immigration destination for economic migrants, along with many other groups both within Europe and outside the European Union arriving (Nationaal Kompas Volksgezondheid, 2016).

The remainder of the article will be structured as follows: in the first part, I unpack Bourdieu’s ‘Forms of Capital’ in order to show its relevance to West African migrants with cultural capital in the Netherlands. Bourdieu’s forms of capital assist me to codify the various kinds of capital that migrants discussed in this paper possess. His description of cultural capital is innovative (especially the division of cultural capital into embodied, objectified and institutionalised forms) and could be applied to migrant musicians. Bourdieu’s capital and transcultural capital theory by the cultural studies scholars Ulrike Meinhof and Anna Triandafyllidou affords me the opportunity to reassess the networking strategies of migrants who are based abroad but have ties with their countries of origin.

Instead of focussing solely on Bourdieu’s cultural capital in the discussion, I have also discussed economic and social capital for several reasons. First, to contrast all three forms of capital with the aim of displaying other applicable forms of capital for migrants besides cultural. Second, to illustrate that for some migrants, economic and social capitals demand a financial stronghold and are often beyond their reach. Lastly, I want to build a case for the practical utilisation of cultural capital and to demonstrate that there are migrants who are successfully utilising their cultural capital to thrive in the Netherlands. The second step is to demonstrate that migrants face socioeconomic challenges that are
intertwined with their choices in their new environment. According to musicologist Small (1998, p.13), to understand their choices we need to understand the social circumstances in the given society. Finally, I present the findings and discussion section. There I discuss the strategies utilised by the musicians to thrive in the Netherlands.

2 Capital

The French sociologist, anthropologist and philosopher, Pierre Bourdieu, pioneered the debate on capital. In his work ‘The Forms of Capital,’ published more than four decades ago, Bourdieu argues that we can use the theory of capital to account for the structure and functioning of the social world [Bourdieu, (1986), p.46]. By capital, Bourdieu (1986) implies an accumulated labour both in material and symbolic form that is sought after and can be acquired, exchanged and converted into other forms. Bourdieu identified three forms of capital: economic, cultural and social.

2.1 Economic capital

Economic capital refers to material assets that are immediately and directly convertible into money and institutionalised in the form of property rights [Bourdieu, (1986), p.47]. These material assets are of various kinds and forms (for instance, land, property, and finance), all geared towards facilitating a better standard of living. In most cases, economic capital (in the forms outlined above) is non-existent for many migrants. For most of these migrants, economic capital in the form of finance continues to pose a challenge to their sustenance in Europe. Furthermore, capital in the form of finance is a challenge for all small business ventures, but it is even more severe for migrants or ethnic minority entrepreneurs because they lack credit ratings, and proof of collateral to be able to secure loans [Light et al., (1990), pp.35–54]. In their book ‘Ethnic Entrepreneurs’ published almost two decades ago, Waldinger et al. (1990, p.155) observed Gypsy, Pakistani, Korean, Asian Surinamese, Afro-Caribbean and North African migrants and found that the amount of capital needed by migrants varies greatly from a few thousand dollars to hundreds of thousands. What is striking is that very few brought financial capital (personal savings or acquired loans from their ethnic communities) to start their businesses (Waldinger et al., 1990). Since most migrants lack economic/financial capital, a possible substitute is cultural capital.

2.2 Cultural capital

Bourdieu (1986, pp.49–51) designates cultural capital as existing in three forms (embodied, objectified and in the institutionalised state). In the embodied state, cultural capital is a form of habit that requires time to develop and assimilate. For instance, culture (cultural habits and artefacts cost both time and investment) requires dedication and hard work (Bourdieu, 1986).

Cultural capital in the embodied state is unique because it constitutes an integral part of the person; it is a habit and not transmitted instantaneously. Unlike economic capital
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(tangible and transferable), cultural capital in the embodied state is not transferable from one person to another by proxy [Bourdieu, (1986), 49–51]. Cultural capital in its embodied state declines and dies with its bearer because of the link to the bearer’s biological singularity and is subject to a hereditary transmission, which is heavily disguised or even invisible, and it combines the prestige of innate property with the merits of the acquisition (Bourdieu, 1986).

Furthermore, because one cannot easily acquire cultural capital, the migrant with such a capital has an edge in the competitive space in their new environment. For instance, West African musicians in the Netherlands and elsewhere invested time and conscious effort to work on their skills (playing techniques and the social and cultural aspects of the music through apprenticeship) from their childhood. Their knowledge or skill and the value people place on their craft become their cultural capital. As such, one could compare a musician with cultural capital to someone who is in possession of economic capital. For instance, a commonly used term to refer to migrants’ cultural capital is exotic goods. Waldinger et al. (1990, p.27) argue that the exotic goods tag provides a niche for migrants to convert both the contents and symbols of ethnicity into profit-making commodities. The major factor here is that migrants thrive in their new environment because they encounter almost ‘no competition’ from their hosts (Waldinger et al., 1990). However, it is not entirely precise that migrants with cultural capital face no competition. Dutch people who are proficient djembe players are the competition because they contend with their West African colleagues for teaching and performance opportunities. However, being a qualified or a proficient djembe player is not adequate to function as a djembe musician. It is also important to have an extensive knowledge of djembe repertoires, the historical and the social association a repertoire symbolises. This knowledge is disseminated orally during the apprenticeship/formative years. A West African djembe musician possibly would have learnt about these practices during their formative years, and as such, the West African djembe musicians might have an edge.

Cultural capital in the objectified state is material entities that are transferable from one person to another. In the objectified state, cultural capital can assume the form of material objects, writings, paintings, monuments and instruments that are transmissible [Bourdieu, (1986), pp.49–51]. Examples of these objects include musical instruments (such as djembe and kora) and art works (paintings, sculptors, and beadwork). Cultural capital as goods can fit the purpose of both economic and symbolic capital. It exists both as symbolically, materially active and effective capital insofar as agents appropriate it, implements it and invest it as a weapon and a stake (Bourdieu, 1986).

Cultural capital in the institutionalised state is in the form of academic qualifications (Bourdieu, 1986). Holders of academic qualifications are also in possession of a cultural capital that enables them to exchange it in the labour market or convert such qualifications because these qualifications have been guaranteed some kind of monetary value. For most Africans (in general) who immigrated to the Netherlands, a common difficulty has been the conversion of academic qualifications as will be discussed later. Next, I will investigate social capital, which is another form of capital which is difficult for most migrants to access because it (social capital) favours the rich and wealthy. Migrants, especially those to whom I refer to in this article, lack such social connectedness with the wealthy in their places of residence to be able to access the benefits of social capital.
2.3 **Social capital**

Bourdieu (1986, p.51) defines social capital as “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition— or in other words, to membership in a group— which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital, a ‘credential’”. Bourdieu argues that social capital favours the rich in society. The rich use their social capital (their connectedness) to protect their wealth and influence.

“Cultural capital depends on the following: the size of the network of connections and the volume of capital and profits that could accrue from membership in a group. The network of relationships is an insurance policy because it aids its members and protects their investments (both material and symbolic). It is a social club whereby its members are richly endowed with capital (social, economic and cultural). Members have an opportunity to make useful connections and every group has its more or less institutionalized forms of delegation which enable it to concentrate the totality of the social capital, which is the basis of the existence of the group” (1986, p. 49-51).

The main concern that social capital underscores is that there is strength in numbers. The social capital theories of both Bourdieu and the political scientist Robert Putnam exemplify this notion. Bourdieu’s idea of social capital differs from that of Putnam. Bourdieu’s social capital theory targets a few within the network of friends of the one who possesses social capital. As such, Bourdieu is concerned about how one can ascend the economic ladder from their contacts. Putnam on the other hand, advocates for a social capital that can help build trust, togetherness and reduce social vices. Putnam’s main idea verges on the premise that a lack of social capital is the catalyst for many social vices in the USA (Putnam, 1993). In other words, social capital fosters togetherness and breathes hope (together we can achieve more).

One way social capital has been researched so far is in terms of its benefit to immigrant’s entrepreneurial activities. Scholars have focussed on how, through the formation of cooperatives, migrants can meet their economic, cultural and social goals (Waldinger et al., 1990; Bates, 1996). Cooperatives in the form of Rotating Credit Associations (RCA) offer entrepreneurs the opportunity to acquire capital for their projects [Bates, (1996), pp.2–7]. This kind of RCA is common the world over and is known as susu in Nigeria and Ghana (West Africa) among various ethnic groups. Susus are made up of groups of people, usually from the same ethnic groups, age, class or among friends and sometimes family members who contribute part of their earnings each week or month depending on the frequency of their meetings. The money is given to a trusted member or the treasurer of the group. Depending on the structure of the group and the frequency of their contributions, money is paid in a lump sum to a member, while the others await their turn. Once every member has accessed the funds, the susu has completed a cycle [Williams, (2006), p.74]. Members are guaranteed to receive their contributions before the end of a susu cycle (Williams, 2006). An RCA might serve as insurance for the musicians in times of hardship, sickness or in severe need.
Bourdieu’s forms of capital tell a compelling story when applied to a phenomenon like migration. For instance, the cultural studies scholars (Meinhof and Triandafyllidou, 2006; Meinhof, 2009) have modified Bourdieu’s form of capital to explain the dependence of migrants from Africa on their countries of origin while abroad and they called their theory transcultural capital [Kiwán and Meinhof, (2011), p.8]. “Transcultural capital involves the strategic use of knowledge, skills and networks acquired by migrants through connections with their country and cultures of origin which are made active at their new places of residence” [Triandafyllidou, (2008), p.4]. Meinhof and Triandafyllidou used transcultural capital to analyse the narratives and everyday lives of first generation immigrant musicians from Francophone Africa living and working in Paris and other major European cities. I do not distinguish transcultural capital as a critique of Bourdieu, rather, I view the theory as a continuation (expanding the applicability of Bourdieu’s capital). In the application of the theory, the authors examined these artists in search of possibilities of local and transnational ties, widespread bi/multilingualism or bi- or multiculturalism and proof of their integration in their new settlements [Triandafyllidou, (2008), p.4]. Bourdieu’s capital differs from transcultural capital in that the former captures the symbolic and social networking power of hegemonic groups in most societies while the latter explains how migrants maintain highly meaningful links with their countries of origin and the benefit such a link creates for them in their new environment. Later in the findings section of this paper, I will demonstrate that the majority of the activities of West African migrant musicians previously favoured this bifocal attachment (back and forth movement between their countries of settlement and their countries of origin) as discussed by transcultural theory. However, I argue that at present the musicians’ activities are mainly concentrated within their countries of settlement. In other words, the musicians have found innovative ways to execute their businesses in their new settlements without regularly needing to travel to their home countries.

Migrant musicians’ decisions are in most cases shaped by the circumstances in their places of residence. For one to understand the decisions of the musicians, one needs the social circumstances to reveal why the musicians adopt certain strategies [Small, (1998), p.13]. By reviewing the social conditions, I intend to contrast how migrants fared compared to their hosts, and to learn what the economic, health and educational discrepancies are. I look for clues (e.g., discrimination, racism, opportunities or lack of) to justify the decisions or strategies the musicians adopt to navigate the given society. Therefore, this third section sets out to discuss some of the social circumstances that migrants face in the Netherlands. I have selected three aspects that came up strongly in the surveys for deliberation; they are health, education and the economy. In terms of the health factor, I will contend that migrants in general may be prone to mental health issues because of living far away from home. Later, during the findings I will show how djembe musicians have built their businesses around helping the stress related issues of their hosts and themselves. Economic and educational factors are important to establish that discrimination exists in the job market, and those with cultural capital could use their skills to become self-employed and to thrive. In the findings section, I will return to the discussion in this third section to explain and justify some of the strategies adopted by the musicians.
3 Why migrants living in the Netherlands need capital

For migrants, the cultural capital brought from their home countries is, in most cases, their only lifeline in their new environment. To be able to thrive, their cultural capital is then converted and appropriated in their new environment. However, appropriating capital comes with some challenges.

3.1 Health factor

Studies conducted on the health of migrants indicate poorer perceived health than the native-born (Jolivet et al., 2012; Deliema et al., 2012; Iliceto et al., 2013; Tiedje and Plevak, 2014; Shanta and Njeri, 2010). Furthermore, migrating to foreign countries such as Europe, could cause psychological distress and contribute to mental health troubles for migrants [Iliceto et al., (2013), p.1106]. Most scholars omit completely a definition of mental health problems in their work. This is partly because defining diseases and disorders is a concern in philosophy, medicine and psychiatry because it is culturally situated, and also because there is a lack of a comprehensive and consistent definition of mental disorder that applies to all situations [Stein, (2013), p.656]. Mental disorder is described using various concepts: distress, loss of control, disadvantage, disability, inflexibility, irrationality, syndromal pattern, etiology, and statistical deviation). Each description is a useful indicator for a mental disorder, but none is equivalent to the concept, and different situations call for different definitions (Stein, 2013).

The Trimbos Institute (a centre of expertise in mental health and addiction in the Netherlands) reveals on their website that migrants in the Netherlands were prone to mental health problems with loneliness (eenzaamheidsgevoelens) prevalent among the Surinam, Moroccan, Turkish and the Antillean population. Another study points to several socioeconomic conditions that militate against the health of migrants, such as discrimination and the acculturation process [Iliceto et al., (2013), p.1106]. Scholars have also suggested that the prevalence of social and economic disadvantages could account for the imbalance in the health status of native-born versus migrants (Viruell-Fuentes et al., 2012; Hansen and Sørlie, 2012; Tinghög et al., 2007). Two examples will elucidate how ethnic discrimination and loneliness can have an adverse effect on the mental health of migrants in the Netherlands.

First, there is the question of ethnic discrimination and rejection in their new places of residence. For instance, the Nederlandse Omroep Stichting (NOS) (in English: Dutch Broadcast Foundation) is one of the broadcasting organisations making up the Netherlands Public Broadcasting system. In 2014, NOS (n.d) published the rejection of Syrian refugees (fleeing war-torn Syria) by their Dutch hosts on its website. It is important to state that with the increased migration from Asia and Africa to Europe, NOS and other news media report on the increased somewhat hostile reaction by some people in the Netherlands towards the creation of asylum quarters in close proximity to rural communities. The asylum quarters are generally located in secluded areas, however, the government met with firm opposition when they (the government) planned to locate one around a residential area. Some Dutch people expressed their displeasure with the government for accepting more refugees and they fear the repercussion of migrants for their communities. The narrative is that, the Syrian migrants arrived in the Netherlands and the authority assigned them to a new station in the Dutch village of Orange, but the
local native-Dutch inhabitants opposed the integration of these people into their community because of security fears. The acculturation process is the main problem. The tension between the dominant ethnic group and the minority immigrant community could cause mental health problems for both groups. However, the immigrant groups in these situations are adversely affected [Missinne and Bracke, (2012), pp.97–109]. The threat by the Dutch government to deport Angolan born Mauro Manuel is a case in point. A popular Dutch newspaper, the Telegraph (De Telegraaf, n.d.), reported in 2012 that the Dutch Government met with stiff opposition from the Dutch people when the government announced its intention to deport Mauro Manuel (born in Angola in 1992) back to his home country. Some Dutch people expressed shock that their government acted inhumanely towards a boy that could easily be categorised as Dutch, having grown up in the Netherlands. Dutch people held several protest rallies to persuade the government to allow Mauro (and all those who came before their 18th birthday) to stay and to continue their studies in the Netherlands. Although Mauro later got a student visa to remain in the Netherlands, the scenario (fear of repatriation, an abrupt stop to his education and being the topic of discussion on the media) could possibly have left an indelible mark on the young boy in terms of emotional and mental wellbeing.

Second, some migrants display the feeling of loss of their homeland. It appears that most migrants respond to various situations in their new country of residence: the feeling of loss, isolation from home and they are sometimes in limbo (a state of uncertainty) [Baily and Collyer, (2006), pp.167–182]. For instance, some African migrants who left their jobs in their home countries in search of greener pastures in Europe feel pain and loss, even regret in their present predicament. In most cases, they have been misinformed about better job prospects abroad only to arrive and be employed in low paying jobs and deplorable working conditions. According to the findings of the Dutch Sopemi Report 2014 on Migration Statistics and Migration Policies in the Netherlands, non-Western migrants engage in elementary and low-grade occupations. They engage in more flexible jobs than their hosts, their income is three times lower than their Dutch hosts and they are more likely to be dependent on social benefits compared to their Dutch hosts [Klaver et al., (2014), p.129].

3.2 Education factor

Statistical evidence from the Netherlands Institute for Social Research SCP (2012) links minority groups’ high rate of unemployment to low levels of education. Similarly, Figure 1 shows that in the Netherlands, migrants from non-Western countries have high levels of poor education and that the situation is severe for first generation migrants, while second-generation migrants fared better [Klaver et al., (2014), p.130]. The statistical figures available do not give a complete picture of the population, but they represent a picture of minority groups in the Netherlands and thus useful.

Figure 1 confirms that, in comparison with the native Dutch population, minority groups (Turks, Moroccans, Surinamese, and Antilleans) have lower levels of tertiary educated population. In the data, Turks have fewer tertiary educated populations, compared to the other three minority groups. Antilleans on the other hand, lead the minority groups in terms of the number of tertiary educated people. However, these data are incomplete and do not clearly tell us about African migrants or the refugee population. However, Figure 2 shows the situation of one African country (that of
Somalian migrants in the Netherlands), again, not representative of the African population. In my research, I did not find any statistical information about the African population in the Netherlands to compare with Figure 2. Nevertheless, I do hope that the figure of Somalis in the Netherlands is not an official documentation of the level of education of Africans in the Netherlands. The figure shows Somalian refugees as lacking in tertiary educated members of the population, compared to Afghans, Iraqis and Iranians [SCP in Klaver et al., (2014), p.131).

Figure 1  Education level of non-Western immigrant groups and Dutch population 2012

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>primary education</th>
<th>secondary education</th>
<th>tertiary education</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Turks</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moroccans</td>
<td>46</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Surname</td>
<td>61</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antillians</td>
<td>62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>native Dutch</td>
<td>55</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Netherlands Institute for Social Research SCP (2012)

Figure 2  Educational achievements among non-school going afghan, Iraqi, Iranian and Somali refugees, 2009 (percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Afghan</th>
<th>Iraqi</th>
<th>Iranian</th>
<th>Somali</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary education</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary education</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary education</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Although the data in Figure 2 is not recent, it provides a comparison of the education levels of the minority population, with Iran leading other nationalities. While it has been shown in the statistical documents that minority populations fared poorly compared to the native Dutch, the data does not explain why this is the case. However, many factors are in play especially language barrier discussed in the Sopemi Report and the Netherlands Institute for Social Research.

Similarly, the statistical evidence fails to explain situations where employers have not accepted foreign certificates, which highlights what many scholars call institutional racism inherent within the Dutch system (Essed, 1991; Essed and Trienekens, 2008; Vasta, 2007). The Dutch Sopemi report and extensive research carried out by the Netherlands Institute for Social Research (2013; in Klaver et al., 2014) admit that racism and discrimination exists in the Dutch system.
3.3 Economic factor

Statistical evidence has shown that, in comparison to native Dutch, migrants have very high unemployment rates. In her evaluation of the unemployment figures from 1983 to 1993, Vasta (2007, p.719) noted that in 1983 the unemployment of migrants was as high as twice that of the indigenous population. A decade later, by 1993 the difference in employment rate was even higher than in 1983. In the 1990s, the Netherlands witnessed considerable economic growth, attributed to the lowest unemployment rate (Vasta, 2007). The Dutch SOPEMI report 1994–2003 also points to a very high unemployment rate for migrants in comparison to the native Dutch [Snel et al., (2005), p.95]. What is striking about the statistical numbers from 1983 until 2012 is that the unemployment rate for migrants is still twice that of the native Dutch. This suggests that unemployment for non-native Dutch is a constant non-changing phenomenon.

In 2012, the Dutch economy was in recession. The recession affected non-Western migrants more than the Dutch hosts. For instance, the unemployment rate for non-Western migrants rose from 9% in 2008 to 16% in 2012 [Klaver et al., (2014), p.134]. The SOPEMI authors reported that the gap among those unemployed in non-Western migrants had widened considerably since the recession. The number of unemployed youths in the non-Western immigrant group rose from 15% in 2001 to 28% in 2012 [Klaver et al., (2014), p.134]. The native Dutch population also witnessed youth unemployment, but theirs is relatively low compared to minority immigrant groups in the Netherlands.

4 Findings/discussion

The statistical evidence presented so far paints a bleak picture for minority groups (including migrants) in the Netherlands when compared to the host population. So far, it appears that the native Dutch population has fared better in most sectors compared with migrants. This is why I argue that migrants require cultural capital to compete and thrive in the Netherlands.

West African musicians largely exemplify how the possession of cultural capital can benefit migrants. The example is the four West African musicians below who developed their skills through the apprenticeship system. The four are not exclusively djembe musicians, however, they also possess similar cultural capital as djembe musicians and warrant my inclusion in this debate. What is also significant is that none of them possesses certificates from a college or university from their home countries, but it is their exceptional skills and cultural capital that has earned them respect and created opportunities for them. The four musicians are highly skilled migrants but it will be a mistake to assume that the factors militating against migrants discussed in the third section do not apply to them. On the contrary, I have shown that Dutch employers dismiss these ‘so-called’ skilled people with foreign certificates as lacking in quality. Under health factor, I showed that stress is predominant among migrants and it is highly possible that stress, and rejection are some of the factors that encourage these musicians to find alternatives (e.g., starting up their own music businesses). Like most migrants
from Africa, finance is discussed under economic factors, hence cultural capital becomes useful since it requires little or no financial commitment. Therefore, my concern is how these migrants find meaningful employment through their cultural capital which affords them the opportunity to thrive.

Aly N’Dyaye (1959) is Senegalese and an example of an accomplished percussionist in the Netherlands. Aly is the son of the famous percussionist Doudou N’Dyaye Rose. Aly started playing the percussion when he was four and mastered his craft while working in his father’s orchestra. He has toured the world with his father and played in festivals alongside Miles Davis, The Rolling Stones, James Brown, Stevie Wonder and Peter Gabriel. He worked in Dakar as a music teacher before eventually immigrating to France and later to the Netherlands. Aly teaches drum music at the Koninklijk Conservatorium in The Hague. He has also published his own music and teaching methods.

Lamin (1964) was born in the Gambia and grew up in a traditional Griot family. He started learning the kora from his father when he was five years old. Before immigrating to the Netherlands, Kuyate performed in traditional ceremonies and for tourists back in Gambia. Kuyate composes and performs his own songs together with a traditional repertoire. Since immigrating to Europe, he has performed in several festivals such as RASA, Tropenmuseum, Melkweg, Vreedenburg and Concertgebouw Amsterdam. Besides performing, Kuyate gives lessons and workshops. He is an adjunct lecturer (kora) at the Amsterdam conservatorium.

Paco Diedhiou (Lamin, n.d) is a multi-instrumentalist and dancer born in the Casamance, in southern Senegal. He studied percussion with Samba Gueye (composer, singer, dancer and percussionist). He performed extensively with the group BAKINE before immigrating to the Netherlands in 1989. Since living in Europe, Diedhiou has performed in various festivals in the Netherlands, France and Germany. He specialises in various ethnic instruments such as bougarabou, seourouba, sabar, djembe, kes-kes and balafon. He is also a guest lecturer at the Rotterdam Conservatorium.

Aissata ‘Bébé’ Youla was born in 1961 in Guinea and grew up learning to dance from her family. At the age of 13, she was a member of the National Ballet Djoliba. She has performed all over the world and as part of Miriam Makeba’s crew at the Festival of Art and Culture (Festac 77) organised in Nigeria. In 1998, she was invited to tour the Netherlands with the group, ‘Fatala,’ and in 1987, she settled in Nijmegen. She is active as an African dance instructor and gives lessons and workshops all across Europe. Not all djembe musicians earn a living by teaching in conservatories, so it is important to discuss other ways the musicians use their cultural capital to thrive in the Netherlands. First, djembe musicians generate income from the sale of imported instruments (djembe, doundoun and Kenkene) to their students. The three main instruments (mentioned above) are examples of cultural capital (musical instruments) brought from West Africa and traded in the Netherlands. Other instruments are idophones that vibrate by being struck (e.g., balafon), and chordophones that produce sound by way of one or more vibrating strings (e.g., Kora). But among these instruments, one instrument completely dominates in terms of its popularity, which is the djembe. It is still shrouded in mystery why the djembe has become so popular, not only in Europe and in the Netherlands in particular, but the whole world [Polak (2000), p.18].

Second, informal teaching is, for many djembe musicians, their main source of revenue. Informal teaching involves forming a djembe group, usually a mixed group, with no limits of age or gender. Informal teaching provides regular income for the musicians, and a djembe musician would typically have several groups in the region
where they reside. This informal teaching could take place in any location (theatres, schools, or music studios). The more groups a djembe musician has, the more revenue that can be generated. Djembe musicians also organise infrequent workshops for groups in schools, businesses, prisons and holiday camps. The workshops act as an addition to the revenue generated from a fixed group of students. Similarly, some djembe musicians have acquired a large number of djembes that can be rented out during workshops. This practice of renting out djembes to students aids the musician to maximise the profit from their workshops. Another supplement to teaching djembe is teaching dance, although, teaching both djembe and dance is not very common.

Third, djembe musicians generate revenue from performances during festivals, in clubs and at events. They can be seen performing as large ensembles or in small groups. They can also be part of popular music bands as sidemen. During my discussion with the musicians, I realised that more energy and focus is reserved for teaching than performance. This is understandable because performance opportunities seem infrequent compared to the ‘relatively stable’ income generated from teaching. I use the term relatively stable because a musician’s income is dependent on the number of groups and students, which fluctuates from time to time. For instance, I realised that during the winter season the musicians have less students compared to the summer months. The musicians attribute this low patronage during winter to the cold weather. When they do perform, some djembe musicians use the same lesson group as their performing band. This practice has some benefits: it is obvious that by using the same group, logistical and organisational concerns associated with arranging a band are resolved. It appears that musicians use their performances as a means to promote his teaching business while also giving the students the opportunity to hone their djembe skills. Djembe teachers might use the same lesson group in their performances to promote djembe to the audience, who can see people their age, gender or ethnicity engaging in djembe music.

The fourth method used by djembe musicians to generate income is through ‘djembe tourism’. Djembe musicians organise yearly visits for their students to West Africa to meet and play with djembe musicians there. However, tourism is an aspect that generates revenue for only a few djembe musicians. The musicians use this avenue to add value to their craft, improve relations with their countries of origin and djembe groups back at home and those abroad, and to create opportunities for local tourism in their home countries. This is also an opportunity for the students to witness the cultural context associated with djembe music. One way of using djembe tourism as a source of income is organising the travels, lodgings and facilitating student movements when they arrive in Africa.

The fifth method djembe musicians use to generate income is through djembe repair services. Djembe musicians repair damaged skin heads, replace skin heads and also re-string broken strings used to hold the skin head together. Repair services are not offered by many djembe musicians because it is time consuming and expensive. Similarly, the prevalence of inexpensive good quality second-hand djembes, and cheap low-quality djembes might discourage students from repairing their damaged instruments.

Lastly, djembe drumming is prominent in the literature as occurring within three areas: village ceremonies, state ballets and global scenes (Charry, 2000; Polak 2000; Nesbitt, 2001). Charry in his extensive works on West African music, in particular his book Mande Music, describes in detail the function and role of djembe in the Mande
ethnic group. He writes that djembe music encourages communal participation (dancing, clapping and singing). The rhythms played at ceremonies “give people strength and courage before or during a trial, and honour them when they have passed through it” [Cherry, (2000), p.198]. However, in the Netherlands, djembe musicians assist people with stress-related illness. Work-related stress problems have been extensively documented in the literature (Rijksoverheid, 2014). Practitioners do this through weekly lessons or workshops, whereby those with work-related stress concerns can sign up and meet other students. The musicians generate income through this process when they are invited to give workshops to businesses, prisons or any group of people who are stressed. What is even more striking is that these weekly lessons are also an opportunity for the musicians themselves to de-stress. For instance, three examples will illustrate how the musicians navigate stress in the Netherlands. Soumah (2016) is a djembe musician and dancer in his 30s, who resides in the Northern Province of Groningen. This is what Soumah says about stress in the Netherlands:

“Without djembe, I will be crazy in the Netherlands with all the stress in the land. When I am performing, I am in the moment; I am not worried about the stress I experience. I just believe everything will be all right. Without djembe music, I would have left for Africa. Without this music, I do not want to live here.”

Cheikh (2016) is a Senegalese who has been living in the Netherlands (Amsterdam) for more than a decade, teaching and performing djembe music:

“In Africa, I play the djembe every day but here I play once a week and enjoy it a lot… It is true, you get energy from the music and it helps you forget your problems. That can be so for many people if they believe that djembe is therapy.”

According to the Amsterdam-based djembe musician, Toure (2016), who originates from Guinea and appears to be in his 50s:

“If I did not play this music, I will be stressed. It is also a sort of therapy for the students. The moment the student comes to lesson, even though they do not move before, they start to make an automatic movement with the music. Without speaking, the moment they sit they start to feel happy… djembe is also therapy in Africa. You see this especially among women. When a woman is preparing a meal and she hears the music, she starts to dance… There is a lot of stress here; some people have jumped onto moving trains to commit suicide. Like me, I cannot kill myself. The music helps me to release stress. I also have children to cater for, so happy and sad moments are also fine.”

These musicians all agree that stress is prevalent in the Netherlands and that djembe music helps them to release stress. The musicians may not have explicitly mentioned or described the discriminatory conditions associated with being employed. In addition, they may not have hinted directly at the economic and social reasons why they decide to teach and perform djembe music. Yet, the musicians are well aware of the problem of discrimination and racism in the workplace because some of them have previously worked menial jobs when they first arrived in the Netherlands. Their actions and proclamations hint at an awareness of the socioeconomic challenges that migrants face in the Netherlands. This is why Soumah says that if not for the music he would have left for Africa. For Toure and for many of his contemporaries who have no formal qualifications, it would be difficult to secure gainful employment. In fact, Toure (2016) seems to acknowledge this when he says later on during the interview that:
“For me it is now 26 years of living with djembe music here in the Netherlands. I cannot now wake up at six o’clock in the morning that I am going to a company to work, I cannot. I came here for the music and that is what I will continue to do.”

To sum up the arguments in this paper, I draw from the interviewees’ comments and the various strategies they employ in their businesses discussed above. My main objective in this paper is to show how cultural capital plays a fundamental role in the lives of djembe musicians in the Netherlands. First, I have mentioned elsewhere that transcultural capital enables the musicians to move back and forth between their countries of residence and their countries of origin. However, it seems that while djembe musicians could have relied essentially on their transcultural mobility or connections for supplies such as the instruments brought from their countries, my research found that the musicians’ activities seem to be overtly concentrated in their countries of residence (e.g., the Netherlands). As such, the need for the dual attachment highlighted by the theory of transcultural capital seems to be residing. Another factor that may have influenced djembe musicians’ sole concentration in their countries of residence (not discussed in this paper) is the competition from other stakeholders such as music stores and commercial manufacturers of djembes in Asia. These conglomerates according to some djembe musicians have flooded the market with cheap and poorly made djembes; as a result, the musicians could not sell their priced African made ‘quality’ djembes. Second, the musicians seem to have positioned their businesses in such a way that the various aspects mentioned above (teaching, performance, repairs, tourism and the sale of instruments) generate income such that the demise of one aspect does not completely bring their businesses to a standstill. For instance, I showed how the musicians have moved away from selling instruments to mainly teaching and organising workshops or stress-release sessions. This tendency on the part of the musicians has assisted them to build a sustainable business and has enabled them to thrive as a result. Third, the musicians have ingeniously built their businesses around the prevalence of work-related stress concerns in the Netherlands. The musicians, because of building their businesses around stress problems, paradoxically escape stress and the mental health matters themselves, which are prevalent among migrants, as discussed above, chiefly among them loneliness. In order words, engaging in djembe music has also improved the health of the musicians, judging by the comments of Toure and Soumah above. Fourth, the musicians have formed communities, especially djembe communities that are inclusive of their hosts, and this in turn has assisted in their integration. Their services are sought after by their Dutch hosts, and their contacts with their hosts have assisted them in learning the language and culture of the Dutch. All across the Netherlands, these communities of djembe musicians exist and seem to be growing.

5 Conclusions

I have shown how we can equate the cultural capital of migrants with economic power. I explained my approach by stating that, when migrants are in a new environment, they have a choice of appropriating skills learned in their home countries in the new environment. In some cases, their transcultural capital could be the difference between
surviving and thriving in their new environment. As such, a migrant in possession of capital is also in possession of economic power, all things being equal.

Furthermore, the skills of migrants become their source of sustenance, although there are some implications about a society where migrants have to depend, against the odds, on their cultural capital to survive. It shows on the one hand that there is a market and a demand; however, on the other hand, if we take into account the challenges mentioned above (discrimination, racism and unemployment), it suggests a society that is essentially capitalist, commoditised and globalised. It shows a society that creates opportunities for migrants on the one hand, while discriminating against minorities on the other. This situation forces the migrants to appropriate cultural capital to survive and thrive.

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Dr. Barbara Titus, University of Amsterdam, friends, colleagues and the anonymous reviewers for their encouragements, comments and guidance.

References


