

The VOORwerk project as catalyser for labour market participation

A qualitative study based on refugees,
trainers and mentors' experience



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1 Introduction

In the past years, the European Union (EU) has seen a peak in asylum requests due to ongoing conflicts and unrest in Syria and other non-western countries such as Eritrea. This generated a ‘refugee crisis’ relayed heavily by the media and political institutions. As a result, 103 860 refugees are currently residing in the Netherlands and 5818 asylum seekers are still awaiting a decision on their request (VluchtelingenWerk, 2018). The Syrian group is currently the most prevalent in the Netherlands, followed by groups from Eritrea, Irak, Iran, Afghanistan and Somalia, as shown in figure 1 (Ministry of Justice and Security, 2018; and CBS, 2018).

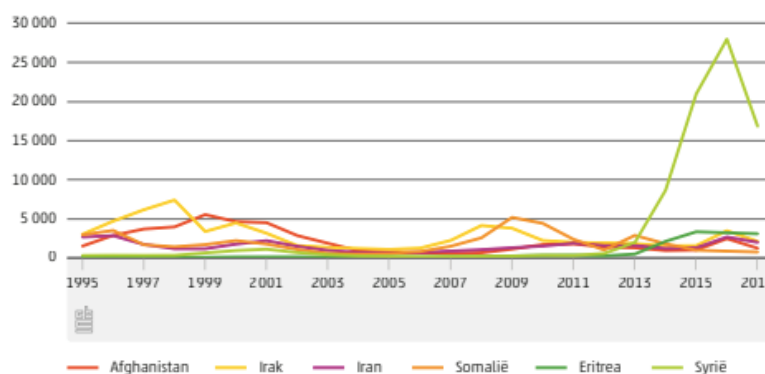


Figure 1: Immigration per country for refugees residing in the Netherlands (CBS, 2018)

As a signatory of the Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of the Refugees (1951), The Netherlands is obliged to give a status to persons who ‘owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it’¹ (United Nations Refugee Agency, 1951).

¹ Art.1 of Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of the Refugees

Moreover, The Netherlands has additional responsibilities towards refugees² thanks to the Qualification Directive³ when it comes to integration. More specifically, member states should grant ‘*within the limits set out by international obligations, (...) benefits with regard to access to employment, social welfare, healthcare and access to integration facilities requires the prior issue of a residence permit*’⁴ (European Parliament and Council, 2011).

Furthermore, the report ‘*Uit de start blokken*’ (CBS, 2018) states that, by the end of 2017, social benefits were the main income of 62 percent of the refugees that obtained a status in 2014. This causes a strain on the national welfare system (Engbersen et al., 2015). Although a fast inclusion in the labour market should be prioritised as a long-term investment (Klaver, 2015; Engbersen et al., 2015; Akerboom and Wormann, 2016; and Ministry of Justice and Security, 2017), only 11% of the refugees arrived after 2014 were employed three years later. This number is comparable for the Syrian sub-group (10,5% after 3 years), but lower for Eritreans for example (5,8% after 3 years). The odds to be employed after one year are even lower (5,7% in general, 1,5% for Syrians, and 0,9% for Eritreans) (CBS, 2018; Dagevos et al., 2018).

Under those circumstances, the Centraal Orgaan Opvang Asielzoekers (COA) is in a key position to intervene early on in order to minimise these employment gaps. In the Netherlands, refugees stay for a significant period in reception centres after obtaining a residence status and before receiving housing in a pre-assigned municipality. In 2017, 20960 refugees stayed in the reception centres, 42% of them having a residence permit (COA, 2018). During this period, they are provided with training and other activities to facilitate their integration and

² The term ‘refugee’ in this report includes only the holders of an asylum status due to the fact that status holders only have access to the project in question. It differs from the term ‘immigrant’ in the sense that the former is forced to leave their country, while the latter is not (Gericke et al., 2018).

³ COUNCIL DIRECTIVE 2004/83/EC of 29 April 2004 on minimum standards for the qualification and status of third country nationals or stateless persons as refugees or as persons who otherwise need international protection and the content of the protection granted; recast with DIRECTIVE 2011/95/EU OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 13 December 2011 on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and for the content of the protection granted.

⁴ In the Dutch context, a residence permit is ‘*an authorisation issued by the Dutch government allowing third-country nationals to stay legally in its territory, in line with the conditions of Article 1(2)(a) of the Council Regulation (EC) No. 1030/2002 of June 2002*’.

participation in the society. One of these initiatives is the project VOORwerk (2017), a collaboration with the Foundation for Refugee Students (UAF) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). VOORwerk focuses on the development of communication competences called ‘soft skills’⁵. The project combines a training with individual counselling with a case-manager and can lead to opportunities of internships, volunteer work or apprenticeships in order to consolidate the skills learned. The first phase of the VOORwerk project was implemented in 18 COA locations between 2015 and 2018, with an approximate amount of 3000 participants.

At the end of this initial period, the COA, UAF and IOM expressed a need for an independent impact research evaluating ‘*to what extent VOORwerk facilitates the labour market integration of permit holders in The Netherlands?*’ to the Tilburg University. This was also advised by de Lange et al in their report ‘*Van AZC naar een baan*’ (2017).

Comparatively, the current scientific literature sees a growing interest in the concept of integration⁶. First of all, participation in the labour market is accepted as the most significant factor facilitating refugees’ broader integration in the society (Konle-Seidl and Bolits, 2016). However, most of the analyses available are based on quantitative measures that focus on migrants and refugees as a cohort, and not as individuals. Moreover, they are often pinned as the source of their integration issues, minimizing the mirroring responsibilities of the society (Schinkel, 2018). Therefore, more studies should take both parties into account. Second, while reviews cite many factors influencing one’s labour market integration (Bakker et al., 2016), most studies focus on language abilities or social network. Few researchers have investigated the role of refugee’s well-being in their odds to find employment (Newman et al., 2017). Finally, soft skills have been shown to facilitate one’s labour market participation (Cinque, 2016). However, only a small number of researchers focus on how they could help refugees to better integrate. Moreover, these soft skills are bound to the country’s cultural context (Siebers,

⁵ Laker and Powell (2011) define them as ‘*interpersonal skills such as one’s ability to manage oneself as well as interpersonal skills such as how one handles one’s interactions with others*’.

⁶ ‘Integration’ is described in the literature as a two-way process involving mutual accommodation by both the host society and the newcomers (Akerboom and Wormann, 2016). It is multidimensional and reciprocal (Berry, 2017).

2018). This creates a need for a better understanding of how refugees can implement them after taking part in the VOORwerk project.

In response to these gaps in the literature, this research will attempt to better understand how the VOORwerk project stimulates refugees' labour market participation, reconciling the experiences of the refugees and of the COA employees to frame this question in a dualistic integration process. In order to do so, the properties of the project (its aim, trainings, and counselling sessions) will be analysed. Moreover, the present study touches upon the role of multiple factors in the refugees' path towards labour market participation: the way VOORwerk aims allow for a transfer of soft skills learned (Laker and Powell, 2011); the well-being gained after taking part in VOORwerk (described below in terms of psychological capital); the mentoring sessions of VOORwerk (analysed in term of social capital); and cultural differences between the participants and the COA employees' understanding of the soft skills. The resulting research questions are as follows:

1. How does VOORwerk stimulate labour market participation?
2. How do refugees experience their participation in VOORwerk?
3. How does refugees' motivation evolve over time?

In order to do so, the present study adopts a qualitative perspective to gain a better understanding of the stakeholders' experience. Observations of the training and one-on-one interviews constitute the base of the data analysed. Moreover, the refugees were interviewed at two moments to provide a longitudinal insight: directly after the training, and two-to-three months later.

This thesis is further divided in five chapters. The first one is a theoretical framework dedicated to labour market integration and the soft skills targeted by the VOORwerk project. It delves deeper into the implication of integration in a host society and the factors facilitating it. The second chapter is an overview of the method. It details the qualitative approach and how the study took shape on the field. The third chapter is devoted to the results of the data analysis. It focuses on the overarching themes that emerged. The fourth chapter is a discussion of the results. It attempts to link the outcomes of the study to existing literature. Finally, recommendations are offered in relation to the VOORwerk project and labour market integration policies.

2 Theoretical framework

2.1 Labour market integration

This section summarises the content of the body of literature devoted to labour market integration, as it relates to the present research. The first part offers a definition of the concept of integration, provides an indication of when it is achieved and links it to labour market participation. The second section focuses on refugees' integration in the Dutch society. The third part details a model accounting for labour market integration. The last section details factors influencing the refugees' participation.

2.1.1 The concept of integration

In the report '*Migration: Mapping the field*', Castles (2002) discusses the complexity of defining the concept of integration. It is used at various levels of the society and concerns immigrants and refugees in multiple domains: political, public, employment, etc. Because each of these domains of activity have specific processes, they also feature different definitions of integration and specific factors influencing it. However, a common view is adopted and characterises integration as a '*two-way process of adaptation, involving change in values, norms and behaviour for both newcomers and existing members of the society. This includes recognition of the role of the ethnic community and the idea that broader social patterns and cultural values may change in response to immigration*'. This process starts immediately when the refugees arrive in the host state. On the one hand, integration requires migrants to exercise their agency to adapt to the lifestyle and function effectively in their host country. On the other hand, the host country also has to contribute to the integration process and help facilitate an equitable access to jobs and services, include them in social interactions, and provide them with a feeling of security (Bakker, 2016; Castles, 2002; European Migration Network, 2016; and Hynie, M., 2018). This two-way process is achieved when, through constant negotiation between both parties, the past and the present, and the country of origin and of refuge (Bhatia and Ram, 2009), social networks are built and one's identity changes while still maintaining its original culture (Cheung and Phillimore, 2014).

However, the public and academic multiculturalist discourse often describes migrants as others or the source of their own integration issues. More specifically, it tends to leave aside the relational aspects of migration. However, Schinkel (2018) explains that, originally, integration

(from ‘*integer*’ in Latin) refers to the “*internal adjustment of the parts of a whole*”. This means that the society should adapt and play a significant role in the process. This study therefore uses information gathered with both refugees and employees of the host country’s reception centres.

In refugees’ studies literature, integration is mostly viewed in practical and functional terms because the refugee status is closely linked to the right to special protection. This implies social protection, settlement services, housing, language training, education and labour market access (Castles, 2002). Similarly, Cheung and Phillimore (2014) argue that employment is a key factor and can create benefits, for example in language acquisition, psychological well-being, economic independence, and social networking. Given these points, access to the labour market is one of the most significant factors encouraging long-term integration in the host country (Konle-Seidl and Bolits, 2016).

2.1.2 Labour market integration of refugees in The Netherlands

The Netherlands, as a host country, insists on the importance of integration (Engbersen et al., 2015; European Migration Network, 2016; and Ministry of Justice and Security, 2017). Statistics Netherlands⁷ reported on a cohort of asylum seekers’ integration between 2014 and mid-2017. Bakker et al. (2017) and de Lange et al. (2017) offer more details.

To begin with, Bakker et al. (2017) discuss two phenomena observed in the national data. First, the immigrant entry effect corresponds to a worse integration of migrants compared to non-migrants (Klaver, 2015). Between 63% (non-western countries of origin) and 72% (western countries or origin) of the immigrants⁸ are employed while 80% of the Dutch nationals are (CBS, 2018). Second, the ‘refugee gap’ appears between the refugee sub-group of migrants and the other ones. For example, only 11% of all refugees engaged in paid work three years after their arrival in the Netherlands (CBS, 2018). These gaps can be closed when refugees enrich their human capital with a better proficiency in Dutch language, a Dutch qualification or certificate, or Dutch citizenship (Bakker et al., 2017).

⁷ Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek (CBS).

⁸ Arrived before or after 2014.

Furthermore, de Lange et al. (2017) conclude that the Dutch labour market integration process remains serial and standardised, even if better odds of participation are reached with simultaneous and tailor-made processes. More specifically, the Dutch process works in four consecutive phases. Each corresponds to different legal frameworks and types of assistance when it comes to facilitate work experiences in The Netherlands: the asylum process, the permit holder in the asylum seekers' centre, the permit holder in the municipality, and the permit holder in the Netherlands in a longer term. The second step, subject of this study, starts directly after the residence permit is granted and allows them to stay in The Netherlands for five renewable years. It lasts until the refugees are provided with living arrangements in municipalities or a family reunification.

2.1.3 Theoretical framework for labour market integration

Eggenhofer-Rehart et al. (2018) propose using Bourdieu's theory of practice (1977, 1990) as a theoretic lens to better understand the factors influencing refugee's labour market integration. In short, the theory of practice suggests that for agents to gain power in their social field (or context), they need to develop various forms of capital: human, social and cultural within the societal context. Specifically, refugees had to move to a new country and the capital they have gathered in their country of origin cannot simply be used in the host society. It is re-evaluated in regard to the local values. Therefore, in order to get to a more favourable position, refugees have to develop their capital to increase their own worthiness. This framework incorporates both the migrant and the society in a two-way process that enables the refugees to be included.

To better understand the concept of capital and how it affects refugee's integration in the labour market, Siebers (2018) provides more specific elements. First, one's human capital incorporates their education and the level thereof, their mental and physical health, and their proficiency in the local language. Migrants therefore possess less human capital relevant in the host society. Second, one's social capital includes the bonds they develop with the people that evolve in the same environment. Third, one's cultural capital is related to how they present themselves in relation to the society and show a culturally valued profile. Western societies grant a relatively high importance to soft skills (discussed in the next chapter) which are the manner an employee works and its personal characteristics (creative, proactive etc.). Furthermore, soft skills play a role in how a person can transfer their human and social capital from one context (their country/culture of origin) to another (the Dutch society for example).

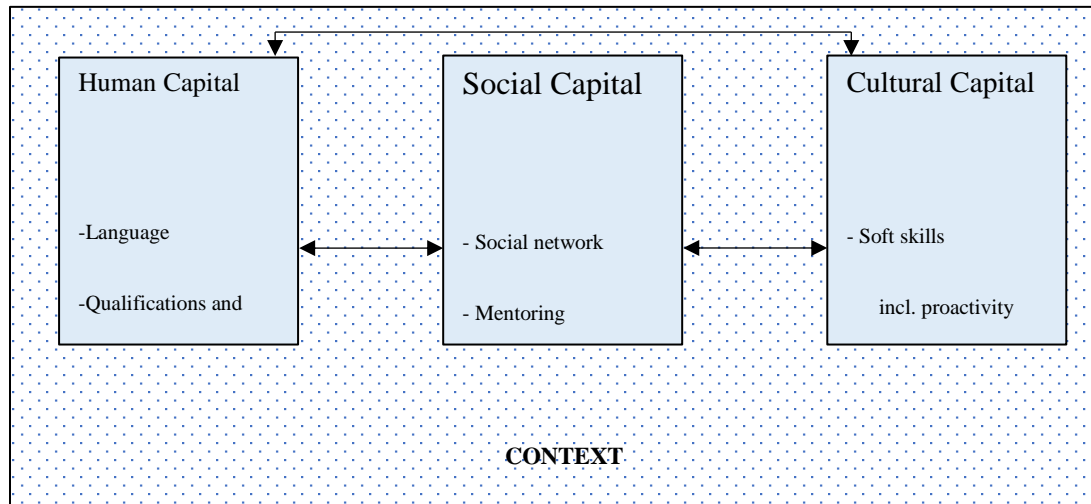


Fig. 2: Bourdieu's theory of practice (1977,1990) summarised as presented in Eggenhofer-Rehart et al. (2018) and completed with factors influencing labour market integration of refugees identified in the literature review.

2.1.4 Factors influencing labour market integration

2.1.4.1 Human capital

This section focuses on three factors: one's psychological capital, their language skills, and qualifications and professional experience.

Psychological Capital

One's psychological well-being is an '*individual's cognitive assessment of satisfaction with his/her life circumstances*' (Newman et al., 2017). It influences their employment prospects and contributes to the unemployment gap (Bakker et al., 2016). Therefore, refugees possessing less human capital might thus benefit from policies that help to restore their well-being in order to feel empowered and integrate the local labour market (Cobb-Clark, 2015; Tomlinsen and Egan, 2002; and Pajic et al., 2018).

With this in mind, Newman et al. (2017) link the concept of psychological well-being to the notion of psychological capital. He defines psychological capital (or PsyCap) as '*an individual's positive psychological state of development*'. It is funded on four psychological resources: optimism, hope, resilience and self-efficacy. First, optimism signifies an '*individual's expectancy of positive outcomes*' and can bring about the motivation to pursue goals. Second, hope is based on one's '*motivation to succeed at a specific task*' and the '*means by which that task may be accomplished*'. Hopeful individuals possess more goal-directed

energy and are more flexible in their attempts to achieve said goal. Third, resilience is defined as a *'return to the original level of functioning after such events'* (Abraham et al., 2018). Fourth, self-efficacy was defined by Bandura (1993) as *'people's beliefs about their capabilities to exercise control over their own level of functioning and over events that affect their lives'*. Individuals that believe in their own influence over outcomes tend to address more difficult challenges.

Furthermore, Wehrle et al. (2018) explain that refugees tend to find it difficult to determine their career- and life-paths when they have been experiencing threats to their self-control. For example, a longer waiting period without a stimulation to participate in the labour market enhances psychological stress (Hainmueller, 2016). More specifically, Abraham et al. (2018) identify coping self-efficacy⁹ (CSE) as a highly valued coping strategy. It affects various outcomes: motivation – meaning how hard refugees will try to integrate the labour market (Cobb-Clark, 2015); human capital investment (Cobb-Clark, 2015); the risk of developing a post-traumatic stress disorder (Bosmans et al., 2015); or how intensely a refugee will look for work (Pajic et al., 2018).

Interestingly, self-efficacy and psychological capital have been linked to other factors influencing refugees labour market integration, playing a mediating role. First, Obschonka et al. (2018) explain that refugees with a higher perceived self-control will tend to be more proactive. Second, the propensity to build social networks is also associated with self-efficacy (Wehrle et al., 2018; and Eggenhofer-Rehart et al., 2018). Finally, the OECD report (2018) highlights the fact that refugees with a lower proficiency in the local language also feel a lower self-efficacy.

Under those circumstances, Pajic et al. (2018) and Wentzel and Miele (2016) advise to include modules supporting psychological capital within trainings offered to prospective job seekers.

Language

Language is the factor influencing (labour market) integration that appears as the most important in international reports (European Commission, 2018; European Public Employment

⁹ Bosmans and van der Velden (2015) define coping self-efficacy as *'the perceived capability to manage one's personal functioning and the myriad environmental demands of the aftermath of potentially traumatic events'*.

Services (EPES), 2016; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2018; and Martin et al., 2016a and 2016b). Scientific literature (Dubus, 2017, Cheung and Phillimore, 2014; Obschonka et al., 2018; Konle-Seidl and Bolits, 2016; Wehrle et al., 2018; Dubus, N., 2017; Bucken-Knappand et al., 2018; and Engbersen et al., 2015) describes host country language abilities as a necessary condition to the integration process. More specifically, refugees gain, on one hand, better professional matches and outcomes if they speak the local language. On the other hand, they also gain a wider social network, therefore facilitating further labour market integration (OECD, 2018).

Qualifications and occupations

The European Public Employment Services (2016) cite qualifications and occupations as a key aspect in refugees' labour market integration. They can be bound to the country of origin or bound to the host country. Qualifications obtained in the host country facilitate refugees' integration (Bucken-Knappand et al., 2018; Martin et al., 2016; Engbersen et al., 2015; Bakker et al. 2016; and Bakker, 2016). They can be obtained via specific trainings (for example on language), higher education, or bridging courses (Engbersen et al., 2015; and Konle-Seidl and Bolits, 2016). Gaining professional experience locally is also possible with volunteering work, internships and apprenticeships (Martin et al., 2016a and 2016b). Furthermore, enhancing one's human capital also helps building a better network (Cheung and Phillimore, 2014) and brings more confidence and sense of control (Akerboom et al., 2016; and Wehrle et al., 2018).

2.1.4.2 Social capital

The social network built with host contacts is a core element of one's social capital¹⁰ (Ferlander, 2007).

Social network

Social networks are defined as '*relationships of refugees with the host community*' that can provide a better access to the labour market (Cheung and Phillimore, 2014). The community

¹⁰ Van der Gaag and Snijders (2004, p.200) define social capital as "*the collection of resources owned by the members of an individual's personal social network, which may become available to the individual, as a result of the history of the relationships the individual has with the members of his network*".

can for example provide useful information, knowledge or relay job offers. Interestingly, possessing a network is not sufficient to find employment but the lack of it is detrimental (Cheung and Phillimore, 2014; Mousa, 2018). Newly arrived refugees however have fewer contacts with the host community due to linguistic and cultural differences (Konle-Seidl and Bolits, 2016).

Moreover, three types of social capital are possible: bonding, bridging (Granovetter, 1973), and linking (Woolcock, 1998). First, bonding social capital includes the networks that are similar to a person, for example their age, ethnicity or education. It is an inward-looking process and is instrumental in “getting by” (Ferlander, 2007). Second, bridging social capital is the access to a heterogeneous network of people considered as native members of the host country, for example social workers, or new friends. It is outward-looking and key to “getting ahead” (Ferlander, 2007; Gericke and al., 2018). Notably, contacts with the host community help compensate a lack of other types of human capital and can contribute to bringing back a lost sense of control, belonging and reinforce optimism (Eggenhofer-Rehart et al., 2018; and Wehrle et al., 2018) Third, linking social capital, sometimes seen as a sub-dimension of one’s bridging capital is described as ties that cut across groups and also travel up and down the social ladder (Ferlander, 2007). It helps mobilise political resources and power (Poortinga, 2012) and gain access to information and resources that exist outside of a social network.

Gericke and al. (2018) propose that each type of social capital supports refugees’ integration differently at various stages. At an early stage, bonding and bridging are used to gain access to the local culture and language (Mousa, 2018). Bonding is here important to regain a feeling of security. Later on, while preparing to enter and entering the labour market, bridging is principally used to gain access to jobs via contacts and to better understand administrative processes.

With this in mind, this study analyses which types of social capital are stimulated by the VOORwerk project. It includes sessions of social counselling (or mentoring) that have been shown to have a positive impact on one’s labour market integration (Konle-Seidl and Bolits, 2016; Akerboom and Wörmann, 2016; Greenspan et al., 2018; Mansson and Delander, 2017; EPES, 2016; and Martin et al., 2016).

2.1.4.3 Cultural capital

One's cultural capital represents how people present themselves in relation to the society and show a culturally valued profile. It includes one's soft skills, proactivity being one of them (Sieber, 2018).

Proactivity

Proactivity¹¹, or 'self-rescuing' abilities¹² - two terms often used for the same concept in the literature influences refugees' labour market participation (Akerboom and Wörmann, 2016; Obschonka et al., 2018; and Hynie, 2018). In short, our western societies expect refugees to use their personal agency and create their own possibilities in the host country. They are asked to do so by setting their personal goals and find a way to achieve and reach them. Some key behaviours are culturally desirable, such as own initiative, entrepreneurialism and career adaptability. However, it is not always feasible for refugees to be independently proactive (Akerboom and Wörmann, 2016; and Eggenhofer-Rehart et al., 2018).

Furthermore, self-rescuing abilities have a positive effect on other forms of capital such as language progress, adjustment to the host culture, or connection with the locals. Proactivity is also a form of general self-efficacy: '*confidence in one's ability to deal with different demanding situations*'. It can help minimize the effect of life uncertainties early on in the integration process (Obschonka et al., 2018; and Eggenhofer-Rehart et al., 2018). Such a personal agency is needed when refugees have to overcome a learned helplessness due to their forced migration, health, or inactivity in the reception centres. It can be done by boosting the feeling of control: self-efficacy (Tolentino, Garcia et al., 2014).

¹¹ Seibert, Crant, and Kraimer (1999, in Obschonka et al., 2018) define proactivity as "*an important personality feature for the modern world of work. It can be seen as a personality factor reflecting a preference for self-initiative and actively influencing one's environment across different situations*".

¹² A detailed definition of the concept was not available in the consulted literature, nor in the consulted policies related to refugees' integration. The only description applicable to this context was found via the Ensie encyclopaedia and should be read with a critical eye. Ensie defines self-rescuing abilities as "*one's ability to care for oneself, solve their own problems, evolve independently through life, and know how to save themselves*".

2.1.4.4 Context

The context in which all three forms of capital are unpacked plays a significant role in their applicability within the host country and therefore impacts refugee's labour market integration. The time spent in the asylum procedure is, for example, associated to labour market integration (de Lange, 2018).

Often, refugees stay in reception centres a longer time because local municipalities have an insufficient supply of social housing (Engbersen et al., 2015; Fóti et Fromm, 2016; Bakker et al., 2016, 2017; Bucken-Knappand et al., 2018; and de Lange et al., 2017). Research conducted in The Netherlands shows that it has an impact on mental health and labour market integration (Bakker et al., 2016; Martin et al., 2016; de Lange et al., 2017, 2018; and Wehrle et al., 2018).

2.2 Soft Skills

Soft skills are part of one's cultural capital. They are also the object of the VOORwerk project that is the object of this study. They operate at an overarching level and facilitate the transfer of hard and soft skills from one context to the other. Therefore, they, as part of one's cultural capital, would help refugees to better present themselves and their human and social capital in the Dutch society.

This second section offers a definition of the concept of 'soft skills' and their significance on the labour market. It details the role of volunteer work and the VOORwerk project. Finally, it discusses a way to consolidate the skills learned.

2.2.1 Definition

Laker and Powell (2011) define Soft Skills as “*interpersonal skills such as one's ability to manage oneself as well as interpersonal skills such as how one handles one's interactions with others*” and are opposed to hard skills, “*technical skills that involve working with equipment, data, software, etc*”. Furthermore, Cinque (2016) defines soft skills as “*skills that can be transferred from one job to another, one employer to another, and from one country to another*”. In this study, the concept of soft skills is based on both definitions combining management of interpersonal skills and transferability.

The literature also lists different types of skills. In her review, Cinque (2016) catalogues 22 of them, and allocates each skill to one of three categories: (1) *personal skills*, such as learning,

commitment, stress tolerance, ethics, self-awareness, life balance and creativity, (2) *social skills*, such as teamwork, communication, networking, conflict management, culture adaptability and leadership, and (3) *methodological skills*, such as proactivity, self-development, adaptability, decision making and results orientation.

Methodological skills (also called meta-competences) stand at an overarching level and are necessary to develop and transfer hard skills and the other soft skills learned from one context to another. They are therefore interesting to investigate in the present study because they play a significant role in how refugees can apply their human, social and cultural capital in the Dutch society.

2.2.2 Importance of soft skills in the labour market

Soft skills are linked to employability for candidates entering the labour market (Cinque, 2016). Notably, employers express a need for soft skills which they signal are in shortage, insisting on the importance of work ethics, punctuality and professionalism (Alaraj et al., 2018).

Similarly, migrants are part of a group of job seekers considered at an entry level. Adding human capital in the form of soft skills is therefore relevant for them so they can better show their achievements and assets to future employers, to themselves, and to the social system (i.e., the municipalities, COA, etc.). Furthermore, soft skills are important in the selection of the workforce in the Netherlands (COA, 2017; and Siebers, 2015). This is why soft skills should be taken into account in migrants' journey towards integration and be developed accordingly, for example via volunteer work.

A growing body of literature is dedicated to how volunteer work could facilitate refugees' integration in the society and on the labour market (Konle-Seidl and Bolits, 2016; and Eggenhofer-Rehart et al., 2018). Bakker et al. (2018) describe it as a catalyser for a better participation and integration and it can also lead to paid work.

First of all, volunteer work helps refugees to recover, reinterpret or build the skills necessary for their labour market integration (Greenspan et al., 2018). Its goal is to work without obligation and without remuneration in order contribute to the society and can start when refugees are still in the reception centre to avoid wasting time.

Furthermore, volunteer work can indirectly influence one's employment possibilities due to its positive impact on one's health, well-being (including their psychological capital), language abilities, self-development, and social network (Engbersen et al., 2015; Bakker et al, 2018; de Lange, 2017; Mousa, 2018; Gericke et al., 2018; and Alaraj et al., 2018).

However, introducing volunteer work to refugees is not always a successful process. They may have other priorities such as a search for housing or prescribed integration duties. Moreover, they may feel intimidated due to their limited knowledge of the local language and afraid to not understand the information provided (Bakker et al., 2018). Additionally, depending on their housing situation or the location of their reception centre, they may be in a region of the country that has more or less opportunities.

2.2.3 The VOORwerk project and labour market integration

VOORwerk (2017) is the product of the project Samen Werken aan de Toekomst (SWAT) and is focused on permit holders' labour market integration. It is the result of a partnership between The Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA), the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Foundation for Refugee Students (UAF). The project is financed by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF).

The aim of the project is to equip permit holders with information and soft skills related to the labour market in order to facilitate their integration. More specifically, the option to take part in VOORwerk is restricted to permit holders still living in a reception centre (COA, IOM and UAF, 2017). It therefore includes only the refugees that are in the second phase of their path towards paid work (de Lange and al., 2017).

In practice, VOORwerk offers two services to stimulate labour market participation: a group training and one-on-one counselling sessions with a case manager. First, refugees are invited to attend a group training organized in three or five days. They learn about soft skills and their importance in the Dutch society. The initial module focuses on what soft skills are and how they relate to each person. The following modules feature exercises to better grasp the concept of soft skills (for example role play of a job interview, a video CV workshop, or team building sessions). The last modules give attention to how refugees can draw a path towards labour market integration using the soft skills they have learnt so far. At that point, they discuss the importance of volunteering. Refugees can also ask questions to their future case manager and

to a representative of the Dutch workforce (for example an account manager from an outplacement agency). After the group training, refugees are invited to attend individual mentoring sessions with a case manager where they can further work on their understanding of soft skills. Furthermore, the case managers use their network to introduce the participants to specific volunteering possibilities.

2.2.4 Training and transfer of skills

Because the present study looks into the transfer of the soft skills learned thanks to VOORwerk, it is important to discuss how skills are learned in a training setting and transferred on the workplace.

Laker and Powell (2011) define training transfer as the “*extent to which what is learned in training is applied on the job and enhances job-related performance*”. In the literature, three factors facilitating implementation of skills are listed (Cinque, 2016; Laker and Powell, 2011; and Tonhauser and Buker, 2016): individual attributes, learning field attributes, and attributes at the organizational level.

First, individual variables play a role in the degree to which skills learned are consolidated. One’s motivation to learn, develop and apply what was learned differs between trainees. Moreover, their cognitive skills, self-control perception and volition play an important role. Other personal factors such as personality traits, work related attitudes and expectations influence the transfer of skills as well. Interestingly, some of the individual attributes can be considered as soft skills, meaning that the participants who possess more soft skills before the training would benefit more from it. This is for example the case for people that are in good health, younger, or benefit from a higher education.

Second, the learning field attributes are crucial in the training material consolidation. In other words, the preparation to the training (for example a preliminary meeting, leaflet or discussion), the content of the training (practical, theoretical, visual etc.) and the follow up after the training contribute to the degree to which the skills are transferred.

Third, the attributes at the organizational level also influence the amount of consolidation. Opportunities of use of the soft skills, the social support within the organization, the feedback qualities and the presence of an opportune environment play a role.

Also relevant to the VOORwerk project, Laker and Powell (2011) explain that soft skills are significantly less likely to transfer than hard skills. Because real life situations are often more complex than a training environment. Moreover, Tonhauser and Buker (2016) add that the main issue is that, while participants gain skills, they often lack opportunities to implement them in their routines. This is why a long-term evaluation of the transfer of the training material is crucial

Finally, Bandura (1977) argues that a change in behaviour resulting from a skills transfer happens through modifications in self-efficacy (*in* Laker and Powell, 2011).

2.2.5 Evaluation of VOORwerk

With the intention to evaluate the role of VOORwerk in refugees' long-term labour market participation, Reed (2018) conducted a study, comparing two groups: one that took part in the project, and one that did not. Interviewees explained that, at first, they had no expectations regarding the Dutch labour market nor any plan on how to look for employment. After one or two years in the Netherlands, all had volunteered at one or more occasions. However, some differences in both groups appeared when they discussed the concept of soft skills. The participants talked about their relevance and that VOORwerk taught them they already possessed some or could develop others. The concept was less known by the second group. The study concludes that VOORwerk provides a strong foundation to understand the Dutch culture and labour market and boosts the participants' confidence.

This evaluation is paramount to better understand how a project is realized "in the field". Weatherly and Lipsky (1977) discussed how policies can be implemented differently due to the extent of the services asked from the organization's personnel. More specifically, the social workers responsible of its actualization are not always provided with the necessary tools to make it a success (training, time, monetary funds, sufficient personnel etc.). This can force the employees to use coping mechanisms to manage the intense workload, therefore limiting the scope of the policy by limiting the range of the targeted group (mainstreaming), selecting specific participants, avoiding tailor-made services or failing to meet the goals set.

3 Method

3.1 Literature review

In order to build a theoretical framework, different sources were used: books, peer-reviewed publications and reports from national authorities and international organisations. More references came from the articles and books found, often to source original definitions. Specific themes were combined and keyed in to focus on the integration of refugees in the labour market of their host country. Further review of literature related to soft skills and the concept of self-efficacy.

3.2 Procedure and ethics

This study was conducted with a population that resides or resided in the COA centres as the participation in VOORwerk is offered to them only. The project team was therefore involved in this study at different stages: the research proposal agreement; they were gatekeepers to the participants; they approved the instruments used; and they facilitated the translation of the instruments used. They also financed the interpretation and transport fees generated.

In practice, I took part in the training portion of the VOORwerk project in two locations: one located in a city, one in a large town. The access provided was ‘overt’ in the sense that the trainers were informed of my presence and the goal of the study. I informed the participants at the beginning of the training about the nature of the study, my affiliations to Tilburg University, the voluntary nature of their participation and the confidentiality thereof. In other words, I was a participant observer, an approach considered by Kawulich (2005) as the most ethical. I also asked the group if they needed any clarification immediately, or later on in the process. At the end of the three training sessions, I invited the participants to voluntarily take part in an interview the following week in the asylum centre. Lastly, at the end of the first interview, I invited were invited for a second appointment three months later and each indicated their preferred way of contact (e-mail, letter, text message, or WhatsApp message).

Finally, the research includes more ethical guardrails. First, before each phase of the study, repeated and clarified its nature if necessary. Second, an informed consent form (Silverman, 2006, p323) translated in Arabic explained the possibility to withdraw at any time and assured anonymity (see appendix 1).

3.3 Research methodology

This study focuses on qualitative techniques because including the refugee's point of view adds value to the evaluation of policies. This accounts for the context in which they benefit from the services offered (Bucken-Knapp et al., 2018). As an illustration, the UN Refugee Agency (UNCHR, 2015) qualifies them as 'experts by experience' because they gained an expertise of a particular system through their own experiences.

This research uses the grounded theory paradigm. It is based on the idea that '*theory building should be an ongoing process since the world is complex and new information makes continuous theory development necessary*' (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, in Gericke et al., 2018). Therefore, this research method prescribes simultaneous and interrelated data collection and analysis, one informing the second, and vice versa, in order to try to generate or modify theories (Silverman 2006, p95; Charmaz, 2014; and Corbin and Strauss, 1990). The theories built are therefore grounded in empirical data, experience and the context of the participants. This study uses two qualitative methods: observation and in-depth interviews.

On the one hand, participant observation¹³ is the first component and was used at two moments. I took part in the VOORwerk training sessions, consigned descriptive information in a logbook and added more practical details such as how many people attended, their name, placement in the room, activities and salient non-verbal exchanges. I tried to be non-judgmental, a good listener, and I took part in all activities together with them. Participating in the VOORwerk exercises enabled me to (maybe partially) understand some of their responses. This type of holistic understanding can enhance the validity of the analysis (Silverman, 2006, p68).

On the other hand, I conducted in-depth interviews with the participants who accepted my invitation. They followed a semi-structured guide that corresponds to the exploratory nature of this study. The questions were also open-ended to better access the participants own experience and perceptions (Huizinga et al., 2018). This allows for more flexibility and active listening

¹³ Marshall and Rossman (1989, in Kawulich, 2005, p89) define observation as '*the systematic description of events, behaviours, and artefacts in the social setting chosen for study*'. More specifically, DeMunck and Sobo (1998, in Kawulich 2005, p89) define participant observation as "*the primary method used by anthropologists doing field work (...) and involves active looking, improving memory, informal interviewing, writing detailed field notes, and perhaps most importantly patience*".

(Silverman, 2006, p110). Second, I also conducted a more focused observation during the interviews during which I took notes about the non-verbal stance of the person, what material they brought with them, if they were on time, or what we discussed before and after the taping.

In practice, the first round of interviews was conducted in Dutch and Arabic with the help of interpreters, and they lasted between 20 and 60 minutes. First, a text repeating the goal of the study, the confidentiality, and the possibility to stop at any time was read. Second, participants were asked if the session could be taped and to sign an informed consent form translated in Arabic. Third, a list of questions addressing demographic details was read. Fourth, more open-ended questions, pre-approved by the VOORwerk project team were asked. An interview guide is available in appendix 2. Finally, the participants were asked if they would agree to attend a second interview. Three months later, the same participants were invited following their preferred mean of communication. The ones that attended the second round of interviews were read the same text, submitted the same consent form and asked a similar list of open-ended questions. A comparable approach used for the interviews conducted with two case managers and two trainers from the COA. One of each for both locations where the target groups resided.

Lastly, the questions chosen for the interviews were based on the research questions, the theoretical framework, and information gathered in earlier interviews. First, the impact of the VOORwerk was evaluated thanks to the contrast between the data coming from the refugees and the COA employees. Second, the extent to which the participants were stimulated to participate in the labour market was questioned in regards to their human, social and cultural capital. Finally, the soft skills, object of the VOORwerk project were discussed and identified using the training and literature definitions.

3.4 Participants

I interviewed a smaller number of participants during the second round. Fourteen individuals were present for the first meetings and only four participants were interviewed for a second time, three to four months later. This was expected for different reasons. First, it is a well-known phenomenon in research (for example, Bean and al. (2007) reported only a 63% retention rate). Second, the target group is more susceptible to drop out due to their circumstances. For example, they may be engaged in a family reunion, moving to housing, have left the country, etc. While not ideal, it still allows useful data collection, especially when using the themes that emerged in the first round of interviews.

The participants were spread evenly between both training locations: a city and a large town. Half of them was younger than 40 and the other half older. Only two were female. All have an Arabic background and come in majority from the Syrian region. Most of them are married and have a family (see table 1).

3.5 Data analysis

The coding of the data followed three steps (Charmaz, 2008) after the interviews' literal transcriptions. During a first open coding phase, portions of text are annotated with a corresponding theme such as 'language', or a 'soft skill' for example. These themes were included in the following interviews as attention points to better understand the topics. During a second axial coding phase, categories were gradually created, such as 'negative feedback', 'labour market activity', 'self-efficacy', and 'own initiative'. Because the coding system still reflected preliminary observations based on the research questions, a third phase of selective coding highlighted overarching concepts that emerged from a more comprehensive analysis. The last coding system used themes such as 'proactivity', 'motivation', or 'psychological capital'. They enabled a better use of a theoretical lens based on the literature and to find relations amongst them. The analysis was made using MAXQDA.

	1**	2	3	4**	5	6	7	8	9	10**	11	12**	13	14
Gender	M	M	M	M	F	F	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
Age	33	46	61	37	52	37	53	53	55	26	29	62	21	38
Country of origin	Syria	Syria	Syria	Syria	Syria	Syria	Syria	Syria	Syria	Syria	Palestine	Syria	Syria	Syria
Education	Bachelor stopped	HBO	MBO	Secondary school (18)	Bachelor stopped	Secondary school (15)	VWO	Secondary school (15)	Secondary school (15)	Bachelor stopped	HBO	Secondary school (12)	Secondary school (15)	Secondary school (15)
Professional experience	Administrative coordinator supermarket	Veterinary	Tem leader in factory	Building industry	Home maker	Home maker	Education advisor	Car mechanic	Metal artisan	HR manager	Journalist/e-finance	Restaurant manager	student	School bus driver
Marital status	Married, one child	Married, children	Married, children	Married, children	Married, children	Married, children	Married	Married, children	Married, children	Single	Single	Married, children and grandchildren	Single	Married, 9 children
Languages*	Arabic (N), English (B), Turkish (B)	Arabic (N), English (B)	Arabic (N), Turkish (B)	Arabic (N), English (B), Turkish (B)	Arabic (N), English (B)	Arabic (N)	Arabic (N)	Arabic (N), English (B)	Arabic (N)	Arabic (N), English (G), NL (B)	Arabic (N), English (G), NL (B)	Arabic (N)	Arabic (N), English (B)	Arabic (N), NL (B)
Arrival in NL	Oct-17	Nov-17	Dec-17	Oct-17	Nov-17	Nov-17	Sep-17	Nov-17	Oct-17	Sep-17	Jan-18	Oct-17	Oct-17	Aug-15
Residence permit	Jan-18	Nov-17	Feb-17	Nov-17	Dec-17	Nov-17	Dec-17	Dec-17	Oct-17	Oct-17	Feb-18	Nov-17	Jan-18	Jan-16
Family in NL	No at first interview, yes at the second	Yes	Yes, but children passed away	No, family reunion	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Location residence centre	City	City	City	City	City	City	City	City	Town	Town	Town	Town	Town	Town

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the participants.

* *N* (native), *G* (good), *B* (beginner), ** interviewed twice.

3.6 Limitations

Different factors may limit the accuracy of the data gathered. First, the translating of the interviews by interpreters was not always accurate, as indicated by some participants. It also means that some opinions may have lost nuances in the translation process. I also have a strong French accent that may have impacted the communication with the translator. Second, social desirability may have impacted the content of the interviews (Khan et al., 2016). A more indirect style of communication is used in the Arabic culture, avoiding to provide negative feedback. Third, two selection biases are possible. On the one hand, the VOORwerk project team chose the locations, trainers, and case managers involved later on. As a result, they also selected two samples of Syrian refugees. On the other hand, the four participants who answered the invitation for the second round of interviews may have different characteristics compared to the others (for example in proactivity). Fourth, even though I did not perceive any indication of a personal bias, it is possible that my role in the study had an impact on the results. For the refugees, I am a white female student researcher that could be seen as affiliated to the COA. I am therefore “other” and this could have limited the way they shared their experience (Schinkel, 2018). Finally, the questions featuring in the interview had to be pre-approved by the COA in order to avoid themes that were forbidden in their own ethical guardrails. In practice, these questions were always used as a starting point. However, I have also enquired more details when the first answers were not sufficient and asked about attention points that emerged from the earlier interviews.

4 Results

After coding the interviews in MAXQDA, different themes came across. First, the ways the VOORwerk project helps stimulate labour market integration is discussed. A second section analyses how the refugees experienced their participation. Finally, a third part presents how the benefits evolve over time.

4.1 How does VOORwerk stimulate labour market participation?

4.1.1 Properties of the VOORwerk project

In the first place, the aim of the project VOORwerk is to equip refugees with information and soft skills related to the labour market in order to facilitate their integration. The program is focused on soft skills. More specifically, the idea behind the curriculum is that, when people understand the concept of soft skills, they gain a better understanding of themselves and therefore can develop better these attributes. In practice, VOORwerk offers two services: a group training and individual.

On the one hand, the training is split in modules spread along three or five days and the sessions touch upon four categories of soft skills relevant to the Dutch labour market: communication, own initiative, organisation and responsibility (see table 2). They all feature in Cinque's list of skills (2016) and include personal, social and methodological abilities. First, methodological skills operate at an overarching level where they facilitate the transfer of one's personal and social capital. They appear prominently in the modules featuring the theme "responsibility" and "own initiative" (including proactivity). The training therefore can play a role, as a form of cultural capital, in helping refugees to transfer their human and social capital in the Dutch society. Second, social skills appear in the modules "team work", "networking" and "communication". Related to one's social capital, they are important to refugees' labour market integration. Third, personal skills operate between one's human and cultural capital. They feature in the modules "responsibility" and "organization". All in all, the VOORwerk training discusses soft skills that are relevant for each type of capital and also skills that facilitate their transfer to new contexts.

Category	Soft Skill	Description	Cinque's category
Communication abilities	Readiness to self-develop	I am open-minded	Methodological skill
		I ask questions to clarify	Social skill
	Collegiality	I am willing to build relationships	Social skill
		I help my colleagues when necessary	Social skill
		I show interest	Social skill
	I know what is expected from colleagues	Social skill	
	Able to show motivation	I can show my enthusiasm	Social skill
Own initiative	Networking	I can present myself well	Social skill
		I interact well with others	Social skill
		I can initiate contact	Methodological skill
	Team-work	I can provide and receive feedback	Social skill
		I can work with others to achieve a goal	Social skill
	Readiness to self-develop	I can work independently	Methodological skill
	Flexibility	I can figure out my next tasks	Methodological skill
I can handle new situations		Methodological skill	
Organisational skills	Time management	I can divide my time	Personal skill
		I am punctual	Personal skill
Responsibility	Work capacity	I combine well my professional and work lives	Personal skill
		I am fully present during working hours	Methodological skill
	Trustworthiness	People can count on me	Social skill
		I arrive on time	Personal skill
		I respect appointments	Personal skill

Table 2: Categories of Soft Skills included in the VOORwerk training compared to Cinque's categories (2016)

On the other hand, VOORwerk also provides sessions of tailor-made counselling with a case manager, present during the last group meeting, where he or she gets to know the participants and presents the individual counselling possibilities (i.e., practicing of soft skills in reference to possible job interviews, finding of volunteer work or an internship). During these sessions, refugees having attended a minimum of 80% of the training can discuss their individual path towards finding paid and unpaid work experiences such as internships, apprenticeships or volunteer work. More specifically, the goal of the sessions is to continue using the soft skills learned during the training.

4.1.2 Introspective and practical nature of VOORwerk

One of the aims of the VOORwerk project is to use introspective methods in order to bring the participants to a better understanding of the concept of soft skills. They have to use their own

past experiences as a canvas to build up on. This has two consequences. On the one hand, it forces them to actively reflect on what they can offer to the Dutch labour market. On the other hand, the participants are put in a position of strength where they realize that they have something to bring to the table. They soon realise which soft skills they already possess, which ones they can enhance, and which ones they should start developing. It helps setting them in the present situation.

“I already had some skills, but I didn’t know it. I have learned it during the training. I was already good at communicating. And yes, make good contacts. I was also always on time. But I have also learned other competences, about managing time”.

21-year-old man, student in Syria

This could also be observed in the participants non-verbal communication during both the training and interviews. When they were able to talk about what they achieved and to link it with skills that are desirable in the Netherlands, their posture changed and they became more enthusiastic. The pride they had in their work in Syria came across distinctly in the detailed descriptions they gave of their responsibilities.

“In my country, I used to work as a bus driver (...). I had to apply the strict rules. First, I had to drive perfectly, respect the guidelines. I also had to look after the vehicle and know everything about it: the motor, the brakes. I had to control everything. I was always well dressed and I respected the school teachers.”

38-year-old man, bus driver, Syria.

The second aim of the VOORwerk project is the fact that the training is anchored in practice: the soft skills learned are directly clarified and used in workshops. For example, the participants practiced what they had just learned about how they should present themselves in a pretend job interview, or how they should present a curriculum vitae. They found this type of exercise one of the most useful part of the training.

“On the practical side, I have learned a lot. The most important was how I can make a CV”.

38-year-old man, bus driver, Syria.

Furthermore, similar roleplays could also take place during the mentoring sessions with the case managers to prepare the participants for volunteer work for example.

“If someone doesn’t want to volunteer yet, I start working directly with them. We rehearse for example job interviews or we make a motivation letter”.

Case manager VOORwerk

Given these points, the personal and practical approaches used by VOORwerk provide refugees with key opportunities to consolidate the course material. They are therefore more likely to transfer the learned skills to another setting, for example in the labour market. Moreover, the introspective essence of the project helps refugees to experience more self-efficacy, thereby enhancing their psychological capital. This can also contribute to a more effective behavioural change.

4.1.3 Role of the VOORwerk trainer and case manager

First of all, the counselling provided by the case manager creates an ideal setting to further consolidate skills that have been learned during the training with one on one roleplays or assistance to find volunteer work, internships or apprenticeships. This has many positive implications: (1) the soft skills learned have better odds of being transferred in a work environment; (2) the refugees' psychological capital is directly stimulated, and (3) it stimulates their bridging social capital during the appointments and resulting volunteering opportunities.

“I had an appointment with the case-manager. We are soon going to contact a company in the field of business management. Of course, he has to negotiate with the company, because you cannot do that as a refugee, without extra help.”

29-year-old man, Journalist and e-finance professional in Palestine

However, not all participants attend the sessions. This is due to multiple factors. First, each mentor has a different approach to the way he/she follow the VOORwerk guidelines and combines them with his/her other duties. One case manager invites only participants who want to do volunteer work and are motivated to do so. Only the ones who raised their hands during the last training session are invited. The other case manager has a broader vision of his role. However, not all refugees show up to the appointments. One of the interviewees comments shows how a communication problem or a selection process can lead to their non-inclusion. In this specific case, she had not raised her hand during the last training session and was not aware she would not be invited.

“My husband had an appointment with the case manager. Me, not yet. After the training, my husband received a message from the case manager and he went to the meeting. But I haven't received mine yet.”

37 year-old-woman, Home maker in Syria

Second, the trainers of the VOORwerk project also play a key role in its success. They each bring their personal experience to make the sessions more relatable and are experts in the topic of soft skills. This has positive implications: (1) the accent the trainers set on concrete exercises helps the refugees better understand the soft skills that could be seen as abstract. This also favours a better skills transfer; (2) the participants self-efficacy is often reinforced and praised during the sessions; (3) they encourage a simultaneous process of integration where refugees combine trainings, volunteering and private life; (4) they stimulate bonding social capital when they encourage sharing within the group, bridging social capital when they talk about the importance of volunteer work, and linking social capital when they introduce the participants to, for example, an outplacement office manager.

However, the trainers also set up the schedule. This has two consequences. First, they plan their weeks as efficiently as possible and split the hours dedicated to the group sessions on three full days. In contrast, five of the participants spontaneously explained that the days were too long and they could not maintain their attention on the course material. The fact that many of them were not participating or listening towards the end of the day was also often noted in the observation logbook. Second, not all trainers organize trips to companies or businesses to enable the refugees to gain a more practical understanding of the workplace. In contrast, four of the interviewed participants mentioned they would have benefitted from such an activity.

Consequently, the trainers and case managers involved in the VOORwerk project play a significant role in the way the project is implemented. Both the training material and the way the mentoring take place are determined by standardized procedures while leaving some flexibility to the COA employees, the bureaucrats described by Weatherly and Lipsky (1977). On the one hand, this allows for a tailor-made approach benefitting all participants. On the other hand, this permits employees to deal with high service demands they cannot reconcile within their working hours to resort to coping strategies (for example selecting some promising participants only to not waste any time). Moreover, each employee uses their own professional experience to interpret the VOORwerk guidelines. For example, one trainer had a more reassuring attitude and insisted on the importance of volunteer work. The other insisted more on the importance to be proactive and adjust expectations. Finally, the trainers, dealing with real workplace limitations, and supported by their management, maintain the longer days instead of splitting a similar number of hours on more days, thereby limiting the quality of the service provided.

Moreover, other factors contribute indirectly to refugees' labour market participation. For example, the location of the reception centre is important. The refugees who resided in the city had the possibility to visit a volunteering centre and other facilities from the busy centre. The participants residing in a town did not have similar possibilities. The location also determines to which trainers and case managers they have access to.

In conclusion, VOORwerk helps refugees to draw on their own past experiences to envision their future path from a position where they are aware of their own strengths. Furthermore, the material is directly applied to possible situations, enabling the participants to start consolidating the skills learned. Finally, the help provided by the case managers and trainers is an added value but is not the same for all participants.

4.2 How do refugees experience their participation in VOORwerk?

4.2.1 Motivation to participate in the labour market

Most participants are ready to move further towards paid or unpaid work at the end of the training. This features below in three themes. First, the volunteer work done or intended. Second, a boosted psychological capital. Third, individual differences also contribute to one's motivation.

In the first place, the enthusiasm towards volunteer work, internships, or paid work is one way refugees show how the VOORwerk project helped to stimulate them to participate in the labour market. These practical experiences are catalysers to further participation and local language development. Before the training started, only one of the participants had volunteered in the day care from the reception centre. After the training, eleven of the fourteen participants were willing to use volunteering as a stepping stone towards their future paid employment. During the last interviews, three of the four participants gained local experience thanks to volunteer work through the network of their case manager. One participant stresses the importance of volunteering as he understood it.

“Volunteer work is actually very important. First, you can maybe find paid work after. Second, you gain experience. And third, you meet people. Then people see that you also work in the Netherlands. And you will also improve your language skills”.

55-year-old man, Metal artisan in Syria

During the training and mentoring sessions, volunteer work is presented as a possible catalyser to further labour market participation and local language development, a “way in” to find paid work, and to build a network. This piece of information is clearly retained by many participants.

“The plan is that I will first go volunteer and learn a lot of practical skills. It will help me build a network with other people that will maybe help me to find a work”

38-year-old man, bus driver, Syria.

Together with the mentions of volunteer work, most participants link it to the mentoring of the case managers.

“After the training, I had an appointment with my case manager. She asked me where I wanted to work. She knows I love my work and she promised to look for something that matches me. She knows I am willing to volunteer so I can recover my work experience [from Syria].

46-year-old man, veterinary, Syria

More specifically, volunteering is a key practice when it comes to how refugees gain a social capital. However, not all of them have access to the same opportunities. On the one hand, the ones that already speak the language used locally (basic Dutch or English) and have a relevant human capital (higher education, professional experience in an international setting for example) have access to individual volunteering positions. They interact directly with a Dutch person, therefore developing their bridging social capital. They will learn the language faster, understand the culture faster, and develop a network faster. On the other hand, the refugees that have a less applicable human capital (they do not speak Dutch or English, with no education or applicable professional experience) will have access to group volunteering activities where the Dutch organizers are assisted by translators. Therefore, there are fewer chances to develop their bridging social capital, but they still affect positively bonding social capital of refugees amongst themselves.

Refugees’ psychological capital is another catalyser for labour market integration. It is influenced by the VOORwerk training and mentoring sessions. In the first place, VOORwerk brings much practical information on the Dutch labour market that is not easy to find for refugees. For example, many participants didn’t know where to find employment because the system they knew in Syria was centralized. They have learned about online networking tools such as LinkedIn, outplacement and temp agencies, and other ways to come across vacancies. This gain in practical knowledge brings more control to the participants. They feel that they

have tools to find a path towards paid work. Moreover, eight participants confided they felt more self-assured. This gain in self-esteem was clear when they could attribute soft skills as their own properties.

“I thought about my soft skills after the training. I realised that I had already many of them in my own character.”

36-year-old man, HR manager in Syria

In some cases, however, information had an opposite impact. For example, a participant found the Dutch system difficult to penetrate, especially if he wants to work in the field where he gained years of expertise in Syria.

“In general, I think it is going to be difficult for me to work in my field. Here, there are only big companies. Here, it is not easy to infiltrate them, to find a job. I may have more chances to just work in a restaurant or something”.

55-year-old man, Metal artisan in Syria

In a similar pattern, hope appears for some participants, but not for all of them. Six participants spontaneously used the word “hope”. Hope can manifest itself in this context because the participants feel more in control, informed and self-assured after taking part in VOORwerk because it is based on their own strengths.

“Now, there is more hope (...). Before, it was just a dream, thoughts. But after this training, we heard about possibilities to do volunteer work and for self-development. That’s the way to find a job. That way, I have more trust that we can work here. In the future”.

53-year-old man, Car mechanic in Syria

This was however not the case for all participants.

“I have few expectations. There are not many possibilities for someone who is 61 and suffers from hernia”

61-year-old man, team leader in factory in Syria.

A third way motivation to participate in the labour market is influenced is via individual circumstances that may have an impact on how the participants experienced VOORwerk. First, their education level plays directly on how fast and how much they can assimilate the information provided in the training. Second, younger and more flexible, participants tend to be able to apply the material faster and they understand the Dutch system faster. Third, the

female participants interviewed retain different information compared to male participants. Using their own experience and aspirations as mothers, they focus more on communication and flexibility with children related matters. They also project a future as care takers or cooks. Finally, the ones who already know when they will move to their housing have a more concrete plan for the coming months.

In conclusion, the participants interviewed showed in many cases more motivation towards their labour market participation. This appears in terms of volunteering and a reinforced psychological capital. Refugees feel more in control, self-assured, informed and hopeful.

4.2.2 Is proactivity culture-bound?

Own initiative is one of the four categories of competencies defined in the VOORwerk training and encompasses in this framework both social and methodological skills. More specifically, when the COA employees discuss proactivity, they mainly talk about the methodological skills such as “contact initiation” or “initiation of future tasks”. The data analysed below indicates that the participants’ comprehension of the concept is somewhat asymmetrical to the one seen through the Dutch cultural lens.

The training material often touches upon proactivity and provides examples to make the concept tangible. The Dutch society, of which the COA employees are acting as proxys, expects refugees to find opportunities by themselves to counterbalance the negative effects of the context they live in. In contrast, the participants interviewed have a more passive notion of proactivity. This cultural difference has an impact on their labour market integration.

On the one hand, all interviewed COA employees explained that many refugees were not proactive enough, even after the VOORwerk training. For example, a case manager could not understand why they, having shown tremendous motivation *en route* couldn’t keep on doing so in their destination country.

“I try to show them what is possible here. Because you can accomplish a lot from a reception centre: work, integrate, go to school... You can also look for housing. You have survived everything, and it brought you here, you are a survivor! You can go out, you can do it here! You can look for work”.

Case manager COA

Another case manager also stresses the importance of own initiative and sees it as a more global soft skill.

“There are maybe other countries that reach out more to those people, but in the Netherlands, people want to see and then believe [that you want to integrate]. We want to help, but you have to show own initiative, and it is highly valued (...) some people say it is typical in the Netherlands, but I don’t know...”

Case manager COA

In short, the COA employees (as members of the Dutch society) see own initiative as an active participation where refugees have to imagine, create and foster their own possibilities to participate in the labour market.

On the other hand, the participants interviewed have a more passive interpretation of the concept of own initiative in general, and also in relation to their position of refugees (not able to speak the language and not familiar with many cultural aspects of the Dutch labour market, even after a training discussing it). They see proactivity as seizing all possibilities presented to them but not as creating those possibilities.

“Also, I am ready for each chance that I could get. That’s why I go to all the trainings. As soon as I get a chance, I will seize it. Because I wait for a chance.”

33-year-old man, administration coordinator in Syria

A participant for example used one of our interviews as an opportunity to seize and a possible way in for more volunteer or paid work. He also automatically mentioned soft skills.

“If you also have an idea, a place to go work or an internship, I would be happy to do it. Not only as a driver, it can be something else. My friends always say that I am very useful and careful. I do things well, I am always on time, and serious”

38-year-old man, bus driver, Syria

Another participant awaited her mentoring session. She was patient and waited for the chance to grab but was not considering reminding the case manager about the issue, something that Dutch citizens would do often. Another interviewee had similar expectations.

“I haven’t heard from her. I just had an appointment and she did not get back to me after”

37-year-old man, in the building industry in Syria

In conclusion, the extracts of interviews used above show a clear difference in own initiative interpretation and expectations. On the one hand, Dutch professionals expect refugees to create their own chances, while the latter are awaiting chances, but ready to grab them and be creative to have a possibility to benefit from them.

4.3 How does the motivation progress over time?

From the fourteen participants, only four answered to the invitation sent (seven did not answer to the letters or messages, and three had moved to housing in a municipality and were occupied by the integration processes). Some useful points can however be retrieved combining the content of the second-round discussions. First, the actual labour market participation is discussed. Second, actual or perceived obstacles are taken into account to better understand how the motivation evolves.

4.3.1 Participants interviewed twice

First of all, the soft skills learnt in the VOORwerk training should be used by the participants in order to be consolidated. One way to do so is to take part in volunteer work, or other activities related to the Dutch labour market. Of the four refugees interviewed, three had taken part in consolidating activities. All three experienced it differently. One of them still lives in the COA facilities and relied on the case manager's network. He works a few hours a week inside the reception centre on Mondays and is satisfied with it. Aside from the specific cleaning tasks, he learned to work in an efficient manner, and got to experience working for a Dutch company.

"I help them with cleaning of the kitchens and bathrooms. I do everything they ask me, I can help (...) I found it thanks to the case manager. She asked if I wanted to volunteer and I answered that I would like that. To develop myself, learn new things and see how Dutch people do it (...) it has a big impact on me. That is something in my life. I have experienced a lot thanks to it".

38-year-old man, bus driver, Syria

Another participant has also volunteered soon after the training. The experience did not live up to his expectations and he stopped volunteering for that organisation. The position was also found via the case manager's network in the town. He still lives in the reception centre.

"My case manager found this opportunity with the Hangout project. It is a project that takes care about the youth. And I tried to be with them but I cannot find my goals in

this, in this work. The main goal for me, now, is to learn Dutch as a main mean to communicate with the Dutch entities. But during the hangouts, you can find all the children from the Arabic countries and refugees. I tried to talk with them in Dutch, but they also need to talk with me in Arabic. So, it was a very big problem”.

36-year-old man, HR manager in Syria

The third person that was interviewed a second time and took part in activities had moved soon after the training to a municipality offering him housing while he awaited the reunion with his wife and daughter. He immediately had the opportunity to consolidate the soft skills learnt in the VOORwerk training. He started to volunteer one day per week to begin with. He was also willing to be present more days as soon as his wife and daughter, that had just arrived in the Netherlands, felt safer.

“I started to use soft skills on the first day (after I moved to the municipality). I contacted people in the municipality to build a network (...) to find employment. (...) On my first appointment, I brought my CV”.

33-year-old man, administration coordinator in Syria.

The last participant interviewed did not wish to volunteer until he found housing for himself and his family that was currently still in Turkey.

With this in mind, the fact that all four interviewees relay a different experience is interesting, while still touching up on similar themes as during the first round. Their motivation evolved differently depending on their human capital (their gender, age, past education and experience, psychological capital, etc.), their social capital (particularly the bridging type during the case manager appointments or employees from external organisations), their abilities to adapt their cultural capital in the Dutch context (be proactive, use the soft skills etc.) and the context they lived in (in a reception centre, near a town, etc.).

4.3.2 The future prospects of the participants

First of all, the participants’ housing status is a first factor that emerges. On the one hand, the ones who had the possibility to move to a home in a neighbouring municipality had directly opportunities to consolidate soft skills and participate in activities related to the labour market. Employees of an organisation were actively guiding him and such a concrete approach has

possibly reinforced his level of motivation, hope and self-control, while still being aware of the difficulties ahead.

“On my first work day, a man came to talk with me. He was responsible for my activities there. He talked about my language skills and what I can possibly accomplish in the field of accounting. There are possibilities (...) At the moment, I think that I have 70% chances to find a work here, based on my professional experience. But otherwise, I will try to study or try something in the ICT sector to have a better future”.

33-year-old man, administration coordinator in Syria.

On the other hand, another participant still living in a reception centre discussed how heavily his situation impacts his prospects. This shows that the context where refugees evolve (in which town or city, in a reception centre or a municipality) has a strong impact on their labour market prospects and the opportunities they get to build up their social and human capitals.

“Sometimes I cannot see a good future here. I cannot imagine outside of the gate of the AZC because now, I see only one reality: this open prison, which called AZC (...) I think when I have house, I will go hard or quickly, to improve my Dutch language in my house, (...) I will ask the municipality to give me a good opportunity for volunteer work, maybe with older people. Because most of them cannot speak English well (...) In my situation, I cannot think of any plan. Your future depends on others or if you are a lucky or unlucky person, an employee of COA said that (...) I trust myself and I like the challenges. But for me, I am in a bad psychological situation, sometimes I feel I don't want to do anything, I don't want to talk to anyone. But I think that when I will have a house, that will not be a big problem anymore, I will have my privacy, I will have my own life, I will be good”.

36-year-old man, HR manager in Syria

The language skills are a second perceived obstacle to labour market participation. Ten of the fourteen participants said directly after the VOORwerk training that they would focus more on their plan to volunteer or their labour market integration after they developed their Dutch language level.

It is too early for me to talk about volunteering because we first have to understand the language.

52-year-old woman, Home maker in Syria

As a result, the participants' experienced stimulation to participate in the Dutch labour market is not necessarily maintained after the end of the training and the mentoring sessions.

In conclusion, many participants benefitted from taking part in the VOORwerk project and were motivated to participate in the Dutch labour market directly after the training. This motivation was possible due to the introspective, practical and mentoring content of the program. In return, the refugees took part in volunteering work and developed their psychological capital. The pattern of the motivation differed however amongst the group due to their human, social and cultural capital or contextual variables. Finally, learning the local language and finding housing in a municipality were seen often as a priority to be attained before focusing on finding a work experience.

5 Discussion and conclusion

While the findings developed in the results section reflect the content of recent publications, some themes seen from the refugees' perspective in the Dutch context add up to pre-existing knowledge: an asymmetric perception of the concept of proactivity, and a broader reflexion on society's role (with COA employees as its proxys) in the integration process, less frequently part of the public discourse. More concretely, four research questions guided the reflection of this study.

The first question this study investigates is *what the goals of the VOORwerk project are and how they are implemented*. In the data gathered, three properties of the VOORwerk project appear to motivate the participants to take steps towards their labour market participation. First, it is built so that the participants focus on their own strengths to build up on skills they already possess or develop other ones. This helps them to better position themselves *vis a vis* the Dutch labour market and possibly adapt to better fit in it (Akerboom and Wörmann, 2016). Second, it uses practical exercises. This helps to start a consolidation of the soft skills learned, and may therefore facilitate their transfer from the training setting to the job market (Laker and Powell, 2011; and Tonhauser and Buker, 2016). Third, the mentoring component of the VOORwerk project is key to further consolidation and acts as a form of social capital (Konle-Seidl and Bolits, 2016).

More specifically, case managers play a significant role in connecting refugees with the labour market in finding volunteer work, therefore developing their bridging social capital (Gericke et al., 2018). They thereby help them to build local human capital quicker and with less hurdles (Konle-Seidl and Bolits, 2016; and Eggenhofer-Rehart et al., 2018). The case managers also occupy an ideal position to discuss in more depth issues that were not sufficiently assimilated during the training. They thereby can facilitate the transfer of the learned skills (Tonhauser and Buker, 2016). For example, they can promote personal agency (Obschonka et al., 2018 and Hynie, 2018) and discuss its significance in the Dutch society. They are also able to stimulate other factors influencing one's labour market participation such as promoting a non-sequential approach combining language courses with volunteering to avoid wasting time in the reception centre (Engbersen et al., 2015 and de Lange et al., 2017). They can also be a qualified contact person to work from the start with employees from the municipalities (Martin et al., 2016). All in all, the mentoring component from the VOORwerk project stimulates the participants social

capital, the latter influencing other forms of capital, like one's self-efficacy, essential to their psychological capital. It is also key to show to members of the Dutch society that the refugees fulfil their side of the two-way integration process (Castles, 2002).

However, few participants had benefited from the mentoring sessions at the time of the interviews. Similarly, Reed (2018) found that refugees who could get in regular touch with their mentors found volunteer work and built a network, but other ones found it difficult to get in touch with the case managers due to the latter's demanding agenda. Subsequent studies should look into that dynamic, from the point of view of the participants (from various countries of origin) to paint a richer picture, for example using Schinkel's work (2018) on the role of society in the integration process and the necessity for it to adapt to achieve integration.

The second question of this thesis relates to *what extent the refugees are motivated to participate in the labour market after participating in VOORwerk*. Two themes appeared: consolidation via volunteer work and the role of their psychological capital. On the one hand, volunteer work is the most concrete manner to measure one's motivation to participate in the labour market. Most participants were motivated to volunteer after following the training. On the other hand, the VOORwerk training helped many participants to better understand the Dutch labour market, feel hope, and feel a form control on their future. These are resources of psychological capital and directly impact one's well-being (Newman et al., 2014), further facilitating labour market integration (Cobb-Clark, 2015; Tomlinsen and Egan, 2002; and Pajic et al., 2018).

At the same time, this newly regained feeling of control, hope and motivation is not necessarily permanent and can be influenced by contextual factors. Notably, a lack of accreditation of their education (Akerboom et al., 2016), stress (Hainmueller, 2016) or a learned helplessness in the reception centres (Cobb-Clark, 2015) impact heavily on coping self-efficacy (Abraham et al., 2015). While one's psychological capital is fragile, it is also strongly associated with labour market integration. Interestingly, while it is influenced by other factors, it can also impact the same factors positively such as proactivity (Obschonka et al., 2018), social networks (Wehrle et al., 2018; and Eggenhofer-Rehart et al., 2018), language skills etc. (OECD, 2018). This is why the resources of psychological capital (optimism, hope, self-efficacy and resilience) should be fostered, a task that could be filled within the VOORwerk project. Similar conclusions were drawn in the parallel research: some VOORwerk participants found volunteer work or internships via their case manager. The non-participants also found similar positions

via word of mouth or through a friend. Reed (2018) explained that the difference between both groups is that the VOORwerk participants proceeded through their path with more confidence, hope and a better understanding the Dutch labour market. Of course, raising one's psychological capital is not sufficient to motivate him or her and there is very little literature that focuses on the refugee's subjective experience of empowerment. This is why the link between refugee's motivation towards the labour market and their psychological capital should be further studied in a qualitative setting.

Furthermore, the refugees and employees' cultural background influences their understanding of soft skills, especially one's personal agency, a key to consolidation and part of their cultural capital (Alaraj, 2018; and Siebers, 2018). On the one hand, the COA employees see own initiative (or proactivity, or "self-rescuing") as an active, individual and independent attribute (Akerboom and Wörmann, 2016; Obschonka et al., 2018; and Hynie, 2018). Following this train of thought, the refugees are solely responsible of their own integration¹⁴. On the other hand, refugees have a more passive vision of proactivity and would tend to seize chances that are available, but not generate them. This difference makes it difficult for refugees to unpack their human capital in the Netherlands (Greenspan et al., 2018; Konle-Seidl and Bolits, 2016).

The third question of this research is linked to *how the effect of the participation in VOORwerk evolve over time*. The interviews conducted with the refugees helped to understand how the soft skills learned in the VOORwerk training are consolidated in sessions with their case managers and during volunteering activities. Unfortunately, this process is sometimes hindered by obstacles such as poor local language skills (OECD, 2018). The parallel study relayed a similar point. Participants and non-participants were equally hampered by their lack of local language skills. Other obstacles include not knowing when their family will reunite or when they will obtain housing in municipalities (Obschonka et al., 2018; and Eggenhofer-Rehart et al., 2018).

This is why proactivity, already part of the VOORwerk project, should be further detailed in both components of the project and a broader discussion on its different meanings should take

¹⁴ This also transpired in recent national policies. In its recent communication of new regulations on migrants' integration, the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment, W. Koolmees, insisted that motivation and self-rescuing abilities were key aspects of one's integration (Minister of Social Affairs and Employment, 2018).

place. More importantly, proactivity is a perfect example of the duality of the integration process as defined by Castles (2002). While refugees have to show agency and willingness to adapt, the host country should attempt to better understand the cultural differences to further facilitate access to the labour market (Bakker, 2016; Castles, 2002; European Migration Network, 2016; and Hynie, M., 2018). This means that a wider debate and analysis on the meaning of “self-rescuing” capabilities should take place to better understand them. This should allow organisations to foster them, especially when recent policies also cite these skills as key to integration (Minister of Social Affairs and Employment, 2018).

In addition to the three research questions, the importance of a partnership with the municipalities emerged from the analysis of the interviews. As discussed above, refugees explain that they want to delay further language training or labour market participation until they obtain housing. They would like to avoid investing energy in building a network in a town where they will not stay and therefore waste their valuable time awaiting in reception centres. This goes against recommendations from a large body of literature (Huizing and van Hoven, 2018). In contrast, an early line of communication with the municipalities to which they have been assigned is key to the consolidation of the soft skills learned and other factors influencing their labour market participation (Martin et al., 2016): they can maintain or develop their psychological capital (Bakker et al., 2016), social network (Wehrle et al., 2018), and get an opportunity to consolidate their agency and other soft skills learned in the VOORwerk project. Once again, this tentative conclusion is drawn upon a small and homogenous (similar origin) group of interviewees.

Recent political developments in the Netherlands contribute to this question. In his latest communication of new regulations on migrants’ integration, the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment (2018) details a new policy insisting on, amongst other points, the role of the municipalities in refugees’ integration. The municipalities should, from 2020, provide tailored and non-sequential programs to facilitate labour market integration. More importantly, their counselling responsibilities begin when the refugees are still residing in reception centres. This would help them to retain and foster the gained psychological capital, the subsequent motivation, and the social network newly acquired. For example, the municipalities, organisations and partners in the Region Hart van Brabant are currently constructing an integration+ approach. It combines tailored integration and language classes. The collaboration with the COA is also central (de Kok, 2018). In this case as well, the new policies should be

continuously evaluated, especially when they have high ambitions (Weatherly and Lipsky, 1977)

In conclusion, the four aspects discussed above integrate into the capital model inspired by Bourdieu (1977, 1990, *in* Eggenhofer-Rehart et al., 2018): multiple factors detailed in the literature also surface in the interviews shared with refugees. These factors seem to not intervene separately but as a network of interconnected entities. Once one of them is stimulated, it could radiate to catalyse other ones. In the context of VOORwerk, feelings of hope and control have the potential to impact the participants' proactivity, social network and they, together could facilitate one's labour market prospects of participation. The opposite process is also possible. Participation could in return reinforce the same factors as well. Moreover, individual differences can also stop that motivation as easily. For example, not knowing when they will find housing or a lack of control due to older age or less transferable qualifications to the Netherlands can start a cycle of negative reinforcement of the motivation experienced at the end of VOORwerk.

6 Recommendations

First of all, the COA could implement practical measures to make sure case managers have enough time to help out all participants to consolidate the soft skills they have learned with VOORwerk and the experienced gain in psychological capital.

1: Provide more hours to case managers and review their responsibilities.

Second, the COA could slightly modify the content of the training to answer to refugees' feedback: (1) include excursions where the participants can interact with the actual labour market (this is already a practice in some COA locations); (2) most participants found the training sessions too long and would benefit from them being split over more days.

2: Include systematically excursions and review the schedule of the training.

Third, the COA could create more opportunities to foster the refugees' newly (re-)discovered soft skills. This could be possible during monthly workshops where alumni of the program (residing in or outside of the centre) meet up and discuss their progress.

3: Organise periodic workshops around labour market participation.

Fourth, a larger debate could take place between the COA, public entities and academia to better understand the role of refugees' personal agency and why such a key soft skill in the Netherlands often lacks in the target group.

4: Discuss “proactivity” as part of the integration process between the refugees and the Dutch society.

Fifth, as advised by minister Koolmees, a faster and efficient line of communication could take place between the refugees and the municipalities to reinforce a feeling of control and hope.

5: Systematise communication between refugees and municipalities.

Finally, further research could be conducted on this topic to address limitations of this study: the sample size, and the fact that only Syrian refugees were interviewed. An ideal manner to do so is for universities to work in partnership with the COA, IOM, UAF, municipalities to set up a qualitative evaluation model to assess the impact of recent political developments.

6: Conduct a long-term cohort study based on a partnership between relevant entities in the field of labour market integration of refugees.

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8 Appendixes

8.1 Informed consent letter.



COA Centraal Orgaan opvang asielzoekers



Toestemmingsverklaring

تصريح موافقة

De ondergetekende,

الموافق أذنان

Naam :

الاسم

Geb. dat. :/...../.....

تاريخ الميلاد

Zegt toe mee te willen werken aan een interview voor een onderzoek van project VOORwerk. Hierbij geeft u toestemming aan het Centraal Orgaan opvang asielzoekers (COA), om gebruik te maken van de informatie die uit het interview komt. Deze data zal geanonimiseerd verwerkt, geanalyseerd en opgetekend worden in een onderzoeksrapport.

موافق لعمل مقابلة لبحث حول مشروع فورويرك. أنت بهذا التصريح توافق للجهاز المركزي لاستقبال طالبي اللجوء على استخدام المعلومات التي تأتي من الاستطلاع أو المقابلة. وستتم معالجة هذه البيانات دون الكشف عن هويتها وتحليلها وتسجيلها في تقرير بحثي.

Handtekening :
التوقيع

Datum
التاريخ

ondertekening :/...../.....
التوقيع

8.2 Questions from the participants interview

My name is Laurence Blavier and I am a student at Tilburg University. For my master thesis, I participate in a study that evaluates the VOORwerk project. I am interested in your opinion on the VOORwerk training and on the case manager counselling. I would like to know if it helped you and how it helped you to find internships, volunteering possibilities or other activities towards finding a job in the Netherlands.

We are going to discuss this in an interview that can be as long as you wish. It should last for approximately one hour. You can stop the interview at any time and you can also decide to not answer the questions you do not wish to.

The information you share will be kept confidential. Before we start with the interview, I would like to ask you to sign this consent form, and ask if I can record our interview conversation.

- What is your opinion on the training?
 - which elements were most useful to you?
 - which elements were not useful in your opinion?
 - What is your opinion on the help provided by the Case Manager?
- Could you please explain if Soft Skills were important in your previous jobs?
- How important do you think soft skills are to find a job in the Netherlands?
 - Could you please explain if your expectations to find a job or work experience in the Netherlands have changed due to the training?
- How did you develop your personal plan to find a job or some work experience?
 - Which steps have you already taken?
- After the training, how sure are you to find a job or some work experience?
- After the training, how informed do you feel about how to find a job or some work experience?
- Would you like to add anything before we end today's interview?

Thank you very much for sharing this with me today. I hope we can meet again in two months to talk about your next steps.