



One Step Forward and Two Steps Back: The Role of Civil Society Organizations in Reversed Integration Processes among Refugees in Norway

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ABSTRACT

Refugees settling in Norway experience several barriers to labour market integration, such as language insufficiency, low or unrecognised formal competence, and discrimination. While numerous scholars have dealt with the issues of both policy implementation and the outcome of public measures, there is a growing interest in the contributions of civil society organizations (CSOs) to the labour market integration of refugees. Such an interest is fueled by the proliferation of neoliberal reforms in European welfare states and restrictive budgets, leading to increased recognition of CSOs as resolutions to social issues. Based on ethnographic fieldwork among refugees and employees in two CSOs in Norway, the findings suggest a particularly vulnerable phase immediately after the public introduction programme for refugees not moving on to employment, education, or training. Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of different forms of capital in addition to Granovetter's theory of social network, I argue that CSOs have a profound role in preventing the reversed integration processes that occur in this specific phase of settlement.

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The increase in asylum seekers entering Norway in 2015 evoked a need for a broader understanding of how various actors contribute to integrating refugees. There are several parameters to measure integration, although the term itself is contested within academic circles (Magazzini 2020; Saharso 2019). However, all-encompassing welfare states, like the Norwegian, consider labour market integration as the primary indicator of successful integration (Joyce 2019; Øverbye & Stjernø 2012), which also makes up the analytical focus of this study. The introduction programme is the main public measure to ensure the labour market integration of refugees. It is mandatory for newly arrived refugees and their family members between the age of 18 and 55 if they need basic qualifications. The programme is a full-time offer lasting from three months to four years, depending on the individual needs (Brochmann 2017). Despite comprehensive public measures and incentives, a substantial number of refugees still end up outside the labour market (Djuve et al. 2017). In this study, I pay particular attention to the group of refugees not moving on to employment, education, or training after the introduction programme because they seem to be moving further away from the labour market. There is a substantial scholarly interest in the outcomes of public measures, particularly the introduction programme, which reflects the strong emphasis on the state's role in the subject of matter (Djuve et al. 2017; Enes 2017; Guribye & Espegren 2019; Lillevik & Tyldum 2018). There is, however, a need for further research on refugees' subjective migration experiences concerning labour market integration (Wong 2020) while simultaneously including other stakeholders that impact these processes.

Both the proliferation of neoliberal reforms in European welfare states and the financial crisis have contributed to an increased focus on the potential embedded in civil society (Kourachanis 2020). Moreover, the post-2014 refluxes of refugees made the public sector in many European countries struggle to satisfy the need for labour market integration services (Numerato, Čada & Hoření 2019). Thus, there is a growing body of literature investigating the role of civil society in the labour market integration of refugees (Åberg 2013; Bagavos & Kourachanis 2022; Baglioni, Calò & Numerato 2022; Bontenbal & Lillie 2022; Calò, Montgomery & Baglioni 2022; Numerato et al. 2019). Findings from a large research project, including studies from Finland, the UK, Greece, Italy, Switzerland, and the Czech Republic, have highlighted the various patterns of private-public collaboration, in addition to the various ways CSOs contribute in the different contexts (Baglioni et al. 2022; Numerato et al. 2019). In the Norwegian context, research on civil society and integration has mainly revolved around minority groups' participation in civil society, which clearly states that the minority population is less represented in CSOs (Eimhjellen, Espegren & Nærland 2021; Kraglund & Enjolras 2017; Loga 2012). However, empirical studies on the contributions of CSOs in the labour market integration of refugees are lacking.

In this study, I highlight salient resources that enable refugees to move towards the labour market and how CSOs contribute to making such resources available. Theories on different forms of capital (Bourdieu 1986) and social networks (Granovetter 1973) provide a theoretical framework that captures how CSOs may contribute to opposing reversed integration processes in a particularly vulnerable phase of settlement for refugees, not in employment, education, or training. The term 'reversed integration' has primarily been used within disability research (Venema 2016). However, this term is also beneficial in migration research. In this case, I coin it to describe processes

among refugees where their capital accumulation is declining. This article aims to contribute to the debate on the impact capital accumulation has on refugees' labour market integration in a specific phase where the development and sustainment of capital could not only oppose an adverse path but positively influence refugees' gravity towards the labour market. Additionally, it seeks to further our understanding of how CSOs can offer refugees access to resources that increase their chances of capital accumulation. First, I will elaborate on the role of CSOs in increasingly neoliberal welfare states.

SITUATING THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE WELFARE STATE

In the wake of the financial crisis in Europe, new and innovative ways of reducing bureaucratic costs and efficient solutions to social demands and challenges have been on the agenda (Kourachanis 2020). Such a focus has led to a paradigmatic shift in social policies across Europe heavily influenced by neoliberal discourses and reforms, which promote market liberalisation and professionalism intending to decrease welfare dependency (Bagavos & Kourachanis 2022; Kamali & Jönsson 2018; Kourachanis 2020). The Nordic countries, which traditionally have been regarded as developed welfare states with a strong public sector, are also influenced by this shift and are becoming more similar to other welfare states in Europe (Kamali & Jönsson 2018). Such trends have provided a renewed interest concerning the voluntary sector's role in future welfare states (Kamali & Jönsson 2018; Selle, Strømsnes & Loga 2018). The embedded potential in, and the increased expectations of the voluntary sector (Loga 2018), are often discussed in terms of welfare pluralism, or the 'welfare mix' (Dahlberg 2005; Loga 2018). The concept of welfare pluralism focuses on how various actors can provide welfare services and is characterised by a purposeful duplication of activities in a pluralised market of services (Dahlberg 2005). The financial crisis in Europe contributed to accepting welfare pluralism as the dominant approach to resolving social issues, which led to increased recognition of CSOs as solutions (Bagavos & Kourachanis 2022; Kourachanis 2020). Although a general trend towards expanding the role of civil society, this varies over time and in different contexts. CSOs are central providers of welfare services in some countries while they in others play a marginal and supplementary role (Baglioni et al. 2022; Bruzelius 2020; Dahlberg 2005). While the public state is still regarded as the dominant welfare provider in Norway, government reports emphasise that the public sector alone cannot bear the responsibility of welfare production in the future, calling on different forms of cooperation between the public sector and civil society to be developed (Loga 2012). National social policies have a strong orientation towards small-scale voluntary activity, with clear expectations of the voluntary sector's contribution to integration policies, thus perceiving civil society actors as significant in fulfilling political aims. Social capital growth in local societies, emphasising the importance of networks, norms, and trust, has been explicitly stated in public papers as an expectation towards the sector (Kunnskapsdepartementet 2021; Selle et al. 2018). Based on the increased interest in civil society as a valuable stakeholder in immigrant integration, the article provides an empirically informed discussion on how CSOs in Norway contribute to bridging the gaps in the public welfare state.

CAPITAL ACQUISITION AND CONVERSION

Capital theory provides an analytical prism to describe how a social group's position is determined by *economic*, *cultural*, and *social* structures of inequality (Nohl et al. 2006). The Bourdieusian perspective of the different forms of capital (Bourdieu 1986) has frequently been used to examine refugees' labour market integration (Erel 2010; Föbker 2019; Wahlbeck & Fortelius 2019). This approach enables us to understand how different forms of capital contribute to and determine the relative position of a group within a social space (Koikkalainen 2014; Lan 2011). *Cultural capital* points to an individual's assets and resources regarding education, skills, and knowledge. In migration research, cultural capital has been widely used to understand integration processes by looking at how the cultural resources that migrants entail are (under) valorized in the country of settlement (Fosslund 2013; Nee & Sanders 2001; Zhou 2005). Furthermore, Bourdieu understands *social capital* as the social relations that enable an individual to advance one's interest (Siisjainen 2003). A recent study from Finland on skilled migrants highlights the need for a distinction between resources and capital by emphasising that resources need to be transformed into capital to positively impact migrants' occupational attainment (Yamazaki 2022). Focusing on ethnic ties, also Anthias' (2007) emphasises the importance of mobilising one's resources because 'resources are not always capital but that resources can be used to create it' (p. 801). For this article, I treat labour market participation as the desired and pursued *economic capital*. Following this idea, cultural and social resources can, given the right circumstances, be converted into economic capital, and utilised to overcome barriers like unemployment. Putnam, a well-known researcher in the field of social capital understands social capital as a public good that measures resources available to cities, states, and nations (Portes & Vickstrom 2015; Putnam 2000). Bourdieu, on the other hand, emphasises social capital as resources inherent in the individual's network and one's ability to command those resources and transform them into economic and cultural capital. Given this study's attention to the sustainment and development of resources valuable to the individual refugee, and the potential of transforming it into capital, I take on Bourdieu's perspective.

This article specifically examines the role of CSOs, which makes the social network dimension of social capital of particular interest. Several studies have engaged with the issue of social ties' contribution to shaping patterns of inclusion for migrants as they resettle in a new country (Bagavos & Kourachanis 2022; Cheung & Phillimore 2014; Gericke et al. 2018; Kalter & Kogan 2014; Korhonen 2006; Popivanov & Kovacheva 2019). It is common to distinguish between *bonding social capital* and *bridging social capital* (Putnam 2000). Bonding social capital refers to relations within a group that share similarities on important demographic parameters. Bridging social capital, on the other hand, describes connections between groups in a community usually divided by boundaries such as class, ethnicity, or religion (Claridge 2018). This distinction, introduced by Putnam (2000), builds on Granovetter's previous work on embeddedness, addressing the network function of various social ties (Claridge 2018). Granovetter (1973) defines the strength of a tie as 'a (probably linear) combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal services which characterize the tie' (p. 1361). For migrants, both 'old' and 'new' social ties connect them to networks with various strengths and compositions (Popivanov & Kovacheva 2019). Granovetter, however, suggests that cohesive power is embedded in *weak* social connections. He refers to weak ties as the social connections embedded in people's overlapping networks and claims such connections are salient

in facilitating people's mobility opportunities because they, more often than strong ties, can create linkages between members in *different* groups (Granovetter 1973). According to this rationale, weak ties are an indispensable asset for people to be integrated into communities. For refugees settling into a new community, arenas facilitating encounters with the majority population, for instance, would expand the weak ties in their network and prompt social capital at their disposal.

SOCIAL CAPITAL, NETWORK, AND LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION

Social capital has proven to influence immigrants' access to the labour market and occupational mobility (Aguilera 2002), yet the various social ties in people's networks are prescribed different functions (Segaard & Wollebæk 2011; Søholt, Tronstad & Vestby 2015). Several studies stress that ethnic networks are more heavily relied upon in access to and important information about the labour market (Saksela-Bergholm 2020). The social network they are embedded in can, however, hinder upward social mobility and increase the risk of overqualifications by locking them into low-quality segments of the labour market (Ahmad 2015; Kracke & Klug 2021; Lancee 2013; Leschke & Weiss 2020). Social ties entailing dissimilarities in terms of ethnicity and social level, bridging social capital, seem especially valuable for refugees' labour market integration as it inhibits the potential of social mobility (Gericke et al. 2018). It is reasonable to believe that refugees outside the labour market would have a close network positioned equally. Hence, these bonding networks can be important for emotional and moral support but not as beneficial for inclusion into Norwegian society (Badwi, Ablo & Overå 2018). There is, however, inconsistency in the literature on the importance of social capital. Researchers have argued that the mere possession of social capital is not enough and emphasise human capital as more critical (Cheung & Phillimore 2014; Potocky-Tripodi 2004). Moreover, authors have critiqued theories on social capital because they underestimate the importance of temporal differentiations, in addition to gender and power relations (Anthias 2007; Erel 2010). By taking on Bourdieu's understanding of the different forms of capital, the varied and intertwined dimensions of resources are emphasised, which coincides with the analytical focus of this article. This article aims to extend the literature on the role of capital accumulation and social networks in refugees' labour market integration by looking at a phase of precarity for refugees on their move towards the Norwegian labour market and how CSOs contribute to this.

METHODS

This article is based on longitudinal, qualitative research conducted between May 2020 and February 2022 at three civil society organizations (CSO) working with refugees in Norway. The analysis draws on participant observation and in-depth interviews with 10 refugees and 4 representatives from the organisations. Given the central part participant observation has in the research design and the focus on investigating a small sample of cases (Atkinson & Hammersley 1998), the fieldwork takes an ethnographic approach focusing on 'shared and learned patterns of values, behaviours, beliefs, and language of a culture-sharing group' (Creswell 2013: 68). The participant observation took place within two of the study's organisations, over 18 months. I participated in work practise and community courses in addition to events

and trips arranged by the organisations. I got to know the participants over time, as they actively took part in discussions and conversations about different aspects of life in Norway.

The individual interviews lasted between 1 and 2 hours, were based on a life story approach (Atkinson 1998), and touched upon topics like background, education, migration journey, current situation, as well as thoughts and ideas about working in Norway. Additionally, five refugees were re-interviewed one year after the initial interview to get a deeper insight into different settlement phases. The refugees interviewed were aged between 23 and 50 and had different backgrounds in terms of ethnicity, religion, educational level, gender, and work experience. From an organisational perspective, all the participants were employed by the CSO, yet they varied in their role, years of employment, and educational background.

The material was analysed in line with the 'six-phase approach' to thematic analysis introduced by Braun and Clarke (2012). Following this approach, the material was transcribed, coded, and analysed in NVivo. Finally, I searched for themes by organising the codes and reviewing potential themes several times.

A PHASE OF PRECARIY – THE TIME AFTER THE INTRODUCTION PROGRAMME

Coherent with other research, the participants in this study experience various barriers to labour market integration. These include language insufficiency, lack of or low formal competence, health issues, and discrimination (Bakker, Dagevos & Engbersen 2017; Elgvin & Svalund 2020; Sørholt et al. 2015). However, the findings also indicate that the phase immediately after the public introduction programme is particularly vulnerable for refugees not in employment, education, or training. In this article, I highlight two main areas of precarity that seem to move refugees further away from the labour market. First, the lack of arenas and opportunities to practise the language constitutes a reversed language progress. Second, their everyday life is characterised by isolation and loneliness, substantiating a lack of belonging. The findings are then discussed in light of the CSO's role in preventing such reversed integration processes. This phase highlights how CSOs operate as an extension of the public welfare state by filling the gaps and shortcomings of the public sector (Bontenbal & Lillie 2022; Mayblin & James 2019).

CULTURAL CAPITAL ACQUISITION: LANGUAGE–THE KEY TO CLOSED DOORS?

The refugees and the CSO employees perceive language proficiency as essential to enter the Norwegian labour market. Karim, a man in his thirties from a Middle Eastern country, claims that his education and work experience from his country of origin have been given little attention in job interviews. In contrast, language proficiency has been the main focus. He emphasises that if you do not hold this key (language), all doors in the labour market are closed. This is also reflected in integration policies and measures where acquiring the language as quickly as possible is explicitly stated as an expectation (Brochmann 2017). Furthermore, it is the reality of a highly formalised labour market, where the language level required is high, even for 'low-skilled' jobs. In such a formalised labour market, cultural capital in the form of educational competence is valorised. However, such competence is devaluated if one needs

to entail a higher level of language proficiency. Therefore, language acquisition as cultural capital is a particularly salient concern for refugees settling in Norway.

The findings suggest, however, that there is a discrepancy between the time given to learn the language, the required language sufficiency in the labour market, and the ambition of labour market integration. For instance, the language training offered through the public introduction programme is perceived as insufficient by the refugees. Behind such perceptions are stories of trauma and stress as they try to settle themselves and their families in a new country while simultaneously learning a new language. Additionally, several women had maternity leave(s) during their time in the introduction programme. During their leave(s), they lacked arenas to practice the language, leading them to start from scratch when they returned to the programme. As such, the situations described by the participants bear a resemblance to Bourdieu's (1986) argument that 'the link between economic and cultural capital is established through the mediation of the time needed for acquisition' (p. 19). This aligns with other research demonstrating language as valuable capital if such resources are mobilised (Wahlbeck & Fortelius 2019; Yamazaki 2022). To convert valorised cultural capital (language proficiency) into economic capital (a job with a steady income), the refugees need time and consistency that enable positive language progress. Additionally, the prerequisite for language learning differs significantly. This is in line with the understanding that capital distribution is not equal but reflects an individual's social world, with its constraints and opportunities. All of which determine one's chance of success (Bourdieu 1986). The requirement of obtaining language level B¹ within two to three years seems out of reach for many of the refugees. However, a high number of available positions in the labour market, even the 'lower-skilled' jobs, require a minimum of language level B2. Work internship is a measure significantly used by public stakeholders to practise the language and get acquainted with the labour market. Many refugees go through many work internships, yet they still need help to reach the required language level. This was the case for Sahara, a woman in her forties from an East-African country:

I was in a 'work internship' for two years in a care home and did a good job. So I expected that it would be possible for me to get a job there. And they said I did a good job, but my Norwegian wasn't good enough to get a job there. So I was frustrated because the job I did was mostly cleaning stuff, and I did not need to be perfect in Norwegian to do that job well.

This highlights the tension between language requirements and personal labour market aspirations. Moreover, while language is essential for the refugees moving towards the labour market, the findings indicate that the refugees need more time and consistency to maintain a positive language process. This additionally demonstrates a shortcoming in the public welfare system. Thus, a precarious phase occurs for refugees who do not move on to employment, education, or training immediately after the introduction programme.

¹ The common European framework for languages is a guideline and level scale for languages developed by the Council of Europe. A1 is the lowest level of language proficiency, and C2 is the highest.

The positive language progress the refugees made through the introduction programme is diminishing because they cannot practise Norwegian after they complete the programme. This phase of inactivity contributes to reversed language progress for refugees outside of employment, education, or training. Wasim, a man in his forties from a Middle Eastern country, left the introduction programme five months ago and did not move on to employment, education, or training. He perceives the phase after the introduction programme as the most challenging part of his time in Norway yet: 'I am just sitting at home. I do not talk to anyone. All my Norwegian words are gone. I remember almost nothing.' He points out that a few months ago, he understood better what people said, but he now even *understands* less Norwegian. His reversed language progress negatively affects his aspirations and hopes of moving towards the labour market. Similarly, Kadir shares the story of his friend who completed the introduction programme with a B1 level in Norwegian. However, he was at home for a long time after the programme, and when he finally managed to get a job, it was in Foodora,² where he did not talk to anyone. Now, he has forgotten most of his Norwegian because he lacks opportunities to practise it. Such cases show how time passing without practising the language has a direct and negative impact on their way towards reaching the language level required in the labour market.

Similarly, Amiira, a woman in her thirties from an East-African country, came to Norway eight years ago and has struggled for many years after she completed the introduction programme: 'When the introduction program was over, they [public stakeholders] said: "now you are done, now you have taken what you should have ..."' And then I was at home for five years, and I forgot the little I had learned. So now I started all over again here at [organization A].'³ When asked what her life looked like during those years, she answered:

I was at home. Did nothing special. Visited others, but that was it. [...] I used to go to NAV and back to school to see if they could offer me anything. In the end, I got a course on how to get a job in Norway. I went to that course. And when the course was over, I was back home. [...] Then they said that I had lived here for five years, so I no longer have the right to free school.

Amira's story is a case in point for many of the women that I met during my time with organisation A. While the reasons that they ended up outside the labour market varied, many of them had spent several years through courses and internships and 'doing nothing,' all of which did not lead to any job. Liv, a CSO employee, also substantiates this:

Several of them say that they sit at home and have spent their given hours in the public system, and then they may have taken some courses through NAV³, but then it has somehow not led to anything, and then they sit at home. So this is the story of many, that they say that they were just sitting there and not speaking Norwegian and not being with anyone. And then they come to [organization A] because they have heard that we offer language training.

² Foodora is an online food delivery service.

³ Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration.

She emphasises that many participants in their language classes have chosen to improve their language proficiency instead of acquiring more formal competence because they perceive it to be a shorter way towards a better economy. Based on the assumption that language is a crucial enabler for refugees to stand a chance in the Norwegian labour market, such reversed language progress not only deprives them of opportunities to develop and enhance their possession of crucial capital but increases an already existing gap between their overall possession of capital compared to the majority population.

WITHDRAWN SOCIAL CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT—ENCLOSED BY ISOLATION AND DESOLATION

For the refugees not in employment, education, or training, the everyday life after the introduction programme is characterised by idleness that creates a sense of isolation and loneliness, which substantiates a lack of belonging. This influences both their aspirations and mental health negatively. Ayla, a woman in her fifties from a Middle Eastern country, completed the introduction programme a few months ago. Health issues make a lot of jobs unattainable for her. She wants to work but perceives her job chances as relatively low. Her time after the introduction programme has been marked by slow and boring days, waiting for something to happen. During her time in the introduction programme, she had a work internship at organisation B and got connected to volunteers and employees. The volunteers come to visit her at home regularly, and once a week, they meet and produce face masks that they sell at organisation B's shop, in which all income goes to Ayla:

Being at home is difficult for me. And especially when I do not have much network or relationships with people here. And you know, time is so long here in Norway. So I think the most relevant and useful thing to do, is what I do now through the organization, [organization B]. To meet people, and do some things that's what can really count for me.

Similarly, Wasim has repeatedly mentioned that he is just at home doing nothing and not talking to anyone. He now elaborates on the consequences of this type of inactivity: 'My body has become heavy. And a little sad.' He emphasises that the body is not heavy physically, but he finds himself in a state of mental heaviness, in which he feels sad and depressed. He is confused and somewhat offended that someone like him, who has worked his entire life, is just sitting at home, isolated, just because his language proficiency was considered insufficient: 'I think I would have learned the job quite quickly, and then my language skills could have developed there.' Maryamo, a woman in her thirties from an East-African country, represents a similar case. After completing a year-long work internship that did not lead to a job, her only option was to go to school, but she could not afford to pay for it. Therefore, she ended up 'just staying at home and had more children.'

The narratives of Ayla, Wasim, and Maryamo showcase how this phase is enclosed by isolation and desolation. As new citizens, the size of their network is small, usually limited to close family connections. Many of the refugees also had limited access to an ethnic network. As a result, their accumulated overall capital is significantly lower than the majority population, which provides them with less potential capital to convert (Bourdieu 1986). Taking on Bourdieu's understanding of social capital as the resources inherited in social relations, the participants enclosed in isolation are

deprived of chances to increase their capital accumulation. Therefore, they need arenas that facilitate the expansion of their network and prompt both cultural and social capital at their disposal. Nearly all the refugees in this study stated that their only connection to the majority population was through the CSOs. This demonstrates that CSOs could function as crucial contributors in developing the refugees' capital and supporting them in their move towards the labour market.

THE SUPPORTING ROLES OF CSOS

The two CSOs in this study differ in structure and measures. Organisation A specifically targets female migrants, offering formal language classes, courses on civic values, creative activities, digital training, and CV writing. Organisation B is oriented around physical activity and targets the Norwegian population in general. However, they are trying out a three-year project directed at newly arrived refugees, offering work internships for participants in the introduction programme, with the aim of long-term inclusion in the organisation. The findings suggest that CSOs provide language training that opposes the reversed language process that occurs in this phase. Additionally, they support the refugees relationally by facilitating arenas that allow them to develop their social networks. Together, the findings demonstrate how CSOs contribute to compensating for the welfare state's limited capacity (Bontenbal & Lillie 2022).

CSOS AS FACILITATORS OF DIFFERENT FORMS OF CAPITAL

While the two CSOs differ in their organisational structures, both perceive language training as one of their main areas of contribution. Amiira explains how five years after the introduction programme, she was back again at level A1, the lowest level of language proficiency: 'I started from scratch: A1, A2. A2, B1. So I'm there now [level B1], and there's a big difference. I have been going here for two years, so I have learned a lot.' This represents the case of many participants in this study and highlights organisation A as a specific arena providing resources that enable the refugees to accumulate cultural capital, which increases their chances of moving towards the labour market.

Organisation B does not offer formal language training, yet they perceive language as one of their main areas of contribution. The refugees emphasised language as one of the most important take-outs from their encounters with organisation B: 'We have learned the language in [organization B]. At INTRO, we only learn words, but here we learn the language.' Moreover, the less formal and more relational settings significantly impacted participants that did not move on to employment, education, or training *after* the introduction programme, as they developed lasting relationships with employees and volunteers through their encounters with the CSO. The extensive inclusion of volunteers in their work led to close relations between many refugees and volunteers. These encounters played a significant role in enabling consistency in the refugees' language practise. In these cases, cultural and social capital development were intertwined as the development of cultural capital was situated within a relational context that simultaneously developed their social capital.

The refugees' chances of success bear on the accumulation of salient cultural capital in the form of language skills, yet this progress is reversed when situated in isolation. The precarity of this phase not only limits their immediate chances in

the labour market but feeds into a continuous deprivation of resources available to acquire cultural capital. As such, the CSOs take on expectations from the public sector (Selle et al. 2018) by contributing towards fulfilling the political aim of labour market integration and, thus, extending the state's welfare provision. The strength of CSOs is their independence and flexible organisational structures, which allow them to tailor and adjust their measures towards the specific needs of their participants (Bontenbal & Lillie 2022; Numerato et al. 2019). I argue that CSOs have a profound role in opposing the reversed capital acquisition for refugees outside of employment, education, or training in this particular phase. This strength could be better utilised with a higher awareness of this phase's negative consequences for the refugees' abilities to move towards the labour market.

CSOS AS NETWORK FACILITATORS

I find that CSOs contribute to opposing isolation and desolation by facilitating arenas that allow the refugees to develop their social network. First, they support the refugees by developing social ties of various strengths that uphold meaning and motivation during a waiting time. Second, they build communities that increase social capital at their disposal when moving towards the labour market.

Christine, the project manager in organisation B, works actively to facilitate voluntary work participation for the refugees affiliated with them. When she asks the refugees connected to them what they want to do, they answer: 'We want to work. We want to do something.' Christine claims one of the reasons the refugees want to volunteer with them seems to be the fulfilment of hard physical work. Second, the social relations that develop as part of a community constitute a sense of belonging. A third reason is the experience of doing something meaningful because they contribute with their resources. On several occasions, Christine has shared the immense number of hours she put in to organise for the refugees to participate in volunteer community work, such as getting babysitters, transportation, and essential equipment. The ability to make this happen can be attributed to the benefits of a flexible and dynamic organisational structure, which distinguishes them from the more rigid structures and measures of public stakeholders.

Many women taking language classes with organisation A do this because they want meaningful activities after time in isolation. They claim it to be 'not good for the head' to stay at home. During a conversation with Maryamo, she explained how her time in isolation pushed her to get out of her comfort zone and actively take part in something that could help her move forward, which made her contact organisation A. Liv, one of the employees, claims that women participating in their activities have made new friends among each other, which also have contributed to a sense of community and belonging: 'they say that their health has improved after they started here.' Based on Granovetter's understanding that the strength of a tie is measured by the amount of time, emotional connection, intimacy, and reciprocity a tie is provided with, these ties could be regarded as *weak ties* (1973). In this case, social ties are created between people with high levels of similarities on demographic parameters, which indicates that the community contributes to developing their bonding social capital by providing space for the women to create and strengthen their social ties. Such ties are important in terms of emotional support and a sense of belonging (Easton-Calabria & Wood 2021; Saksela-Bergholm 2020), yet less beneficial as resources that would enhance their chances of social mobility (Badwi et al. 2018). However, they are

important in keeping the refugees out of isolation and upholding a sense of meaning and motivation to actively move towards the labour market.

The findings indicate that employees and volunteers have a substantial relational significance in the refugees' lives. In some cases, the social ties established between the refugees and volunteers or employees can be regarded as weak in terms of being 'new' ties linking members from *different* small groups (Granovetter 1973). Nevertheless, the intensity of the tie is relatively strong. Christine, for instance, the project manager in organization B, is often referred to as a 'sister,' reflecting the close and familiar relationship that has developed between them:

I do this because my relationship with them has become what it has. Because I've been with the whole family so much. Because I've just been camping with them for four days, tucking in and singing goodnight songs for their kids. Because we have become brother and sister. (...) It is important to me that it should be real and authentic and that we go out of this project, and I call them friends, and they call me friends. They do call me sister and mother and I brother, and that's what I think is, that's what makes it successful. That's where the key lies. If we operate with this professional distance, then we do not meet the elementary needs they have to land here safely somehow.

Christine believes public stakeholders uphold 'professional distance' as a treasured value. However, for her, the desirable way of working with newly arrived refugees is instead the opposite; to *not* keep a professional distance. In her view, consciously creating social ties that bind them together and breaking that distance is their key to success.

Moreover, several participants share that they actively use their affiliation with the CSOs when applying for jobs. Many refugees are conscious of the importance of developing their social network to enhance their access to the labour market. They use employees from the CSOs as references when applying for jobs and have been offered jobs directly through employees or volunteers. While Karim, a man in his thirties from a Middle Eastern country, regards language proficiency as the most important, he perceives organisation B to have a crucial role in enhancing his possession of social capital:

I applied for around 50 jobs and was denied all but one, where I was called in for an interview. In the interview, they were not very interested in my experience from my home country, but they showed great interest in the work internship I had in [organization B]. Those who interviewed me were well acquainted with [organization B] 's work and found it interesting that I had experience there. [...] My connection with [organization B] made my position stronger than I had otherwise had in the interview.

Although Karim perceives his position in the labour market as weaker than the majority population, he claims his affiliation with organisation B to increase his chances of getting a job, compared to others positioned like himself. Moreover, by deliberately using the social capital accumulated with the CSO, he additionally demonstrates an ability to command those resources in an attempt to transform them into economic capital (Bourdieu 1986).

This article has highlighted how the immediate phase after the introduction programme, refugees not moving on to employment, education, or training, constitute processes of *reversed integration*. In this phase, the findings show that they need more chances to acquire salient capital important for labour market integration, particularly language skills and network development. Second, the article has shed light on how CSOs support refugees through the difficulties experienced in this specific phase and, as such, contribute to opposing reversed integration processes. Moreover, restrictive budgets and neoliberal reforms in many European countries, including Norway, have led to social policies with an increased focus on and expectations of the voluntary sector as an important stakeholder in societal challenges like immigrant integration, often referred to as welfare pluralism (Dahlberg 2005; Kamali & Jönsson 2018; Kourachanis 2020). Finally, this article is an empirical case in point on how CSOs fill the gaps in a comprehensive welfare state like the Norwegian (Bontenbal & Lillie 2022; Loga 2018).

Bourdieu argues that the composition of an individual's overall capital is the intertwined dimensions of economic, cultural, and social capital (Bourdieu 1986). Refugees settling in a new country entail less overall capital within all these areas than the majority population (Fosslund 2013; Föbker 2019; Wahlbeck & Fortelius 2019). How refugees gain and utilise capital that enhances their opportunities in the labour market, then further our understanding of how CSOs, as specific facilitators, contribute to this. Two main areas of precarity that seem to move the refugees further away from the labour market have been highlighted. First, the lack of arenas to practise and develop their language constitutes a reversed language progress. While language is proven to be a key enabler to accessing the Norwegian labour market, the inactivity of this phase diminishes their chances of success. Second, this phase is marked by isolation and desolation that substantiate outsidership and lack of belonging, which negatively influence their aspirations and mental health. Based on this, I argue that the refugees are situated in positions that deprive them of the chances of capital acquisition that would increase their chances of becoming self-sufficient. Such reversed integration processes are consequential to their current chances of labour market integration and increase their chances of perpetual social immobility.

The contributions of the CSOs are both practical and relational. Many refugees who demonstrated reversed language progress because of inactivity and isolation after the introduction programme showed positive language progress through formal training with the CSO. The informal and relational settings created social ties with volunteers and employees from the majority population that enabled consistency and progress in their language proficiency immediately after the introduction programme. It demonstrates CSOs as capital facilitators, enabling essential capital accumulation. Furthermore, by facilitating arenas that expanded the refugees' social network, the CSOs contributed to opposing isolation and loneliness and provided the refugees with social capital that increased their chances of success on their move towards the labour market (Aguilera 2002). The CSOs' structural flexibility and relational capacities enable them to facilitate salient capital development for refugees in this phase and, as such, represent an essential supplement to the comprehensive integration measures offered by the public.

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