



A match made in heaven?

Buddy programmes for newly arrived migrants: Opportunities and constraints

Gaëlle Mortier



Faculty of Social Sciences

Department of Sociology

A match made in heaven?

Buddy programmes for newly arrived migrants: Opportunities and constraints

Dissertation submitted for the degree of Doctor of Social Sciences: Sociology

at the University of Antwerp

to be defended by

Gaëlle Mortier

Supervisors

Prof. dr. Stijn Oosterlynck

Prof. dr. Peter Raeymaeckers

Antwerp, 2024

A match made in heaven?

**Buddy programmes for newly arrived
migrants:**

Opportunities and constraints

Doctoral Advisory and Examination Committee

Supervisors	Prof. dr. Stijn Oosterlynck, University of Antwerp Prof. dr. Peter Raeymaeckers, University of Antwerp
Chair	Prof. dr. Mieke Schrooten, University of Antwerp
Members	dr. Bea Van Robaeys, Karel de Grote Hogeschool Prof. dr. Ilke Adam, Free University of Brussels Prof. dr. Robin Vandevordt, Ghent University

Cover illustration by Bendt Eyckermans

This dissertation is accomplished with financial support from the University of Antwerp and the Hannah Arendt Institute for Citizenship, Urbanity, and Diversity.

Disclaimer: The author allows to consult and copy parts of this work for personal use. Further reproduction or transmission in any form or by any means, without the prior permission of the author is strictly forbidden.

Acknowledgements

Ik wil graag beginnen met mijn promotors, Stijn en Peter, te bedanken voor de kans die jullie mij hebben gegeven, of moet ik zeggen 'tweede kans'? Vol ongeloof was ik toen ik vernam dat ik - omwille van een e-mail die niet bij jullie terecht gekomen was- mijn sollicitatiegesprek had gemist. Ik moest en zou solliciteren voor die doctoraatspositie, maar ik was bang dat deze miscommunicatie mij de job had gekost. Toch kon ik enkele dagen later, onzeker maar vastberaden, uit de doeken doen waarom ik geknipt was om onderzoek te voeren naar buddyprojecten voor nieuwkomers. En de rest is geschiedenis. Ik wil jullie graag bedanken voor de begeleiding, de constructieve feedback en om steeds in mijn capaciteiten als onderzoeker te geloven, ook wanneer ik hier zelf erg over twijfelde. Bedankt om steeds kritisch, maar tegelijkertijd met het oog op het creëren van kansen, het doctoraat gedurende de afgelopen vier jaar te ondersteunen.

Ik wil ook graag mijn dank uiten aan mijn commissieleden professor Mieke Schrooten, professor Robin Vandevordt en Bea Van Robaey. Mieke, bedankt om de rol van voorzitter van mijn doctoraatscommissie op jou te nemen. Robin, bedankt om mijn onderzoek naar een hoger niveau te tillen. Bea, jouw rapport en boek over buddywerkingen is de eerste literatuur die ik voor deze doctoraatsstudie onder de loep heb genomen, maar ik heb hier ook talloze keren naar teruggegrepen wanneer ik nood had aan wetenschappelijke inzichten in een verstaanbare taal. Ook een grote dank aan jurylid, Ilke Adam. Daarnaast ik wil graag mijn collega's bij CRESC bedanken. Doctoreren is soms een eenzaam lot, maar toch werd ik gedragen door de fijne mensen rond me heen. Ik wil graag nadrukkelijk Eline, Ona en Lise bedanken om mij te vergezellen in mijn talloze maar broodnodige bib-sessies, waarbij hard gewerkt maar soms ook eens goed geklaagd werd. Jullie morele steun heeft ervoor gezorgd dat ik op moeilijke momenten heb doorgezet. Tevens een dankjewel aan Sara, Joëlle en Elien voor de inhoudelijke feedback en de boeiende gesprekjes. Uiteraard wil ik ook de respondenten die deelname aan dit onderzoek bedanken. Zonder jullie was het doctoraatsonderzoek niet mogelijk geweest. Ik wil mijn speciale dank uiten aan de buddy's die ik mocht interviewen. Jullie zetten jullie belangeloos in voor mensen die op zoek zijn naar hun plek in de samenleving, waar ik ontzettend veel bewondering voor heb. Dit kan mijn wankel vertrouwen in de mensheid alleen maar ten goede komen.

Mijn positie als doctoranda speelde zich niet enkel af op de stadscampus van de Universiteit Antwerpen, maar ik genoot ook van het privilege om als onderzoeker verbonden te zijn aan het Hannah Arendt Instituut. Als brug tussen de wetenschap en samenleving, stimuleerde het instituut mij om mijn onderzoeksresultaten naar buiten te brengen in de vorm van video's, workshops en blogberichten. Het multidisciplinair team van het Hannah Arendt Instituut heeft mij aangemoedigd om verbinding te zoeken met beleidsmakers, professionals en burgers. Ik vond het enorm fijn om af en toe mee te mogen draaien in de operationele werking van het HAI en ik keek er dan ook steeds naar uit om het tweewekelijks overleg te mogen bijwonen. Ik wil meer specifiek de volgende collega's bedanken: Christophe, Marjan, Landry, Joris, Cynthia, Kirsten, Nathalie, Kamiel, Younis, Maxim en Katrien.

Tot slot, wil ik graag mijn familie en vrienden bedanken voor de onvoorwaardelijke steun: Kathleen, Olivier, Thibault, Amaury, Jan, Marijke, Viktor, Yen, Sarah, Magalie, Leonie, Anne, Aaron, Josephine, Aline. Daarbij wil ik het doctoraat opdragen aan mijn grootouders, die mij steeds hebben gesteund in mijn studententijd waar mogelijk. Afsluiten wil ik doen met extra credits te geven aan mijn vriend, Bendt, wie vanop de eerste rij gedurende vier jaar heeft gesupporterd, wie heel veel gezaag heeft moeten aanhoren en wie, wanneer ik door de bomen het bos niet meer kon zien, dat wel zag. Heel erg bedankt om er steeds voor mij te zijn en natuurlijk voor het prachtige voorblad.

Summary

In recent years, buddy programmes for newly arrived migrants have been gaining popularity. The intervention is increasingly integrated into the policy-making process, specifically within the fourth pillar of the Flemish government's civic integration programme. Guidance provided by individuals from the host society (buddies) would support the social participation and integration of migrant newcomers. Moreover, special attention is paid to expanding the social networks of newcomers through buddy programmes. However, previous research has left unspecified why, under which circumstances, and for whom buddy programmes work in the context of migrant integration. From a multi-stakeholder perspective, this dissertation therefore focuses on what makes buddy programmes effective in fostering the integration process of newcomers into the host society, in particular in expanding their social networks.

In my introductory chapter, I will first discuss the contested concept of migrant integration and its European and Flemish policy context, with a particular focus on the local turn in migrant integration policies. After that, I will discuss the emergence of buddy programmes in Flanders. Then, I will present my methodological framework and the research questions. Subsequently, I will reflect on my researcher positionality and the limitations of this study. Chapter one consists of a literature review in which, among other things, the contact hypothesis, the socialisation of care, and relational and organisational success factors of buddy programmes are discussed in detail. Chapter two focuses on the perspectives of policymakers regarding the generative mechanisms of buddy programmes that lead to integration outcomes. Chapter three draws on brokerage theory and more specifically scrutinizes the brokerage behaviour of volunteer buddies and coordinators of buddy programmes to understand social network expansion of newcomers. In chapter four, particular emphasis is placed on the construction and deconstruction of power imbalances in the dyadic relationships between buddies and newcomers, elaborating on (de-)Othering theory. Overall, my study shows that the policy objective of social network expansion for newcomers is not necessarily achieved through buddy programmes. In this respect, I argue that the agency of dyad members cannot be overlooked in policy designs on buddy programmes. My study shows that both buddies and newcomers possess a variety of characteristics that significantly influence orientations towards brokerage. In addition, our empirical analysis indicates *modi operandi* in which power asymmetries are further reinforced, suggesting mixed networking outcomes for newcomers. However, this requires some nuance. The finding that buddies seem to fill in the gaps in the integration system has some important implications for the relationships between policy and practice. First, it suggests that buddies lack organisational support to perform their role as befrienders. Second, it highlights the clear limitations of government interventions in pursuing migrant integration and points to the necessity of structural solutions. Third, it allows me to conclude that the actual practice of buddy programmes often contrasts with official policy objectives. Lastly, I will answer the overarching research question of this dissertation by calling upon the notion of institutional trust to foster relationships of trust between newcomers and host society members, and in doing so make buddy programmes effective in achieving migrant integration. I will end my conclusion with recommendations for future research. My study contributes to the emerging call in befriending literature to understand how buddy programmes for newcomers are 'performed' and social relationships on a micro-level are displayed.

Samenvatting

In de afgelopen jaren worden buddyprojecten voor nieuwkomers in toenemende mate aan populariteit. De interventie wordt steeds meer geïntegreerd in het beleidsvormingsproces, en nu ook in de vierde pijler van het Vlaamse inburgeringstraject. Eén-op-één begeleiding door individuen uit de ontvangende samenleving (buddy's) zou de sociale participatie en integratie van nieuwkomers immers bevorderen. Meer specifiek, richt het Vlaamse inburgeringsbeleid zich op het uitbreiden van het sociaal netwerk van nieuwkomers door middel van buddyprogramma's. Het is echter onduidelijk waarom, onder welke omstandigheden en voor wie buddyprojecten werkzaam zouden zijn voor de integratie van nieuwkomers. Vanuit een multi-stakeholder perspectief focust deze doctoraatsstudie zich daarom op wat buddyprogramma's effectief maakt in het ondersteunen van het integratieproces van nieuwkomers in de ontvangende samenleving, en met name in het uitbreiden van hun sociaal netwerk.

In mijn inleidende hoofdstuk zal ik eerst het veel bediscussieerde concept 'integratie' en de Europese en Vlaamse beleidscontext bespreken, met een bijzondere aandacht voor de lokale wending in het migratiebeleid. Daarna zal ik de opkomst van buddyprojecten in Vlaanderen toelichten. Vervolgens zet ik mijn methodologisch kader en de onderzoeksvragen van deze doctoraatsstudie uiteen. Daarna zal ik reflecteren over mijn positie als onderzoeker en over de beperkingen van dit onderzoek. Hoofdstuk één bestaat uit een literatuuroverzicht waarin, onder andere, de contacthypothese, de vermaatschappelijking van de zorg en relationele en organisatorische succesfactoren van buddyprojecten uitgebreid worden besproken. Hoofdstuk twee richt zich op de perspectieven van individuele beleidsmakers op de generatieve mechanismen van buddyprogramma's die tot integratie-uitkomsten zouden leiden. Hoofdstuk drie baseert zich op de Makelaarstheorie (brokerage) en onderzoekt specifiek het makelaarsgedrag van vrijwillige buddy's en coördinatoren van buddyprogramma's om de netwerkversterking van nieuwkomers beter te begrijpen. Hoofdstuk vier besteedt bijzondere aandacht aan de constructie en deconstructie van machtsongelijkheden in de dyadische relatie tussen buddy's en nieuwkomers, waarbij de (de)Othering-theorie wordt gehanteerd.

Deze doctoraatsstudie toont aan dat de beleidsdoelstelling van netwerkverbreding voor nieuwkomers niet noodzakelijk wordt bereikt door middel van buddyprogramma's. In dit opzicht betoog ik dat de agency van het duo niet over het hoofd mag worden gezien in beleidsontwerpen van buddyprojecten. Mijn studie laat namelijk zien dat zowel buddy's als nieuwkomers een verscheidenheid aan kenmerken bezitten die makelaarsgedrag aanzienlijk beïnvloeden. Bovendien geeft onze empirische analyse modi operandi aan waarin machtsongelijkheden tussen het duo verder worden versterkt, wat gemengde uitkomsten voor het netwerk van de nieuwkomer suggereert. Dit vereist echter enige nuance. De bevinding dat de ondersteuning geboden door buddy's hiaten in het integratiesysteem lijken te dichten, heeft belangrijke implicaties voor de relaties tussen beleid en praktijk. Ten eerste, suggereert de bevinding dat buddy's meer doen dan wat ze eigenlijk moeten doen, dat er een gebrek aan organisatorische omkadering is om hun rol als 'befrienders' te vervullen. Ten tweede, wijst het op de beperkingen van overheidsinterventies met betrekking tot de integratie van nieuwkomers en benadrukt het de noodzaak van structurele oplossingen. Ten derde, stelt het mij in staat om te

concluderen dat de daadwerkelijke praktijk van buddyprojecten vaak in contrast staat met officiële beleidsdoelstellingen. Ten slotte, zal ik de overkoepelende onderzoeksvraag van deze doctoraatsstudie beantwoorden door een beroep te doen op het begrip van institutioneel vertrouwen om vertrouwen tussen nieuwkomers en leden van de ontvangende samenleving te bevorderen, en zo buddyprogramma's effectief te laten bijdragen aan de integratie van nieuwkomers. Ik zal mijn conclusie beëindigen met enkele aanbevelingen voor toekomstig onderzoek. Dit onderzoek draagt bij aan de oproep in de literatuur over 'befriending' om beter te begrijpen hoe buddyprogramma's voor nieuwkomers in de praktijk worden uitgevoerd en hoe sociale relaties zich op microniveau afspelen.

Table of contents

Acknowledgements

Summary

Part I

Introduction of the doctoral	1
1. Migrant integration: A conceptual overview of a contested concept	3
2. Migrant (integration) policies in Europe: Towards a shared framework	5
3. Local turn in migrant integration policies	8
4. The Flemish integration policy	10
4.1. Emergence of the policy domain in Belgium	10
4.2. The introduction of Civic Integration in Flanders	13
4.3. Decree of 7 June 2013 Concerning Flemish Integration Policy	14
4.4. Decree of 9th of July 2021 Concerning Flemish Integration Policy	15
5. Emergence of buddy programmes for newcomers in Flanders	19
6. Research questions and overview	20
7. Research methodology	22
7.1. A broad view of Evidence-Based Practice	22
7.2. Case selection	23
7.3. Data collection	29
7.4. Data analysis	31
7.5. Reflexivity and researcher positionality	33
7.6. Limitations	35

Part II

Chapter 1: Research report Hannah Arendt Institute: Participation and Networking Trajectories as the fourth pillar of the new Integration Decree	38
1. Socialisation of care	40
2. Expectations of buddy programmes	42
2.1. The contact hypothesis	42
2.2. Outcomes for the participant	44
2.3. Outcomes for the volunteer buddy	47
3. Conceptualising buddy programmes: Buddies as volunteers	49
4. Supporting practices: Mentoring, befriending, and coaching	50
4.1. Mentoring	51
4.2. Befriending	52
4.3. Coaching	53
5. Success factors	53
5.1. One-to-one relationship versus group context	53

5.2.	Duration and contact frequency	57
5.3.	Combination of instrumental and relational support	58
5.4.	Asymmetric but reciprocal	59
5.5.	Dynamism	60
5.6.	Basic participatory attitude	61
5.7.	Success factors at the organisational level	62
5.8.	Space and setting	66
6.	Buddy versus professional: complementarity or substitution?	67
7.	Tension and challenges: An examination of complexities	69
7.1.	Dichotomy between instrumental and relational support	69
7.2.	Relationships between buddies and professionals	70
7.3.	Methodological challenges	71
8.	Conclusions	73

Chapter 2: Buddy programmes for newly arrived migrants: Perspectives of policymakers on generative mechanisms for newcomer integration **75**

1.	Theoretical framework	77
2.	Data and methodology	81
3.	Findings	82
4.	Discussion and conclusion	89

Chapter 3: The key to success? Social network brokerage in buddy programmes for newly arrived migrants **92**

1.	Theoretical framework	94
2.	Data and methodology	97
3.	Findings	99
4.	Discussion and conclusion	105

Chapter 4: (Em)powering newcomers? Power asymmetries and negotiations between newly arrived migrants and volunteers within buddy programmes **108**

1.	Theoretical framework	110
2.	Data and methodology	113
3.	Findings	115
4.	Discussion and conclusion	121

Part III

Discussion and conclusions **125**

1.	Formalising buddy programmes: Empirical findings on social networking	125
2.	Neglect of agency of newcomers and buddies	128
3.	Lurking around the corner: Power hierarchies	129
4.	Complex relationships between policy and practice	131
5.	Buddy programmes and migrant integration: What's next?	133

References	136
Appendices	157
• Appendix I: Valorisation projects Hannah Arendt Institute	157
• Appendix II: Questionnaire for policymakers	159
• Appendix III: Questionnaire for coordinators	163
• Appendix IV: Questionnaire for buddies	168
• Appendix V: Questionnaire for newcomers	173
• Appendix VI: Example of codebook	176
• Appendix VII: Letter of invitation	179
• Appendix VIII: Author contributions	181
Figures and Tables	
• Table 1: Research participants: Policymakers	24
• Table 2: Research participants: Coordinators of buddy programmes	25
• Table 3: Research participants: Buddies	27
• Table 4: Research participants: Newcomers	28
• Table 5: Example of coding process based on Thematic Analysis	32
• Table 6: Definitions and labels for selected themes	33
• Fig. 1. Three Forms of Brokerage Process – Obstfeld et al. (2014)	93

List of abbreviations

AgII: Agency for Integration and Civic Integration / Agentschap Integratie en Inburgering

AMIF: Fund for Asylum and Migration

CBP: Common Basic Principles

EBP: Evidence-based practice

EU: European Union

FCC: French Community Commission

JHA: Justice and Home Affairs

KCM: Koninklijk Commissariaat voor het Migrantenbeleid

N-VA: Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie

PNT: Participation and Networking Trajectory

SERV: Social and Economic Council of Flanders

TA: Thematic Analysis

VDAB: Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding

VLD: Vlaamse Liberalen en Democraten

PART I

Introduction

Buddy programmes as a promising tool for migrant integration

This dissertation examines buddy programmes within the context of migrant integration. Over the past decades, Flanders experienced an intense growth of migration flows, especially from non-EU countries (Pasetti, 2019). In 2022¹, the international migration balance for Belgium was 116,544, predominantly driven by a large number of international immigrants. Unsurprisingly, the international migration balance was positive in almost all Flemish municipalities (Statbel, 2023). The majority of these newcomers often suffer from lack of adequate support systems, preventing them from participating fully in society (Behnia, 2007). Moreover, they must deal with cumulated social exclusions, language barriers, discrimination, and prejudice that further complicate their resettlement process (Vescan, Van Keer, Politi, Roblain, & Phalet, 2023). Consequently, considerable challenges are likely to arise in the adjustments processes of both newly arrived migrants and host society members. In response to these challenges, buddy programmes as integration initiatives are gaining popularity in Europe (Raithelhuber, 2023). Buddy programmes, in which a person from the host society voluntarily provides guidance and support to a newcomer with the aim of facilitating the integration of the latter, are in this context presented as a promising tool (De Cuyper & Crijns, 2023, p.23). The intervention is built on the assumption that these resident volunteers (buddies), because of their formal citizenship, have privileged access to social, economic, and cultural capital needed to accelerate newcomers' integration into society (Stock, 2019). Also in Flanders, buddy programmes as an integration measure have gained momentum as they are formally included in the fourth pillar of the civic integration programme (Vlaamse Regering, 2021). Despite buddy programmes being placed on the public agenda and increasingly becoming part of welfare policies, scientific discussions have largely neglected the phenomenon (Raithelhuber, 2023). I identify three research gaps in literature.

First, the body of knowledge on buddy programmes predominantly focuses on established practices of mentoring, such as youth mentoring (Karcher & Hansen, 2014), academic mentoring (Harris & Ogbonna, 2023), and workplace mentoring (De Cuyper, Vandermeerschen, & Purkayastha, 2019). As a result, buddy programmes based on befriending, which provide emotional and social support to newcomers lacking social support during their integration process, have received significantly less attention (McGowan, Saintas, & Gill, 2009; Philip & Spratt, 2007; Van der Tier & Potting, 2015). Despite the growing popularity of befriending interventions on the ground, research on migrant integration has largely overlooked their impact (Balaam, 2015; Crijns & De Cuyper, 2022).

Second, the prominence of quantitative measurements (Haddock et al., 2020) and one discipline (psychology) (Kern, Harrison, Custer, & Mehta, 2019) led to a one-sided focus in studies on buddy programmes on the effects on the level of individuals, e.g. by measuring the quality of mentoring

¹ At the time of writing, 2022 is the most recent year for which Statbel (the Belgian statistical office) has figures on international migration. The international migration balance is the difference between the number of immigrations and emigrations.
<https://statbel.fgov.be/nl/themas/bevolking/loop-van-de-bevolking/migraties#:~:text=In%202022%20bedroeg%20het%20internationale.van%20Statbel%2C%20het%20Belgische%20statistiekbureau.>

relationships (Raithelhuber, 2023). Therefore, interactions and dynamics in the personal relationships between newcomers and buddies, that go beyond an emphasis on clinical effectiveness, are poorly understood and under-researched, with a few but notable exceptions (Raithelhuber, 2021; Stock, 2019; Vescan et al., 2023). The causal relationship between the actions of these volunteers and the outcomes of buddy programmes is challenging to delineate, given the complex interplay of various factors at different levels (Boost, Blom, & Raeymaeckers, 2022; Ebrahim, 2019). A quantitative research bias presents a challenge in comprehending the establishment, utilisation, and management of 'personal relationships' in the context of buddy programmes and policies (Raithelhuber, 2023, p.7).

Third, previous research on buddy programmes is mostly conducted in other societal contexts, predominantly the United States (Eby et al., 2008). As a consequence, we have little insight into how buddy programmes relate to the Belgian context, and more specifically to Flemish civic integration policy. It should be noted that Flanders occupies a unique position as buddy programmes are a structural part of the civic integration programme, a situation not found in other countries (Reidsma & De Cuyper, 2020). Nevertheless, little research has described the intervention in light of this policy change and its unprecedented institutional interest (Vescan et al., 2023).

In this dissertation, I address these limitations by scrutinizing buddy programmes as an integration measure in the Flemish context. Rather than examining mentoring practices, the programmes under study are conceptually classified as 'befriending'. In befriending programmes, which will be referred to as 'buddy programmes' in this study, individuals without adequate support systems are matched with volunteers who act as a friend and offer support for a determined period of time (Balaam, 2015; Hagard & Blickem, 1987; Mahieu & Van Caudenberg, 2020, p.2). I argue that befriending interventions align most closely with the Flemish integration policy's concept of buddy programmes, as they aim to enhance newcomers' social participation (Balaam, 2015; McGowan et al., 2009; Van der Tier & Potting, 2015). The Flemish Integration Decree, in which buddy programmes are an instrument for stimulating migrant integration, holds significant assumptions about the outcomes of the intervention, such as the creation of a wider social network for newcomers, trusting relationships, and positive attitudes towards diversity in society (Vlaamse Regering, 2020, p.10). From a multi-stakeholder perspective, I draw on qualitative research methods to empirically examine these assumptions. In contrast to an input-output logic in earlier research on buddy programmes, this dissertation aims to contribute to our understanding of what makes buddy programmes effective in facilitating migrant integration, why and how, and more specifically in expanding the social networks of newcomers in the host society (Dalkin, Greenhalgh, Jones, Cunningham & Lhussier, 2015; Raithelhuber, 2023).

In this introduction, I situate one literature review and three empirical studies on buddy programmes for newcomers, by firstly delving deeper into the contested concept of migrant integration given the semantic vagueness of the concept (Horner, 2009; Pulinx & Van Avermaet, 2015). I will do so by discussing national models on integration and their criticisms (i). I will, thereafter, sketch the broader social and political background against which migrant integration policies emerge in Europe, as the EU is a key actor in aligning integration policies (ii), and discuss the local turn in migrant integration policies, emphasizing the importance of the local as a site for migrant integration (iii). Subsequently, I will discuss the Flemish integration policy which constitutes the case study of this research (iv). I

argue that a greater understanding of this policy context is required for two reasons. On the one hand, it allows us to gain insights into migrant integration policy trends and the integration philosophies that shaped them, thereby outlining buddy programmes in a Flemish context. On the other hand, it provides insights into the motives behind the implementation and assumptions regarding buddy programmes for newcomers in an institutional framework. I delineate more specifically the emergence of the policy domain in Belgium, the introduction of Civic Integration in Flanders, and the most recent decrees concerning Flemish Integration policy, including the introduction of the 4th pillar, in which buddy programmes become a formal part of the civic integration programme. After that, I will pay attention to the development of buddy programmes in Flanders to situate its history (v). Finally, I will provide an overview of the subsequent chapters, discuss the research questions (vi), and the methodology (vii) that informed them.

It is worth mentioning that the start of this doctoral research in 2020 is closely linked to the establishment of the Hannah Arendt Institute (HAI) for Citizenship, Urbanity, and Diversity in Mechelen. The Institute, initially a collaboration between the University of Antwerp (UA), the Free University of Brussels (VUB), and the city of Mechelen, aims to bridge the gap between science and society. During the course of this doctoral study, I was involved in developing several research valorisation projects on buddy programmes for the HAI.

1. Migrant integration: A conceptual overview of a contested concept

This doctoral research focuses on buddy programmes for newly arrived migrants as a means to facilitate their integration process in the host society. Despite the concept of integration being highly contested, the term generally refers to the process of resettlement, interaction with the host society, and social change that follows immigration (Pennix & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2016). Its complexity reflects a multidimensional process encompassing various domains, such as economic, political, social, and cultural indicators of integration outcomes (Sobolewska, Galandini, & Lessard-Phillips, 2017). Historically, the precursors of integration studies, namely classical assimilation theories, delineated settlement and incorporation as a predominantly linear process, wherein migrants were anticipated to undergo substantial transformation in order to assimilate fully into the dominant culture of the host society (Garcés-Mascareñas & Penninx, 2016). Nowadays, integration is predominantly considered to be a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all migrants and host society members (Council of the European Union, 2004, p.19; Joppke, 2007). In this regard, integration presupposes the preservation of the original identity and culture by all interacting communities along with the creation of new intercultural forms of coexistence (Berry, 2005; Kutsenko, Bataeva, & Babenko, 2020, p.66). However, the integration of migrants constitutes a profoundly contentious political issue, wherein the definition of the policy problem has remained consistently subject to debate (Scholten, Collett, & Petrovic, 2017). Although legislation has been passed and countless policy papers have been written to implement integration policies, an established definition of integration has never reached wider consensus. It is argued that the 'semantic vagueness of integration' places the exclusive control of integration processes with the majority group: at any time criteria can be altered, the target population can be expanded, and endpoints can be shifted by policymakers and the host society (Horner, 2009; Pulinx & Van Avermaet, 2015, p. 339). For instance, integration is often imposed as a condition for migrants to enjoy citizenship rights (Sobolewska et al.,

2017). Moreover, it is criticized that the concept of integration, like assimilation, continues to assume that newcomers must adapt to the majority culture in order to be part of the host society (Penninx & Garcés-Masareñas, 2016). In this respect, the integration of migrants in society is inextricably linked with the idea of a national identity of a shared common language and culture (Choquet, 2017). The adoption of the majority culture is commonly perceived as inevitably leading to the loss of one's own ethnic culture and values (Sobolewska et al., 2017). Consequently, integration is still too often wrongly presented as newcomer migrants going through a major process of change while the host society remains unchanged (Penninx & Garcés-Masareñas, 2016). To capture the diversity of stages, Penninx and Garcés-Masareñas (2016, p.14) propose a new, open definition of integration as "the process of becoming an accepted part of society" for two reasons. Firstly, it emphasises the processual character of integration rather than defining an end situation. Secondly, unlike normative models devised by political theorists, it does not predefine the extent of, or the specific criteria for, acceptance by the host society. These characteristics would render the definition highly useful for empirical studies of integration processes.

It has been customary since the 1980's to associate the concept of integration with that of "model", with each country having a specific pattern when dealing with migration flows (Choquet, 2017). Traditionally, these national models of integration were classified as either assimilationist, multiculturalist, or exclusionist (Castles, 1995). Assimilationist policies, also known as "the republican model", aim to adapt migrants to the cultural standards of the dominant culture (Adam, Martiniello, & Rea, 2018). Newcomers will only be accepted when they adhere to the norms and values of the dominant majority (Penninx & Garcés-Masareñas, 2016). Moreover, it claims blindness concerning cultural and religious differences, as equality is guaranteed by the rigorous identical treatment of all citizens, independent of their differences (Choquet, 2017). The French approach to migrant integration, for instance, has often been identified as assimilationist, opposing any differential treatment on the basis of ethnicity or religion (Westerveen & Adam, 2019).

Multiculturalist or pluralist policies, as adopted in countries like the UK and Canada, aim to promote the emancipation of ethnic minorities, but within their own state-supported ethnic infrastructures, including ethnic schools, ethnic hospitals, and ethnic media (Joppke, 2007, p.5). Within this model, all citizens must have the right to live according to their culture and religion. Here, equality refers to the equality of individual opportunities (Choquet, 2017). Nevertheless, it is argued that multiculturalism has fallen out of favour as a model of integration (Sobolewska et al., 2017). In the Netherlands, for example, this model seem to have failed considering high residential segregation, high school drop-out rates of migrant children, and high unemployment rates of non-EU migrants (Joppke, 2007). Consequently, Dutch governments have abandoned official multiculturalism in favour of civic integration (Joppke, 2007).

The exclusionist model, traditionally presented by Germany, assumes a temporary presence of migrants due to labour market needs, bases citizenship on ancestry, and displays low social and political tolerance (Malmusi, 2015, p. 293). In Germany, for instance, the presence of non-German immigrants remained ignored until 2001, when a government-appointed committee determined that migration should be actively promoted (Doomernik & Bruquetas-Callejo, 2016). This approach

towards integration favours immigrants' inclusion in the labour market, but precludes their participation into the democratic polity (Pasetti, 2019).

Within the Belgian context, it is suggested that a national model of migrant integration is absent as Flanders combines multiculturalist and assimilationist stances, whereas the French community is more influenced by the French assimilationist approach (Adam et al., 2018; Mandin, 2014). However, recent criticism questions the usefulness of his typology. National integration models would lead to simplified, partially incorrect representations of the ways in which countries manage migration issues (Choquet, 2017). Some contend that this tripartite division is dated and opt to also consider other paradigms for addressing ethno-cultural diversity, such as intersectionality, post-colonialism, and superdiversity (Laoukili, Oosterlynck, Swerts, Wouters, & Cools, 2019). Furthermore, Joppke (2007) argues that the notion of national models of migrant integration policies is no longer relevant, as policies on migrant integration in Western European states are increasingly converging, for example, through the implementation of obligatory civic integration programmes and tests for newcomers. In the next chapter, I will briefly discuss the European framework on migration and integration.

2. Migrant (integration) policies in Europe: Towards a shared framework

Over the past decades, the issue of migration and integration has been a topic of contestation and disagreement among European Union (EU) Member States and will continue to be so in the coming years (Scaletta, Tissinié, Nasrdine, & Kerr, 2022). For a long time, there was no explicit legal basis at the European level for developing or coordinating integration policies (Goeman & Van Puymbroeck, 2011). Nonetheless, by delegating competencies to the European level, the role of the EU and its institutions has become essential in shaping migrant integration policies. Below, I delineate the key milestones in the history of European migration and integration policy which continue to have an impact to this day.

A cornerstone of European migration policy is the principle of free movement for EU citizens. With the Schengen Agreement of 1985, a group of Member States abolished border controls and adopted joint immigration policy measures (Scholten & Penninx, 2016). The creation of a European area without internal borders, in which the free movement of people is guaranteed, is thus understood as the starting point for the development of a common European migration policy (Noppe et al., 2018). The asylum migration during the 1990s emerged as a significant catalyst for the Europeanization of asylum and immigration policies. The adoption of the Dublin Convention in 1990 marked the formalization of arrangements among EU Member States to address the challenge of 'asylum shopping' (Scholten & Penninx, 2016). Subsequently, the Maastricht Treaty (1992) enshrined European cooperation in the field of asylum and migration, albeit in an informal, non-binding form through the creation of an intergovernmental Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) pillar (third pillar) where decisions were taken by unanimity (Noppe et al., 2018). The creation of Citizenship of the European Union by the Treaty of Maastricht partially decoupled citizenship from nationality (Adam et al., 2018). Later, the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) transferred asylum and migration policy from the third pillar to the first pillar, replacing the intergovernmental method with the Community method. Consequently, European institutions were given a greater role in the policy-making process on

migration and asylum, and unanimity for some policy areas, such as border control and visa policy, was abolished (Goeman & Van Puymbroeck, 2011; Noppe et al., 2018). However, the Amsterdam treaty, which came into force in 1999, did not include any provisions specifically devoted to integration (Pascouau, 2018). Nonetheless, in the Tampere conclusions of the Finnish presidency in 1999, the heads of state and government called for a 'more vigorous integration policy' at the European level, focusing primarily on equal rights for EU and non-EU citizens and an improvement of existing anti-discrimination policies. The declaration initiated the development of a European framework for integration policy (European Council, 1999; Goeman & Van Puymbroeck, 2011).

In 2003, the European Commission formulated its first explicit view on integration policies based on a conceptualization of integration as a two-way process involving both immigrants and the receiving society (Penninx & Garcés-Masareñas, 2016, p.195). In November 2004, the Council of Ministers overseeing integration reached consensus on the Common Basic Principles (CBPs) for integration. This marked an initial stride toward establishing a unified framework for a European approach to immigrant integration, serving as a benchmark for both the execution and assessment of prevailing and forthcoming integration policies. Importantly, this step towards a more comprehensive framework of integration continues to target third-country nationals only, and not migrants from within the EU who are supposedly already integrated (Council of the EU, 2004; Penninx & Garcés-Masareñas, 2016). While integration is explicitly defined 'as a two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of the Member States' in the first Common Basic Principle, the other Common Basic Principles primarily emphasise the responsibilities of newcomers. For instance, migrants should respect the European values of liberty and democracy, and make an effort to learn the language, history, and institutions of their new home country (Council of the EU, 2004, p.19; Joppke, 2007). In this respect, it is argued that the interpretation of European integration policy reflects the assimilationist vision in several countries within the EU. This implies a focus less on ensuring equal rights and cultural recognition of third-country nationals, as the best guarantee of integration, but rather places central emphasis on duties within the European integration discourse (Goeman & Van Puymbroeck, 2011). Europe therefore explicitly supports the organisation of integration courses (Mandin, 2014).

The Lisbon Treaty (2007, ratified in 2009) abolished unanimity in the Council with regard to decisions on legal migration and redrafted provisions for the development of a comprehensive common migration policy. Since this Treaty, migration policy has become subject to majority voting, the European Parliament has been given co-decision powers, and the role of the European Court of Justice (ECJ) has been strengthened (Goeman & Van Puymbroeck, 2011; Noppe et al., 2018). By explicitly mentioning integration measures for the first time, the Treaty "normalized" immigration and integration policy as a core EU issue (Scholten & Penninx, 2016). However, besides the EU adopting rules to support national policies, the harmonisation of national integration legislation is explicitly ruled out; concrete policy implementation remains the responsibility of the Member States (Goeman & Van Puymbroeck, 2011). As a result, the EU's competence in integration is confined to coordinating national policies (Pascouau, 2018). For instance, in the same year, the European Integration Fund was established as a means for the Union to encourage Member States to set up integration programmes, despite not having a mandate to oblige them to do so (Adam et al., 2018).

Although the five-year work plans of the Tampere Programme (1999-2004) and the Hague Programme (2005-2009) already prioritised many measures in areas such as asylum policy, addressing irregular migration, and border policy, it was only with the Stockholm Programme (2010-2014) that the definition of migrant integration gradually expanded, and the number of actors, stakeholders, and issues covered significantly increased (Noppe et al., 2018). The lack of legal basis has thus not prevented a European integration policy framework from developing over the past decades, which consists of a mixture of hard and soft law (Goeman & Van Puymbroeck, 2011). On the one hand, directives around anti-discrimination, Family Reunification, and Long-term Residence of Third-Country Nationals are included in integration policy. On the other hand, European integration policy consists of a set of policy instruments to encourage Member States to evaluate their national integration policies. It can be argued that, by the 2010s, a distinctly Europeanized policy domain had developed regarding asylum, migration, and integration (Goeman & Van Pumbroeck, 2011; Penninx & Garcés-Mascreñas, 2016).

An item high on the European agenda today is the fight against illegal migration (Goeman & Van Puymbroeck, 2011). During the so-called 'European refugee crisis' in 2015 and 2016, nearly two and a half million first-time asylum seekers arrived in Europe. Borders seemed to have lost their importance and newcomers were perceived as an economic, social, and cultural threat. Consequently, the unity of the EU and the rationale of the entire European free movement regime was questioned, even though people have sought refuge and better opportunities in Europe for years (Virkkunen, Koikkalainen, & Piipponen, 2023). Moreover, the subsequent wave of right-wing populism after the refugee crisis in 2015 increased anti-migration sentiments and Euroscepticism in public opinion, which deem European free movement responsible for the increasing immigration (Virkkunen et al., 2023).

EU responses to migration flows are often complicated by diversity between Member States, leading to a struggle for cohesiveness, and the balancing act between Member States' protection of sovereignty and the EU's core values of equality, dignity, and the promotion of rights (Scaletta et al., 2022). The core values on which the EU was founded, such as human dignity, free movement, and equality seem to reflect a welcoming culture regarding migrants (Scaletta et al., 2022). In spite of that, in recent decades European integration policies have tended to converge toward a restrictive, neoliberal model with an increasing emphasis on the individual responsibility of migrants, with especially socio-economic integration as the key focus of European states' migrant integration policies (Joppke, 2007; Vandevordt, 2019). In this respect, it is argued that migrant integration policies in Europe are now characterized by a multicultural backlash and an assimilationist turn (Westerveen & Adam, 2019). Others point out to the coincidence of the rise of multiculturalism and neoliberalism, resulting in economic inclusion of migrants without solidarity towards their issues of disadvantage (Kymlicka, 2015). The repressive dimension of integration policies in Europe can possibly be explained by the non-selected quality of most of its migrants. In contrast to countries like Canada and Australia, the majority of migrants to Europe are not selected at all, but they enter on the basis of rights, such as family reunification and asylum. As a result, this group lacks education, proficiency in the majority language, and relies on welfare, leading to significant adjustment difficulties in the host society (Joppke, 2007). Moreover, Westerveen and Adam (2019) identified a new, seemingly paradoxical trend in Western European migrant integration policies: a rise in 'colourblindization' combined with increased ethnic monitoring. This entails a diminishing focus on addressing ethnic inequalities through

targeted policy measures, while a surge in ethnic monitoring is observed. Exchanges between Member States have stimulated, for instance, the implementation of compulsory integration programmes in host countries (Adam et al., 2018). Failure to fulfil such programmes may impact the migrant's rights and status, as visas and residence permits may not be issued or may be withdrawn. This demonstrates how integration topics have increasingly become intertwined with migration issues. Furthermore, it reflects the tendency of Member States to utilise integration policies as a means of exclusion rather than inclusion. In other words, in some Member States, integration measures do not aim to enhance the social inclusion of newcomers but rather to tighten immigration rules (Pascouau, 2018). The European context, as it is situated, illustrates how closely linked migration and integration policies can be.

3. Local turn in migrant integration policies

Migrant integration policy is now considered a multi-level process (Flamant, 2020). Nonetheless, the integration of migrants was for a long time a competence of the nation state, since ideas on how to integrate are often intertwined with ideas of a national identity and a nationally imagined community (Scholten & Penninx, 2016). Recently, the local level and mainly cities have become increasingly entrepreneurial and accordingly proactive in the field of migrant integration (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017). The city of Berlin, for instance, has formulated integration strategies long before Germany developed national policies (Scholten & Penninx, 2020). Consequently, cities and regions tend to develop their own agenda, policy strategies, and key questions and answers related to integration and diversity (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017).

One possible explanation for this increasing role of local governments in migrant integration is that cities and municipalities are primarily affected by migration flows (Flamant, 2020). This 'local turn' in migrant integration policy-making became particularly pronounced in the wake of the 2015 Syrian 'refugee crisis', when local governments became engaged in finding appropriate local solutions for some of the issues raised by the increased influx of asylum seekers, such as their need for education, housing, and support (Mahieu & Van Caudenberg, 2020). Ghent city², for example, created a 'one stop shop' to manage and provide accurate information for newly arrived migrants (Ahmad-Yar & Laurentsyeva, 2020). Within this context, an increased local involvement may be understood as a way of finding appropriate responses to migration issues that have not been resolved because of the inability of national governments to do so (Scholten & Penninx, 2016).

Another and related explanation is that local authorities are perceived to be more in touch with their residents and thus, with the challenges of migration (Flamant, 2020). It is at the local level that positive and negative aspects of diversity are experienced more concretely (Scholten & Penninx, 2016). Cities and localities are where immigration has long-term impacts and where integration practices 'play out' (Crul & Schneider, 2010). In this respect, integration is understood to happen essentially locally (Galandini, Mulvey, & Lessard-Philips, 2019). The Flemish Government's concept note of the redesign of the civic integration programme also follows this reasoning and therefore

² It should be noted that municipalities in Belgium decide autonomously on investments in infrastructure and can allocate funds to projects aimed at facilitating migrant integration (Ahmad-Yar & Laurentsyeva, 2020).

places the directing role for implementing the fourth pillar, including buddy projects, with local governments:

Living together in diversity primarily occurs at the local level, in the streets, neighbourhoods, schools, and workplaces: where people interact and connect. Local governments are closest to this reality and have a crucial role to play in embracing this growing diversity to create cities and municipalities where everyone can live harmoniously (Vlaamse Regering, 2020, p. 10).

While the Agencies for Integration and Civic Integration in Flanders are responsible for providing three pillars of the civic integration programme - (1) offering Dutch language courses, (2) social orientation courses, and (3) registering newcomers with the Public Employment Service (VDAB in Flanders or Actiris in Brussels) - local governments in Flanders have been entrusted with a directive role in developing the fourth pillar. This involves offering (4) a Participation and Networking Trajectory (PNT) to newcomers, aimed at their social network expansion in the host society. More specifically, local governments are mandated to identify the range of initiatives eligible for completing this part of the civic integration programme (Vlaamse Regering, 2020).

The prominence of migration on the local political agenda leads to the development of specific local policies to address local concerns in relation to challenges related to immigrant integration (Scholten & Penninx, 2016). In this regard, local integration policies may differ from national integration models. It is argued that cities and smaller municipalities tend to adopt a more pragmatic approach to tackle migration issues (Flamant, 2020; Poppelaars & Scholten, 2008). This occurs as local governments often cooperate with migrant organisations due to a pragmatic necessity for information on migrant groups, cooperation, and at times even the instrumentalization of migrant organisations for the implementation of local policies (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017). Previous research, for example, demonstrated that Belgian municipalities prioritised housing of newcomers, employment, and education of children in their integration policies (Ahmad-Yar & Laurentsyeveva, 2020). The pragmatic problem-solving of local integration policies often contrasts with symbolically inspired national policies (Scholten & Penninx, 2016). Consequently, the strengthening of the local as a site for migrant integration governance may lead to a decoupling between national and local policies, whereby policy processes on a national and local level are fully disconnected, possibly resulting in policy contradictions. As a result, in the same country, a variety of answers to diversity are likely to live side by side (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017). Besides pragmatism, another key feature of local integration policies is the growing focus on interculturalism, as a way to promote diversity beyond traditional state models of multiculturalism and assimilation (Choquet, 2017). The intercultural policy paradigm aims to foster relationships and communication among individuals from different backgrounds, emphasising the creation of connections rather than highlighting differences (Mahieu & Van Caudenberg, 2020, p.3; Zapata-Barrero et al., 2016; 2017). Additionally, the PNT reflects an intercultural approach, suggesting that promoting social interaction between individuals of diverse ethno-cultural backgrounds (newcomers and the Flemish population) can mitigate social exclusion and segregation, while enhancing social cohesion (Vlaamse Regering, 2020). Last, the local turn in migrant integration policies is characterised by more localist relationships, on the one hand, in which the local level lobbies for policy measures at the national and European level, and more

institutionalised relationships between the local and national level, on the other (Scholten & Penninx, 2016). These differing logics of national and local integration policies seem to reflect two different worlds of problem framing of migrant integration (Poppelaars & Scholten, 2008).

Furthermore, the shift from centralised to localised migrant integration policies is not without considerable challenges. Previous research indicates a discrepancy between increased migrant integration responsibilities at the local level, on the one hand, and the constraints of austerity and consequent lack of adequate financial resources on the other. This places pressure on local governments, leading them to primarily focus on immediate and pressing issues (Galandini et al., 2019). Moreover, in Belgium, local stakeholders typically implement policies designed at the federal and regional levels, whereas it could be argued that integration policies should be tailored by local actors to meet the needs of newly arrived migrants (Ahmad-Yar & Laurentsyeva, 2020). Consequently, friction between different levels of government regarding the implementation of integration may arise, especially when the local level is impacted by centralised policies (Galandini et al., 2019). Differing perceptions of migrant integration, for instance, may result in each stakeholder pushing for their own objectives and priorities. The issue of ambivalence in the interests and objectives of integration stakeholders is found to negatively impact the socio-economic integration of newcomers (Ahmad-Yar & Laurentsyeva, 2020).

Lastly, it should be noted that the local turn in the governance of migration integration is not an automatic nor a uniform process. Besides the divergence between local and national policies, it is not surprising that integration policies of cities and municipalities differ from each other. Even within the same country, cities employ diverse rhetoric and policy instruments for integration (Flamant, 2020). In Belgium, local authorities and stakeholders have the flexibility to implement national policies differently and design their own programmes (Ahmad-Yar & Laurentsyeva, 2020). While it is suggested that the local turn primarily occurs in politically left-leaning cities, the dominant political orientation is deemed insufficient to explain the variations in local integration policies (Flamant, 2020). Previous research has identified four factors that may explain the differences and similarities between urban integration policies in addressing ethnic inequalities. These factors include the nature of relations with national governments and their approaches towards migrants, the resources provided by European institutions, the capacity of the civil society to influence the local agenda, and the career paths of local civil servants implementing policies towards migrants. These civil servants often have the opportunity to challenge certain political constraints (Flamant, 2020).

4. The Flemish integration policy

In this chapter, I will focus on the Flemish context. In the following sections, I will discuss the emergence of integration policies in Belgium, civic integration in Flanders, and the two most recent decrees.

4.1. Emergence of the policy domain in Belgium

Although today both migration and integration are highly politicised issues, this was not always the case in Belgian political history (Goeman & Van Puymbroeck, 2011). After 1945, Belgium, like many Western European countries, intensively recruited foreign workers who were considered supplementary workforces to meet the demands of the Belgian labour market (Adam et al., 2018).

For a long time, the migration of guestworkers from Italy, Spain, Greece, Morocco, Tunisia, and Turkey, was considered to be temporary as governments expected them to return to their countries of origin (Adam et al., 2018). Consequently, Belgium lacked an integration policy aimed at these guestworkers. The 1973 economic crisis led to more restrictive migration policies in Belgium and eventually to the migration ban ('migratiestop') in 1974, aimed at halting further labour migration to safeguard Belgian employees (De Clerck & Devillé, 2011). Despite efforts to prevent an influx of new workforces, migration continued to increase, driven by family reunification among previously migrated guestworkers. Consequently, there was a surge in foreign-born families requiring housing, education, and health care (Agentschap Integratie & Inburgering, s.d.). Nevertheless, there was no policy specifically targeting the settlement and participation of these newcomers into Belgian society. For a long time, the migrant integration policy of the Belgian federal government was thus more of a *laissez-faire* policy with no direct or indirect measures aimed at integrating newcomers (Van De Pol, Michielsen, & De Cuyper, 2013). Nonetheless, the integration of some first-generation migrants into Belgian society was facilitated through the efforts of civil society initiatives (Goeman & Van Puymbroeck, 2011).

Gradually, it became clear that guest workers and their families would not return to their countries of origin, giving rise to the development of nascent integration policies (Goeman & Van Puymbroeck, 2011). In this regard, it should be noted that the creation of Belgian integration policy is inextricably linked to the federalisation of competences (Goeman & Van Puymbroeck, 2011). Until 1974, the Employment minister was responsible for the 'reception of migrants'. In the same year, a process of devolution took place, in which the '*welcoming policy for migrant workers*' was transferred from the Federal state to the Regional governments of Flanders, Brussels, and Wallonia (Adam, 2013). However, the target population and the content of the policy domain remained unchanged (Adam et al., 2018). The competence of migration policies came to rest with the federal government. More specifically, the federal government determines who obtains the Belgian residence permit or citizenship and sets the rules for settlement or expulsion of irregular migrants (Ahmad-Yar & Laurentyeva, 2020).³ The law of 15 December 1980 ('*de Vreemdelingenwet*') legally recognised the possibility for foreigners to settle in Belgium. Foreigners were given greater legal certainty and were protected against administrative arbitrariness (Noppe et al., 2018). This law has been subject to several amendments over the years. In addition, since the late 1980s, the federal level has acted as a hub for consultations between the various competent authorities (Goeman & Van Puymbroeck, 2011).

As a result of the 1980 state reform, integration policy became a competence of the Flemish Community and the French Community. Subsequently, the different Belgian governments began to develop migrant integration policies in the 1980s (Adam, 2013). In this context, the policy domain was renamed as the '*reception and integration of immigrants*', rather than the '*reception of immigrant workers*', indicating a shift towards perceiving migrants beyond their roles solely as workers needing integration across various life domains (Adam et al., 2018, 2013). While the two Communities were

³ To obtain Belgian citizenship, all newcomers (EU and non-EU) are required to present proof of civic integration. In addition, the Federal government has developed a twofold accommodation system for newcomers, coordinated by Fedasil, which comprises collective reception centres and Local Accommodation Initiatives (LOI), predominantly managed by municipalities.

initially following similar policy paths, integration policy of the Flemish Community was later characterised by a multiculturalist approach in which social support is provided along the lines of different migrant groups, depending on their nationality, religion, and gender (Goeman & Van Puymbroeck, 2011; Vandevoordt, 2019, p.108). Flanders, in particular, has been promoting a policy of recognition, supporting immigrant associations organized around an ethnic identity ('Minderhedenbeleid'). Following the 1974 migration ban, Flemish policy shifted focus from employment guidance to ensuring the integration of migrants and their families through a categorical welfare policy. This policy includes the promotion of self-organisation within migrant groups and the development of language training for adult migrants (Noppe et al., 2018; Van De Pol et al., 2013). The French Community on the other hand, was inspired by the French assimilation and adaptation policy (Goeman & Van Puymbroeck, 2011). However, in 1993, the competence of migrant integration policy was once again transferred from the French Community, which includes the Walloon and Brussels territories, to the Walloon Region and the French Community Commission of the Brussels-Capital Region (FCC), resulting in divergent policies in Francophone Belgium (Adam et al., 2018).

The number of asylum applications increased in Belgium from the mid-1980s (Noppe et al., 2018). After the far-right began an advance in the 1988 municipal elections, integration policy gained further momentum in Flanders. Consequently, in 1989 the Royal Commission for Migrants Policy (Koninklijk Commissariaat voor het Migrantenbeleid (KCM)) was established (Van De Pol et al., 2013). The establishment of the commissariat presented the initial step toward formulating a cohesive migrant integration policy in Belgium. In its inaugural report, 'Integration: a long-term work', the KCM presented policy proposals across various domains, including housing, education, employment, youth, et cetera (Mandin, 2014). In this respect, the integration of newcomers was still predominantly perceived as a welfare issue requiring cross-cutting policy (Van De Pol et al., 2013). Moreover, the report approached integration as the middle ground between assimilation and segregation. The report defined integration as *'a process, to be promoted and possibly initiated by the government, in which minorities, while maintaining some criteria that can be understood under incorporation, are structurally involved in all activities and objectives of the host country in a proportionally correct way'* (D'Hondt, 1989, p.38). Specifically, it favoured the term 'incorporation' ('inpassing') over the concept of integration (Van De Pol et al., 2013). The above definition of integration adopted by the KCM has been criticized for its assimilationist connotation (Blommaert & Martens, 1999).

In the 1990s, the integration policy in Flanders evolved towards an inclusive, coordinated, and interdepartmental target group policy. This approach encompassed two main strategies: firstly, an integration or equal opportunities policy aimed at facilitating migrants' integration into key societal sectors; secondly, a cultural policy centred on emancipation and participation. The latter encouraged migrants to develop their own identity, foster group consciousness, seek representation, and advocate for their rights (Van de Pol et al., 2013, p. 6). The institutionalisation of Flemish integration policy was finalised in 1991, making Flanders a latecomer compared to other countries. The fall of the Iron Curtain, as well as the wars in former Yugoslavia and the opening of the borders of Eastern Europe, led to new waves of asylum seekers to Belgium from 1990 onwards (Van Mol & de Valk, 2016). The increasing diversity in society caused unrest among the population, eventually leading to the resounding electoral victory of the anti-immigrant far-right party 'Vlaams Blok' in 1991 (Agentschap Integratie & Inburgering, s.d). In response to the electoral success of the extreme right, the focus on

migrant integration in Flanders became significantly more interventionist until the end of the 1990s. This is evidenced by five policy measures: (1) the expansion and institutionalisation of the migrant integration sector, resulting in the establishment of new institutions, associations, and policies; (2) the allocation of public funds to support grassroots ethnic-minority organisations and their emancipatory role; (3) the formation of a 'mainstream policy', which integrated migration issues into various policy domains, coordinated by the Interdepartmental Commission for Ethnic Minorities of the Flemish administration; (4) the rebranding of immigrants as 'ethno-cultural minorities' within a multiculturalist framework; and (5) the establishment of the Minorities Forum (Minderhedenforum) as the official representative body of ethno-cultural minorities in dialogue with the Flemish government on relevant matters (Adam, 2013, p.55; Noppe et al., 2018). The first Minority Decree, introduced on 28 April 1998, embedded these measures within a legal framework (Adam, 2013). Although the federal government is solely responsible for migration policy, in 1996, the Arbitration Court ruled that protecting the interests of persons with a migration background is a responsibility that every legislator, regardless of the administrative level, must address (Adam, 2010, p.37; Goeman & Van Puymbroeck, 2011, p.65).

4.2. The introduction of Civic Integration in Flanders

Until 2003, Flanders' integration policies were characterised by a policy of reception (onthaalbeleid) aimed at familiarizing newcomers with Flemish society and promoting their participation (Pulinx & Van Avermaet, 2015). However, on 12 February 2003, the Law on Flemish Civic Integration Policy (Inburgeringsbeleid) was passed (Adam et al., 2018). While policies towards ethno-cultural minorities of the 1990s were built within a multicultural framework, the civic integration policy shows more of an assimilationist inspiration (Goeman & Van Puymbroeck, 2011). Under influence of the Flemish Liberals (VLD) following the Dutch example, a compulsory integration course for newcomers (Inburgeringstraject) was introduced. Despite the reluctance of the Christian Democrats and Socialists to make the programme mandatory, non-EU migrants were now obliged to follow a civic integration programme (Adam et al., 2018). In this respect, the Flemish government deems civic integration as a process with mutual rights and obligations and not as something entirely non-committal (De Cuyper, Lambrechts, Pauwels, & Vets, 2010). The programme consisted of Dutch language classes, a social orientation course, and a trajectory for professional integration (Adam, 2013). It is argued that the introduction of the civic integration programme shifted the responsibility for integration from the host society and the government to the individual newcomer (Van De Pol et al., 2013).

Between 2002 and 2004, the Houses of Dutch (Huis van het Nederlands) were established to assist non-native speakers seeking Dutch language lessons. For the first time since Flanders assumed the responsibility for integration policy, this competence was assigned to the minister in charge of Domestic Governance (Noppe et al., 2018). In 2004, the Flemish liberal party (VLD) assumed the position of the first Minister for Integration, steering migrant integration towards a more assimilationist and restrictive direction (Adam et al., 2018). Assimilationist policies emphasised the adoption of common Flemish social norms and values. By 2006, these policies expanded the target population of the civic integration programme to include, for instance, foreigners outside the EU who were married to Belgians, as well as Belgians with immigrant parents. Moreover, failure to fulfil the

obligation to participate in the civic integration programme was subsequently financially penalized (Adam et al., 2018, p.239). The existing Minority Policy was updated with the 2009 Flemish Integration Decree. It shifted away from the target group policy and introduced a twin-track approach, comprising a civic integration policy and a diversity policy. The diversity policy aims to manage coexistence in diversity in an inclusive and coordinated manner. 'Active and shared citizenship for all' took centre stage (Noppe et al., 2018). Contradictorily, multiculturalist policy instruments, such as the Minorities Forum and programmes financing immigrant associations and their federations, were further reinforced and developed during this legislature, despite a more assimilationist turn (Adam, 2013; Jacobs, 2004). Notwithstanding the ambiguous character of Flemish Integration policy, others argue that, fuelled by critiques on its failure, the original model of cooperative multiculturalism was replaced by neoliberal policies, placing more power with the state. As a result, the social and political role of civil actors is reduced while gradually eroding the social rights of migrants (Vandevoordt, 2019; Van Puymbroeck & Saeys, 2014). From 2010 onwards, the electoral growth of the Flemish Nationalist Party (N-VA) further stimulated a more restrictive approach towards migrant integration (Adam et al., 2018). The Integrated Action Plan on Integration Policy 2012-2015 also emphasised civic integration and Dutch language acquisition as key strategies for integration (Van De Pol et al., 2013). In 2013, the Brussels Francophone Parliament adopted a Law on the Reception Programme for New Migrants in the Brussels Capital Region. However, the Brussels francophone reception programme remained non-compulsory (Adam et al., 2018). In the Walloon Region, the Law establishing a reception programme, subsequently renamed as an integration programme, for newly arrived migrants was enacted in 2014. According to this law, individuals are required to enrol in the programme within three months of their initial registration with the municipality. In the following section, I will discuss two Flemish Integration Decrees in more detail.

4.3. Decree of 7 June 2013 Concerning Flemish Integration Policy

On 29 May 2013, the Integration and Civic Integration Decree was approved by the Flemish Parliament (decree of 7 June 2013). This decree replaces the decree of 28 April 1998 on Flemish policy towards ethno-cultural minorities, the Integration Decree of 28 February 2003, and the decree of 30 April 2009 that transformed minority policy into an integration policy (Van De Pol et al., 2013). The Flemish government articulated the four objectives of this decree as follows: (1) achieving independent and proportional participation, (2) accessibility of facilities regardless of origin, (3) active and shared citizenship, and (4) strengthening social cohesion (Vlaamse Regering, 2013). Moreover, it was explicitly emphasised that the process of integration encompasses not only the newcomer but also the host society (Noppe et al., 2018). The decree more specifically formulated that Flemish integration policy is an inclusive policy that focuses on the entire society and is realised within various policy areas. Only if necessary, a special offer will be developed (Van De Pol et al., 2013; Vlaamse Regering, 2013). Consequently, integration was defined in this decree as follows:

[...] a dynamic and interactive process in which individuals, groups, communities, and facilities each interact and deal with migration and its consequences in society in a constructive way, each from a

*context of the enforceability of rights and duties inherent in our democratic rule of law (Vlaamse Regering, 2013).*⁴

It is notable that in the new decree, civic integration (inburgering) and integration are inextricably linked, with civic integration understood as the first stage in a longer-term process of integration (Pulinx, 2016):

*Civic integration is a guided pathway to integration in which the government offers persons integrating a specific tailor-made programme that increases their self-reliance with a view to professional, educational, and social participation (Vlaamse Regering, 2013).*⁵

One of the objectives of implementing the decree of 2013 was to counter the fragmentation of organizations and regulations in the integration sector. Therefore, one of the most critical aspects of the 2013 decree was the reform of the Flemish integration sector. All social services and organisations working on integration were centralized within the autonomous government-controlled Agency for Integration and Civic Integration (Agentschap Integratie en Inburgering (AgII)), as well as within two local agencies for the cities of Ghent (IN-Gent, now named Amal vzw) and Antwerp (Atlas). This centralisation aimed to support, encourage, and guide policy, while also developing a more coherent vision for migrant integration (Mandin, 2014; Van De Pol et al., 2013). It is argued that the establishment of the Agency for Integration and Civic Integration resulted from the dual process of Flemish state-building and nation-building, aimed at nurturing Flanders' supposedly homogenous culture (Adam, 2013; Vandevordt, 2019).

After arriving in Flanders or Brussels, newcomers are directed by the municipalities to these reception offices. The civic integration process starts with registration at the AgII and continues until the newcomer is transferred to regular facilities responsible for organising follow-up services (Pulinx, 2016). In consultation with newcomers, who participate in the civic integration programme either as entitled or obliged participants, an integration contract is concluded, detailing a tailor-made programme (usually including Dutch courses and a social orientation course). Newcomers will receive an integration certificate if they achieve the objectives of all components of the civic integration programme (Pulinx, 2016; Vlaamse Regering, 2013). It should be noted that this integration policy targets adult newcomers settling in Flanders or Brussels for a long period. However, the obligation to participate in a civic integration programme does not apply in Brussels. Additionally, citizens of the European Union, the European Economic Area, Switzerland (and their family members), as well as minors, people with disabilities, students, employees, seriously ill individuals, or the elderly are exempt from this obligation (Ahmad-Yar & Laurentyeva, 2020). Brussels lacks formal powers to address integration. As a result, newcomers in Brussels can choose between Flemish or Walloon integration policies (Vandevordt, 2019; Vlaamse Regering, 2013).

4.4. Decree of 9th of July 2021 Concerning Flemish Integration Policy

In the following sections, I will discuss the decree that shapes the civic integration path of newcomers in Flanders today and pay special attention to the introduction of the fourth pillar in the civic

⁴ Article 2, 13° of the decree of 07/06/2013 on the Flemish integration and civic integration policy. This definition has remained unchanged in the current decree.

⁵ Article 2, 8° of the decree of 07/06/2013 on the Flemish integration and civic integration policy

integration programme, which transforms buddy programmes into a policy instrument for migrant integration.

4.4.1. General provisions of the decree

The current Flemish Integration Decree is predominantly based on the Integration Decree of 2013 (as discussed earlier) (Ahmad-Yar & Laurensyeva, 2020). However, the Flemish coalition agreement for 2019-2024 has resulted in significant amendments to the previous decree, reshaping the integration policy. Below, I will outline some notable changes in the decree that took effect on the 1st of March 2022.

First of all, the Integration Decree of 2021 moves away from the concept of free civic integration programmes. Inspired by the Netherlands, newcomers are now required to pay a financial fee upon signing their integration contract⁶. Up to 360 euros is charged for participation in the civic integration course. Another noteworthy change is the implementation of standardised tests for Dutch proficiency (to attain language level A2) and social orientation courses. If the person integrating fails the test, a financial fee will have to be paid again for a new test. Additionally, systematic advice is provided to the Immigration Department (Dienst Vreemdelingenzaken) regarding the civic integration programme undertaken. More specifically, newcomers who fail to comply with the integration obligations, risk not having their residence permits renewed (Vlaamse Regering, 2020). In addition, the target group of civic integration has been revised. As of 1 March 2022, applicants for international protection (commonly referred to as "asylum seekers") and caravan dwellers are excluded from the target group of civic integration. They are no longer permitted to sign an integration contract from that date. Furthermore, the integration contract now includes provisions regarding essential rights and duties that must be respected in Flemish society. Newcomers are required to register with VDAB no later than two months after signing their integration contract, and the Agencies for Integration and Civic Integration no longer intervene in the reimbursement of translation and interpretation services (Vlaamse Regering, 2021).

The above modifications, implemented by the then Minister of Internal Affairs and Living Together (Equal Opportunities, Integration, & Civic Integration), Bart Somers, can thus be interpreted as a tightening of previous integration policies. These policies now include strict and paying prerequisites, further reinforcing the assimilationist nature of Flemish civic integration policies (Adam et al., 2018, 2013). Notwithstanding Somers' self-designation as "Minister of Living Together", which positioned integration at the societal level, since 2021, even greater emphasis seems to have been placed on the individual responsibility of newcomers to integrate into Flemish society (Van De Pol et al., 2013). Unsurprisingly, civil society organisations and local authorities have formulated significant criticism against the changes brought about by the decree. SERV's (Social and Economic Council of Flanders) Diversity Commission fears that the Flemish Government is creating additional barriers for individuals who are already struggling to participate in the labour market, rather than promoting inclusion. For example, the Commission opposes the change in the target group for civic integration, the introduction of fees (particularly given the increased risk of poverty among newcomers), and the

⁶ Newcomers signing an integration contract in Flanders from September 1, 2023, will be required to pay for the social orientation (MO) and Dutch as a second language (NT2) course and test.

removal of the objective of accessibility of all facilities from the Integration Decree (Commissie Diversiteit, 2021).

4.4.2. Introduction of the 4th pillar: Buddy programmes as a policy instrument

As briefly mentioned earlier, starting from the 1st of January 2023, the renewed Integration Decree expands the civic integration programme with a fourth pillar, namely the Participation and Networking Trajectory (PNT), in addition to the three existing pillars of Dutch classes, social orientation, and career coaching. A PNT aims to improve the integration and participation of newcomers by building a social network in the Flemish society (Vlaamse Regering, 2021). In the concept note for the redesign of the civic integration programme, the fourth pillar is further explained:

We are developing a fourth pillar within integration policy. We offer a tailor-made 40-hour programme in the form of a buddy project, an introductory internship with a company, association, organisation or local government, or voluntary work. Countless experiences within local projects in our cities have shown that this approach truly works. It allows individuals undergoing integration to establish social contacts beyond their immediate living environment and build trusting relationships. It ensures that the person integrating has an informal point of contact. It leads to people, both the person integrating and his/her environment, gaining insight into the living environment of others and learn to embrace diversity. To achieve this, we are making necessary efforts. The local authorities are the director of this, in consultation with the programme counsellor. The offer is optional for those who work, study, or voluntarily participate in an integration programme (Vlaamse Regering, 2020, p.10).

In contrast to the supposed trend of mainstreaming in migrant integration policies, buddy programmes represent a specific, rather than a generic, policy aimed at newcomers (Scholten et al., 2017). It particularly relies on an intercultural paradigm aimed at facilitating interactions between newcomers and the Flemish population (Mahieu & Van Caudenberg, 2020). The premise of the PNT is that newcomers' social networks should not be limited to their own ethnic-cultural groups (Somers, 2019). In the Equal Opportunities, Integration, and Inclusion Policy Paper, Minister Somers (2019, p.16) justifies the introduction of the fourth pillar by citing dormant segregation in Flanders, which fosters mutual distrust, prejudices, and ghettoization among its citizens. This diminished social cohesion would lead to social dissatisfaction with living in a diverse society. Conversely, strong social relationships between newcomers and the host population, assumed to arise from the Participation and Networking Trajectory, would, according to the former Minister, contribute to a more cohesive society (Vlaamse Regering, 2020). The implementation of buddy programmes to regulate newcomers' social networks may be attributed to Flanders' interventionist approach regarding the cultural dimension of the integration process, driven by its nation-building process and the need for legitimacy (Adam, 2013).

It should be noted that buddy programmes are not the only option for newcomers to complete the fourth pillar of their civic integration programme. An internship or volunteer work also qualify. Moreover, various activities can be combined, for example, 20 hours of volunteering with a 20-hour internship. However, activities of the PNT should occur within a Dutch-speaking context and aim to

foster social participation, thus providing newcomers with opportunities for interaction (Somers, 2019). Importantly, the compulsory integrator himself is given the responsibility of proving, through uniform documents and procedures, that sufficient efforts are made within the context of this 4th pillar (Vlaamse Regering, 2020). This is not surprising given that neoliberal reforms of Flemish integration policies tend to place stronger emphasis on the individual responsibility of newcomers, as discussed earlier (Vandevoordt, 2019). It is noteworthy that buddy programmes have become mandatory, whereas the intervention previously was characterised by its voluntary nature (Balaam, 2015; Behnia, 2007). A newcomer who is not active in the labour market or not enrolled in education at the time of signing the integration contract, is obliged to participate in the Participation and Networking Trajectory for 40 hours (Somers, 2019, p.25). The compulsory nature of buddy programmes can be understood in the light of the strong politicization of migrant integration in Flanders, stimulated by the electoral success of the far-right in the past (Adam et al., 2018). In this context, fostering intercultural contacts within buddy programmes is complemented by a rights-and-duties approach towards newcomers. This is not unexpected considering that the civic integration perspective dominates current policy views on integration in Flanders (Mahieu & Van Caudenberg, 2020). Moreover, it can be argued that implementing the fourth pillar in the civic integration programme reflects the ambiguous character of Flemish policy, which combines both multiculturalist and assimilationist approaches to migrant integration (Adam, 2013). On the one hand, the PNT aims at 'embracing diversity' by both host society members and newcomers, thus suggesting the multiculturalist promotion of differences. On the other hand, activities of the PNT, including buddy programmes, are exclusively conducted within a Dutch-speaking environment, with a primary emphasis on the responsibility of newcomers. This implies a reduction of differences in favour of the majority population, giving the fourth pillar an assimilationist connotation (Vlaamse Regering, 2020).

This renewed decree thus formalises buddy programmes as an instrument of migrant integration policies. Compared to other countries where buddy programmes are not structurally integrated into the civic integration programme, Flanders holds a unique position in this regard (Reidsma & De Cuyper, 2021). To further prepare the implementation of the fourth pillar, the Fund for Asylum and Migration (AMIF) issued a call for proposals aimed at: (1) developing, testing, and evaluating pathways for social networking and participation for newcomers, (2) creating an operational framework for the sustainable implementation of the fourth pillar of civic integration at the local level, and (3) participating in activities of a Learning Network for knowledge sharing and expertise building (Vlaamse Regering, 2020, p. 11). However, the introduction of the Participation and Networking Trajectory, the fourth pillar, in the civic integration programme is not without criticism. The Minorities Forum (now LEVL), for instance, questions the compulsory nature of buddy programmes, suggesting that volunteer buddies may inherently adopt a controlling, rather than supportive, role towards newcomers (Minderhedenforum, 2021). Additionally, others argue that the responsibility for finding a PNT cannot be placed on newcomers until there is a guarantee of adequate availability (Commissie Diversiteit, 2021). This criticism could possibly explain why the implementation date of the fourth pillar has been postponed several times. Initially, the implementation of the PNT was supposed to take effect on the 1st of January 2022, but ultimately occurred on the 1st of January 2023.

Interestingly, figures from the Agency for Integration and Civic Integration⁷ show that in 2023, 8412 newcomers enrolled in the PNT as a part of their integration contract, of whom only a small proportion opted for a buddy programme, namely 7.1% of all those who started or already completed the fourth pillar of the civic integration programme. Volunteering or participating in Dutch language discussion groups are currently the most popular choices.

5. Emergence of buddy programmes for newcomers in Flanders

As previously discussed, buddy programmes are increasingly becoming integrated into policy-making and integration measures (Raithelhuber, 2023). This chapter examines the emergence of the intervention within the Flemish context.

Buddy programmes supporting newcomers were initially driven by civil society initiatives (Crijns & De Cuyper, 2022). The first buddy programmes for newcomers initiated by the Flemish government trace back to 2011, when Minister Geert Bourgeois of Civic Integration introduced the project 'Integrating Together' ('Samen Inburgeren'). Through the 'Wanted: Managers of Diversity 2011' campaign, Minister Bourgeois called upon local administrations and organisations to establish local initiatives named 'Integrating Together' (Samen Inburgeren). This marked a significant milestone, launching buddy programmes as an integration measure in Flanders. More specifically, Integrating Together was an initiative undertaken by the Flemish government aimed at acquainting newcomers with Flemish society and enhancing their Dutch language skills in an informal manner through the assistance of Flemish volunteer buddies. Some projects focused on sports, while others centred around culture, youth, cycling, or leisure experiences in general. Due to the success and interest in this integration methodology, the project has been continued in several smaller municipalities and cities in Flanders to this day, such as Turnhout, Mechelen, and Ghent. During the summer of 2015, an unprecedented number of migrants and refugees arrived in Europe due to escalating conflicts in Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iraq, and other states in the Global South⁸ (Paré, 2022). Consequently, this reception crisis in 2015 led to numerous solidarity initiatives, with citizens volunteering or establishing their own projects. This included the emergence of a new form of buddy programmes for newcomers, named 'housing buddies' (woonbuddy's), focused on finding housing solutions for newcomers (D'Eer, Robeyns & Geldof, 2019). These buddy programmes, spurred by civil society initiatives, might be understood as a response to national governments' inability to find appropriate alternatives (Crijns & De Cuyper, 2022; Scholten & Penninx, 2016).

In December 2019, the Flemish government extended Integrating Together to other Flemish cities and allocated €400 000 to the project (Ahmad-Yar & Laurentsyeveva, 2020). With the renewed civic Integration Decree, buddy projects for newcomers received a new impetus. Former Minister Bart Somers structurally anchored buddy projects in Flanders, utilising the fourth pillar of the civic

⁷ These figures were obtained through written correspondence with a contact person of the AgII.

⁸ The vast majority of migrants were received in neighbouring countries in the Middle East and around the Mediterranean Sea. Contrary to what often is assumed, it is argued that Flanders did not face a migration crisis but rather a reception and housing crisis, as it was not ready to accommodate the increased flow of asylum seekers (Groeninck, Meurs, & Geldof, 2019; Vandevoordt, 2019).

integration programme, which is compulsory for some newcomers (Vlaamse Regering, 2020). As discussed earlier, to address challenges related to the implementation of the fourth pillar, the Asylum, Migration, and Integration Fund (AMIF) co-financed experiments with 55 local governments over two years (2021-2022) focused on the development of Participation and Networking Trajectories in 26 pilot projects. The projects under study aimed to draw lessons for the implementation of the fourth pillar. In 19 pilot projects, a buddy programme was offered. The key findings for buddy programmes stressed an underestimation of the labour intensity of successful buddy projects and the importance of effective role demarcation and clear expectations (Alonso, Van Ongevalle & De Cuyper, 2023). Importantly, while the initial objective was for local administrations to assume full responsibility for the fourth pillar, during the course of the pilot projects, it was decided that they would only identify the supply in their municipality, while the direction on the demand side was delegated to the Agencies for Integration and Civic Integration. As a result, the focus of some pilot projects also shifted: where initially the focus was on the development of new supply, this shifted towards mapping out and making accessible existing offers within the municipality eligible for the PNT (Alonso et al., 2023). On 22 September 2022, Minister of Society Bart Somers launched an appeal to the general population to register as buddies within the framework of the fourth pillar. The Agency for Integration and Civic Integration receives all registrations. Subsequently, a consultant from the Agency contacts the local administration of the candidate volunteer. On 1 January 2023, the fourth pillar of the civic integration programme came into effect.

6. Research questions and overview

This dissertation answers recent calls for research on 'performing buddy programmes' and 'displaying social relationships' on the micro-scale of everyday interaction (Raithelhuber, 2023). It more specifically aims to contribute to the aforementioned literature by taking into consideration what makes buddy programmes effective in fostering the integration process of newcomers into the host society, in particular in expanding their social networks. It therefore rests on the assumption that understanding the contribution of buddy programmes for newcomer integration requires more than just an input/output logic: it necessitates a deeper comprehension of the activities and interactions within these programmes (Raithelhuber, 2018). I bring this to light in one literature review and three empirical studies that, each from their own contribution, are focused on answering this overarching research question:

What makes buddy programmes effective in facilitating the integration process of newcomers in the host society?

Chapter one, initially drafted as a research report for the Hannah Arendt Institute, offers a comprehensive state-of-the-art review to elucidate the existing scholarly knowledge on buddy programmes. I primarily explore the intervention within mentoring literature, as much of the research on buddy programmes has focused on established practices of mentoring rather than befriending (Philip & Spratt, 2007). In this literature review, I seek to shed light on the concept of buddy programmes, explore potential outcomes and success factors, and identify possible pitfalls. Additionally, I delve deeper into the socialisation of care, which may clarify the increasing popularity

of the intervention. In chapter two, I explore further into the perspectives of individual policymakers on buddy programmes for newcomers, allowing them to reflect on official policy documents and objectives. More specifically, this chapter aims to uncover the underlying assumptions of policymakers regarding how and why buddy programmes contribute to integration outcomes for newcomers (Funnel & Rogers, 2011). Therefore, I propose the following research questions:

How do policymakers describe buddy programmes for newcomers?

According to these policymakers, what are the possible outcomes for the integration process of newcomers?

Why do policymakers think buddy programmes are effective in facilitating newcomer integration?

In chapter three, I reflect on social network expansion for newcomers, which aligns with the official objective of the PNT and, consequently, with buddy programmes operating within the context of the fourth pillar of the civic integration programme (Vlaamse Regering, 2020). However, previous research results on this aspiration have been ambiguous (De Cuyper & Vandermeerschen, 2018; Mahieu, Van Raemdonck, & Clycq, 2019). Drawing on brokerage theory, I examine the behavioural orientations of social professionals (coordinators of buddy programmes) and volunteer buddies with the aim of strengthening newcomers' social networks, rather than solely focusing on networking outcomes (Obstfeld, 2005; Obstfeld, Borgatti, & Davis, 2014). Additionally, this study places special emphasis on the agency of newcomers in influencing the brokerage behaviour of these two groups of stakeholders. This study therefore asks:

How do volunteers (buddies) and coordinators of buddy programmes fulfil their brokerage role with a view to expand the social network of immigrant newcomers in the host society?

In chapter four, I investigate how power is manifested in the dyadic relationships between buddies and newcomers. I contend that buddy programmes are prone to reproducing power imbalances and consequently may lead to suboptimal integration outcomes (Rashid & Cepeda-García, 2021; Stock, 2019). Simultaneously, I acknowledge practices of deconstructing the binary opposition between in- and out-group members (Kutsenko et al, 2020). Drawing on interviews with newcomers who have participated in buddy programmes and volunteer buddies, I analyse relational dynamics within the (De-)Othering theoretical framework. In this regard, the following two research questions are posed:

Which power dynamics emerge in the interpersonal relationships between volunteers (buddies) and newcomers in buddy programmes?

What strategies do these two individuals employ to negotiate these power asymmetries?

In sum, this dissertation presents a contribution to our understanding of how buddy programmes may impact the social integration of newly arrived migrants. In addition to providing an extensive literature review, the study explicitly articulates the assumptions of various stakeholders involved, including policymakers, professionals, volunteers, and newcomers, regarding the mechanisms of the intervention. In doing so, it extends beyond the conventional emphasis on effects and outcomes in studies on buddy programmes, thereby offering a more comprehensive understanding of dynamics, interactions, and personal relationships in fostering the integration process of newcomers

(Raithelhuber, 2023). By examining the intervention from multiple angles, I aim to provide a deeper insight into (i) policy perspectives, (ii) the organisational context of buddy programmes, and (iii) the lived experiences of all participants (coordinators, volunteer buddies, and newcomers). This holistic approach addresses gaps in the current literature by investigating buddy programmes for newcomers within the framework of befriending, utilising qualitative methods in a Flemish context. Consequently, this dissertation not only seeks to advance theoretical knowledge, but also aims to offer practical insights that can inform the implementation of the fourth pillar of the civic integration programme.

7. Research methodology

7.1. A broad view of Evidence-Based Practice

This dissertation aims to provide greater insights into buddy programmes and their contributions to the integration process of newly arrived migrants. More specifically, it seeks to investigate what makes buddy programmes effective in expanding the social networks of newcomers in the receiving society. The first chapter offers a broad exploration of buddy programmes and, by extension, Participation and Networking Trajectories within the international research literature. This literature review sheds light on the contact hypothesis as a theoretical framework for intercultural encounters, outlines the possible outcomes of buddy programmes, and identifies both the success factors and challenges of the intervention. Informed by this literature review, I have chosen to further scrutinize buddy programmes in this dissertation, which fall under the category of 'befriending' aimed at promoting social inclusion (Balaam, 2015; Van der Tier & Potting, 2015; Van Robaeyns & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016). Within the framework of the fourth pillar of the civic integration programme, which focuses on expanding newcomers' social networks, I argue that buddy programmes based on the principle of befriending may be more likely to achieve this objective due to their emphasis on relational support and the strengthening of the dyadic relationship (Philip & Spratt, 2007; Vlaamse Regering, 2020). Moreover, this literature review has enabled me to design the subsequent questionnaires in an informed manner, with insight into the favourable conditions for the relationship between buddies and newcomers (e.g. reciprocity, contact frequency, participatory attitude), the organisational aspects of the intervention (i.e. matching, training, follow-up), and the challenges related to buddy programmes, such as the relationship between volunteers and professionals.

For the empirical study of the doctoral research, I have employed qualitative research methods to gain a greater understanding of the modus operandi of the intervention within the Flemish context. It is worth noting that social work is under pressure to demonstrate its impact, effectiveness, and efficiency (Hermans, 2014). Consequently, the idea of evidence-based practice is introduced with the aim of scientifically underpinning social interventions. Since relational dynamics aimed at facilitating the integration process and strengthening the social networks of newcomers cannot be reduced to numerical accounts, this dissertation takes a broad view of evidence-based practice (EBP) to enhance the visibility of the knowledge base of buddy programmes. In contrast to the narrow approach to evidence-based practice, which draws on a strictly positivist view of science, the broad view pays attention to the interaction between the intervention and the context in which it takes place, thus acknowledging the complexity of the effectiveness concept (Blom & Morén, 2010). Thus, the premise

that social world is complex, and therefore cannot be fully understood through direct empirical observations, led the dissertation to not focus solely on observational evidence in buddy programmes (Hermans, 2014). Inspired by the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of critical realism, the dissertation primarily aims to uncover the underlying and often invisible mechanisms or causes in buddy programmes, giving rise to integration outcomes and social network expansion for newcomers (Bhaskar, 1978; Boost, Raeymaeckers, Hermans, & Elloukmani, 2020). Within the scientific realism approach, mechanisms are considered to be a combination of resources offered by the social programme under study and stakeholders' reasoning in response (Pawson & Tilly, 1997). More specifically, stakeholders hold implicit and explicit assumptions on what actions are required to solve a problem and why the problem will respond to these actions (Chen, 2005, p.7). Importantly, different stakeholders do not necessarily have the same assumptions (Hermans, 2014). Therefore, the dissertation adopts a multi-stakeholder perspective to examine how different actors perceive the objectives of a buddy programme, the actions within the intervention, and the mechanisms behind these actions. The consideration of mechanisms in research enables the development of an explanation not only of 'what works', but also why, under which conditions, and for whom buddy programmes are effective in migrant integration contexts (Dalkin et al., 2015, p.3; White, 2009).

7.2. Case selection

For the purpose of this dissertation, I began by identifying the relevant actors within the field of buddy programmes in Flanders. I employed a purposeful sampling technique, which is a commonly used approach in qualitative research to select information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest (Palinkas et al., 2015, p.533). This process involves selecting individuals or groups with significant expertise or experience in a particular subject or area of interest (Cresswell & Plano Clark, 2011). In addition to possessing necessary knowledge and experience, factors such as willingness to participate, availability, and ability to reflect and communicate experiences and opinions were taken into account in the selection of interviewees (Bernard, 2002; Palinkas et al., 2015). The rationale behind employing a purposive strategy rests on the premise that, considering the study's aims and objectives, certain individuals may possess diverse and significant perspectives on the ideas and issues under scrutiny, thus necessitating their inclusion in the sample (Campbell et al., 2020). For this doctoral study, four groups of stakeholders were included, namely policymakers, social professionals (coordinators), volunteers (buddies), and newcomers. Each of these groups will be discussed in more detail below.

Policymakers

For the initial round of interviews in this dissertation, I selected 15 policymakers active within the field of migrant integration in Flanders. The first interviewee, representing the policy context in which buddy programmes operate, was an employee of the cabinet of the then Flemish Minister for Home Affairs, Administration, Integration, and Equal Opportunities. Accordingly, this respondent can be regarded as one of the programme designers, as the fourth pillar of the civic integration programme was developed by the aforementioned minister (Chen, 2005). By means of snowball sampling, other policy makers who were deemed relevant or prominent in introducing buddy programmes were invited to participate in the interviews. The sample includes both policymakers operating at a supralocal and local level in Flanders. Variation in policy positions allows for gaining insight into the different stages

of implementing buddy programmes as an integration measure. Depth of understanding requires both an understanding of variation and common elements (Palinkas et al., 2015).

Table 1: Research participants: Policymakers

Respondents	Sex	Position/Organisation	Level
Respondent 1	M	Counsellor Home Affairs, Administration, Integration, and Equal Opportunities	Supralocal
Respondent 2	F	Association of Flemish Cities and Municipalities (VVSG)	Supralocal
Respondent 3	F	Domestic Governance Agency (Agentschap Binnenlands Bestuur)	Supralocal
Respondent 4	M	Alderman (Equal Opportunities, Integration and Civic integration, and Community Building)	Local
Respondent 5	F	Alderman (Diversity, Equal Opportunities)	Local
Respondent 6	F	Atlas	Local
Respondent 7	F	Staff member Diversity and Equal Opportunities	Local
Respondent 8	M	Welfare and Equal Opportunities Department	Local
Respondent 9	F	Atlas	Local
Respondent 10	F	Alderman (Diversity)	Local
Respondent 11	F	Integration officer	Local
Respondent 12	F	Amal	Local
Respondent 13	F	Atlas	Local
Respondent 14	F	Agency for Integration and Civic Integration	Supralocal
Respondent 15	M	Agency for Integration and Civic Integration	Supralocal

Social professionals (coordinators)

Previous research suggests the importance of considering the dyadic relationship between the buddy and the newcomer as situated within a larger system of relationships (Spencer, Gowdy, Drew, McCormack, & Keller, 2019). Therefore, a total of 15 social professionals were interviewed in the course of this doctoral research. These professionals all hold the position of coordinator of a buddy project for newcomers and, in this regard, can be considered as the implementers of the programme (Chen, 2005). The selection of fairly homogenous cases generally requires a smaller sample and enables a detailed description of a particular subgroup (Palinkas et al., 2015). This coordinative function usually involves recruiting participants, matching the dyad, following up on the relationship, and programme evaluation. Due to their involvement in every stage and the numerous dyads they support, coordinators may offer a unique helicopter-perspective on the intervention (Dutton, Deane, & Bullen, 2018). Specifically, I chose to include coordinators of buddy programmes that explicitly mention '*social network expansion*' in their mission statement to align with the aim of the dissertation, which is to scrutinize behavioural orientations in buddy programmes to expand newcomers' social networks in the host society. Consequently, the buddy programmes under study align with the concept of 'befriending', with the aim of improving the social well-being of vulnerable individuals. In this context, the dyadic relationship established through these programmes serves as a source of support (Balaam, 2015). With the exception of one interviewee who voluntarily engages as a coordinator, all interviewees are paid employees working either in a government agency, local government of a city or municipality in Flanders, or civil society initiative. Coordinating the buddy programmes was not a full-time responsibility for these professionals, but rather a (small) component of their duties. Consequently, the number of dyads that these coordinators supervise is relatively small, with an average of 20 dyads per year.

Table 2: Research participants: Coordinators of buddy programmes

Respondent	Sex	Organiser	Province	Start date buddy programme
Respondent 1	M	Civil society initiative	West Flanders	2016
Respondent 2	F	Civil society initiative	Antwerp	2018
Respondent 3	F	Local government	Antwerp	2012
Respondent 4	F	Local government	Antwerp	2012
Respondent 5	M	Civil society initiative	Antwerp	2021
Respondent 6	F	Local government	Antwerp	2012
Respondent 7	F	Government agency	Limburg	2018

Respondent 8	F	Local government	Limburg	2021
Respondent 9	F	Local government	Flemish Brabant	2013
Respondent 10	M	Government agency	Flemish Brabant	2017
Respondent 11	M	Local government	West Flanders	2023
Respondent 12	M	Local government	Flemish Brabant	2017
Respondent 13	F	Local government	East Flanders	2017
Respondent 14	F	Government agency	East Flanders	2021
Respondent 15	F	Local government	East Flanders	2021

Volunteers (buddies)

The third round of interviews involved volunteers (N=25) who formally committed to the role of 'buddy' for a specific period, providing support to the newcomer they were matched with. These volunteers have resided in Flanders for an extended period and are fluent in the Dutch language. Again, snowball sampling was utilised for the recruitment of the interviewees (Palinkas et al., 2015). More specifically, coordinators that already were included in the research sample were approached to identify willing volunteers within the buddy programme they supervise. Negotiating access to these buddies was thus based on establishing relationships with these coordinators. Knowledge of the organisation and identifying the appropriate gatekeeper assisted in this negotiation process (Dempsey, Dowling, Larkin, & Murphy, 2016). The reason for this is twofold. On the one hand, buddies are not easily accessible since there is no database available for these volunteers. On the other hand, opting to interview buddies within the same organisation as those of the previously interviewed coordinators provided some insight into the context in which these buddies operate. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of these volunteers from various perspectives, heterogenous sampling was employed, aiming to include buddies with both positive (e.g. multiple participation in the programme) and negative experiences (i.e. early termination of the dyadic relationship) with the buddy programme (Etikan, 2016). Moreover, to the extent possible, the emphasis was placed on buddies who had completed their participation in the buddy programme, allowing them to reflect retrospectively on their experiences. As shown in Table 3 below, the majority of the interviewees were female (N=16), retired (N=13), and often reportedly engaged in different voluntary initiatives. This corresponds to the 'typical' profile of volunteers engaging as buddies (Stock, 2019; Van Robaey & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016).

Table 3: Research participants: Buddies

Respondents	Sex	Age category	Employment
Respondent 1	F	60-65	Retired
Respondent 2	M	55-60	Permanent job
Respondent 3	M	60-65	Retired
Respondent 4	F	50-55	Permanent job
Respondent 5	F	45-50	Unemployed
Respondent 6	F	25-30	Permanent job
Respondent 7	F	60-65	Retired
Respondent 8	M	45-50	Permanent job
Respondent 9	F	60-65	Permanent job
Respondent 10	F	45-50	Permanent job
Respondent 11	F	60-65	Retired
Respondent 12	F	60-65	Retired
Respondent 13	F	40-45	Permanent job
Respondent 14	F	65-70	Retired
Respondent 15	F	60-65	Retired
Respondent 16	F	60-65	Retired
Respondent 17	M	60-65	Retired
Respondent 18	M	30-35	Permanent job
Respondent 19	M	60-65	Retired
Respondent 20	F	65-70	Retired
Respondent 21	M	40-45	Permanent job
Respondent 22	F	60-65	Retired
Respondent 23	M	65-70	Retired
Respondent 24	M	50-55	Permanent job
Respondent 25	F	25-30	Permanent job

Newcomers

Parton and Kirk (2009, p.35) emphasise the importance in research, whether qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-method in approach, of giving voice to those who would otherwise be silent (Hermans, 2014). Therefore, in the final stage of fieldwork, newly arrived migrants (N=15) who participated in one of the buddy programmes under study were interviewed. Once again, the coordinators of the buddy programmes involved were called upon to select the interviewees. In this respect, I requested the coordinators to share a document I created, which explains the main aspects of the study in English, French, or Dutch (see annex), with the participants of the buddy programme they supervise. The majority of respondents were third-country nationals (N=14), male (N=9), and had resided in Belgium for an average of 3 years. All newcomers included in the study are adults. While participation in the buddy programme was entirely optional for some newcomers (e.g. those who originate from a EU Member State, or for those who were working or studying), for others, it served as the fourth pillar of their civic integration programme, and therefore, was a prerequisite for obtaining an integration certificate.

Table 4: Research participants: Newcomers

Respondents	Sex	Country of origin	Arrival year in Belgium
Respondent 1	M	Indonesia	2023
Respondent 2	M	Iran	2016
Respondent 3	F	Poland	2020
Respondent 4	M	Syria	2022
Respondent 5	M	Guinea	2021
Respondent 6	F	Maroc	2021
Respondent 7	F	Ukraine	2022
Respondent 8	F	Albania	2021
Respondent 9	M	Syria	2019
Respondent 10	F	Cameroon	2022
Respondent 11	M	Guinea	2022
Respondent 12	M	Iraq	2022
Respondent 13	M	Afghanistan	2021
Respondent 14	M	Turkey	2019
Respondent 15	F	Ukraine	2022

7.3. Data collection

This section outlines the data collection process that informed subsequent research. Data were collected in the course of this dissertation through semi-structured in-depth interviews. The purpose of in-depth interviewing was to obtain detailed information that sheds light on individuals' perspectives, experiences, feelings, and the significance they attribute to buddy programmes (Rutledge & Hogg, 2020). In total, 70 in-depth interviews were conducted. Whereas quantitative methods primarily focus on generalizability, qualitative methods place emphasis on saturation, aiming to achieve a thorough understanding through ongoing sampling until no further significant information is gathered (Palinkas et al., 2015). As discussed earlier, four participants groups were included: first policymakers (N=15) were interviewed, then professionals (N=15), volunteers (N=25), and ultimately newcomers (N=15). All interviewees provided either verbal or written informed consent. Below, each interview round will be discussed in more detail.

First of all, a document analysis was conducted on relevant policy texts concerning the fourth pillar of the civic integration programme, including integration decrees, policy papers, and other official communication. Subsequently, insights from this official discourse were incorporated into the questionnaires designed for interviewing policymakers. Inspired by realist evaluation, these 'theories' were presented to the interviewees to solicit their comments, aimed at refining the understanding of the underlying mechanisms involved (Manzano, 2016). The interviews were conducted online due to the COVID-19 measures in place at the time. More specifically, during the interviews (45min-1h20), the focus was on exploring the assumptions of policymakers regarding how and why buddy programmes contribute to integration outcomes for newcomers. Thus, the aim was to unravel the motives behind implementing buddy programmes in the civic integration programme. In order to identify generative mechanisms, I asked questions such as:

- *Why do you think a buddy project can contribute to the integration process of newcomers?*
- *How can buddy projects strengthen the social network of newcomers?*
- *What do you think is the added value of working with volunteers within buddy programmes?*

Secondly, interviews were conducted with coordinators of buddy programmes (47min-2h02). These interviews often took place in the interviewees' offices, typically located in a Social House ('Sociaal Huis') or town hall of the municipality where the buddy programme operates. As these professionals are responsible for monitoring the programme, questions focused on the organisational aspects of the intervention, including the target group, recruitment and matching strategies, and training procedures. Simultaneously, the researcher paid attention to the underlying processes in buddy programmes generating integration outcomes for newcomers (Astbury & Leeuw, 2010). Importantly, in order to foreground coordinators' brokerage behaviour, these questions were posed in relation to social network expansion, as illustrated by the following questions.

- *What conditions do you set for participation in the buddy project and why?*
- *What is the matching process like? How does a "good match" contribute to networking for newcomers?*

- *What should have been (ideally) achieved at the level of the newcomer's social network at the end of the buddy programme?*

Third, in-depth interviews were conducted to illuminate the experiences of volunteers who assumed the role of buddy (40min-1h24). These interviews were either held at the respondent's home or at another location of choice. The topic-list of the semi-structured interviews covered a range of themes, such as motivations for volunteering, expectations and outcomes of the buddy programme, strength of the dyadic relationship, challenges encountered throughout the project, an evaluation of the organisation, and previously identified mechanisms such as trust, equivalence, and informality, with the aim of further refinement. To elucidate how these buddies fulfil their brokerage role in strengthening the newcomer's social network, and thus how they facilitate the interactions between the newcomer and other parties (or not), the following questions were posed (Obstfeld, 2005):

- *To what extent do you connect the newcomer with other people (beyond the one-to-one relationship)? How? Why/Why not? Examples?*
- *To what extent do you open up your own social network to the newcomer? How? Why/Why not? Examples?*
- *To what extent do you introduce the newcomer to institutions/services? How? Why/Why not? Examples?*

In the final phase of the data collection process, I conducted interviews with newly arrived migrants who had participated in a buddy programme (35min-58min). Securing access to this participant group required considerable interview flexibility (Dempsey et al., 2016). Depending on the interviewees' preferences, the interviews were conducted in English, French, or Dutch and were arranged at a location and time convenient for the respondent, often during evenings or weekends. Additionally, it was not uncommon for newcomers to be accompanied by a confidant, such as a family member or a friend, during the interviews. Furthermore, while topic-lists were developed to guide the conversations, the stories of newcomers took precedence. Story is a form of meaning construction in qualitative research, build on the belief that individuals make sense of their world most effectively by storytelling (Bailey & Tilley, 2002). More specifically, the dialogical, story-based technique of Most Significant Change (MSC) was employed to gather stories of change within buddy programmes, rather than relying on predetermined indicators (Dart & Davies, 2003). To this end, I posed questions as:

- *What is the most important outcome or change for you as a result of the buddy programme? Why?*
- *What moment with your buddy or memory of them will always stay with you? Why?*
- *Is there anything you would change about the buddy programme? Why?*

7.4. Data analysis

All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. In the data analysis process, I utilized Thematic Analysis (TA), a systematic method for identifying, organizing, and interpreting patterns of meaning (themes) within a dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 57). To address the overarching research question of this dissertation, the analysis paid close attention to how and why buddy programmes facilitate the integration process of newcomers, particularly in terms of expanding their social networks within the host society. Based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach to TA, the data analysis process consisted of six consecutive phases. In the first phase of the data analysis, I immersed myself in the data by listening to audio recordings and actively reading the transcripts of the interviews multiple times, while paying close attention to meanings and patterns. Concurrently, I took notes on the data to identify items that could be of potential interest.

Phase 2 involved the systematic analysis of the data through (open) coding with the assistance of MAXQDA and NVivo software (see Appendix VI for an example of a codebook). Initial codes were generated at both the semantic and latent levels of meaning, with the former describing the content of the data (e.g., 'time delineation of the intervention', 'intended tasks of buddies', 'profile of newcomers') and the latter offering interpretations of that content (e.g., 'a good example of a buddy programme', 'pitfall', 'added value of working with volunteers', 'complex life circumstances of newcomers'), thereby identifying meanings that lie beneath the surface of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The hallmark of TA is its flexibility, as it was employed in this dissertation for both inductive coding (data-driven), as deductive coding (e.g. based on policy documents on civic integration, missions statements of buddy organisations, literature reviews), and, as previously mentioned, for capturing both explicit and latent meanings, the assumptions and ideas that lie behind what is explicitly stated (e.g. generative mechanisms) (Clarke & Braun, 2017). As a result, some codes draw upon our conceptual and theoretical framework (especially in the empirical chapters on Brokerage and (de-) Othering), while other codes reflect interviewees' concepts and language (especially in the empirical chapter on the perspectives of individual policymakers inspired by a realist approach) (Braun & Clarke, 2012). For example, the code 'introduction into own social network' stayed close to the discourse of the respondent (e.g. Buddy 18 stated "I have a busy social life, so I invited the newcomer to join my friend group"). The code 'network agency' (e.g., "He was not interested in coming along"), on the other hand, was informed by our theoretical framework of Social Network Brokerage, as none of the interviewees used this term to describe their experiences.

In the third phase of TA, I transitioned from generating codes to constructing themes. Following Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 82) a theme "captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set." This phase involves reviewing the coded data to identify similarities and overlaps among the codes. For example, in our data from the interviewed policymakers, codes such as 'approachability of the buddy,' 'casualness of the interaction,' and 'voluntary nature of the intervention' were grouped under 'informality,' as these codes all refer to establishing a context distinct from the professional sphere. Subsequently, 'informality' was identified as a subtheme of 'underlying mechanisms,' giving rise to integration outcomes for newly arrived migrants (see table 5). During this stage, I also created a

miscellaneous theme that encompasses all codes that do not clearly fit into existing categories. These codes may ultimately be discarded or integrated into new themes (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

Table 5: Example of coding process based on Thematic Analysis

Quote	Code	Sub-theme	Assigned theme
'When it happens in a casual way, there's a lot more positive energy, and you can talk about all sorts of life themes and connect with people on different levels. Sure, there might be some overlap with what happens in classes, but this is an opportunity to belong, to participate, and to meet people in a way that isn't tied to school or a strict learning path that's so clearly defined.'	Casualness of interaction	Informality	Mechanism
'The newcomer can message the buddy on WhatsApp anytime, even on weekends. It could be whenever!'	Approachability of the buddy		
'The volunteers really want the project to succeed and show genuine interest. They say things like "I want to learn about other cultures. I really want to invest my free time in this".'	Voluntary nature of the intervention		

As mentioned earlier, thematic analysis allows themes to emerge both deductively and inductively from the data. For example, through a document analysis of the renewed integration decree, it was possible to deduce themes aligned with the policy objectives of buddy projects, such as 'embracing ethnic-cultural diversity by host society members', 'gaining insights into the lived experiences of migrants', and 'providing an informal point of contact for newcomers'. Simultaneously, during interviews with policymakers, it became evident that, in addition to these official objectives, they had other goals for buddy programmes in mind, such as 'enhancing access to the labour market' and providing 'language practice opportunities' for newcomers, thereby inductively introducing new themes to the data.

In phase 4 potential themes were reviewed in relation to the coded data and entire data set. First, I checked whether the themes work in relation to the extracts of data (Braun & Clarke, 2012). For instance, when analysing the brokerage behaviour of buddies and coordinators of buddy programmes, I assessed whether there was sufficient meaningful data to support themes such as conduit brokerage, jungens brokerage, and tertius gaudens. I also checked whether the data were coherent under these themes and verified that they adequately addressed my research question: *How do volunteers (buddies) and coordinators of buddy programmes fulfil their brokerage role with a view to expand the social network of immigrant newcomers in the host society?* Next, I reviewed the themes in relation to the entire dataset to assess whether they meaningfully represent the interview data. In

addition, I frequently engaged in reflective discussions with my supervisors to analyse the themes and uncover the underlying meanings present within the interviews.

In the fifth phase of our Thematic Analysis, identified themes were defined and named. According to Braun and Clarke (2012), it is essential to clearly articulate the unique and specific aspects of each theme. In Table 6, the central themes from our final empirical chapter are presented along with a coherent description of the data.

Table 6: Definitions and labels for selected themes

Theme 1. Othering practices through emphasizing differences. Outlines how buddies employ differentiation processes to distinguish themselves as the majority group from newcomers as the minority group. Focuses on the mobilization of this binary opposition, highlighting elements of subordination in the relationships between volunteers and newcomers within buddy programs. Examines the extent to which buddies position themselves, consciously or unconsciously, above newcomers due to their dominant position in society.

Theme 2. Power negotiations and strategies: Maps the concerted efforts to achieve a degree of equality within the dyadic relationship between buddies and newcomers. Focuses on strategies to address or minimize power asymmetries arising from differences in ethnicity, language, and socio-economic background. Involves practices aimed at partially or wholly deconstructing the binary opposition between the in-group of host society members and the out-group of migrants.

The final phase of the qualitative analysis was the production of a report in the form of three journal articles. It is worth mentioning that in this dissertation writing and analysis often overlapped, as I already started making notes of remarkable findings and quotes during the coding process. Throughout the writing process, I paid close attention to the sequence in which the themes were presented. For instance, in the chapter on Social Network Brokerage, I first addressed the brokerage behaviour of buddies before discussing that of coordinators, as there was significantly more interview data clustered around the former theme. Moreover, in our empirical chapter on Power Asymmetries and Negotiations, the de-Othering practices build upon previously discussed themes related to Othering practices, creating a logical and coherent narrative about the data (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

7.5. Reflexivity and researcher positionality

In this section, I will tackle my positionality as a researcher throughout conducting this doctoral study. It is important to acknowledge that every researcher inflects the production of knowledge. As scholars are individuals, each one with their own backgrounds, world views, and beliefs, inevitably colouring their perspective, the idea of research objectivity is rejected (Hinton, 2014). Drawing on feminist standpoint theory, it is argued that a researcher must adopt a self-reflexive approach in order to guard objectivity as much as possible (Harding, 1986). More specifically, the concept of a 'politics of location' serves both as an epistemological and methodological requisite. It emphasises the specificity of the speaking subject, highlighting her capacity to speak, while also acknowledging that all knowledge claims are situated and contingent (Hinton, 2014, p. 100; Rich, 1986). This is not a limitation, as Harraway (1988, p.582) states:

Objectivity turns out to be about particular and specific embodiment and definitely not about the false vision promising transcendence of all limits and responsibility. The moral is simple: only partial perspective promises objective vision.

In this respect, I will reflect on my gender, age, ethnicity, and social class and how this impacted the research process, and more specifically how this affected the interviews with the newcomers who participated in buddy programmes. Throughout the course of this doctoral research, I struggled with my position as a white, middle-class woman, not having a migration background, enjoying considerable privileges, while conducting research on newly arrived migrants, some of them particularly vulnerable and prone to cumulated social exclusions in the initial phase of their arrival in Flanders (Vescan et al., 2023). I had concerns about the legitimacy of my knowledge claims since I could only study migrant integration experiences from a distal perspective, thus limiting my ability to fully understand how newcomers navigate in a new place of residence, as well as the losses involved in their migration experiences. Therefore, I aimed to bridge the gap between my 'detached' position as a researcher and the lived experiences of newcomers by participating in a buddy programme as a volunteer twice myself. Although the programme in which I took part focused exclusively on practicing Dutch and therefore was not included in the case study of this dissertation, 'being a buddy' while conducting this doctoral research has enabled me to stay close to the actual practice of the intervention. Consequently, it allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of the interactions and dynamics between newcomers and buddies on the ground. This is in line with recent calls for research on 'performing buddy programmes' and displaying social relationships on a micro-level (Raithelhuber, 2023). Moreover, I was presented with challenges in my relationships with these newcomers, including communication difficulties and the pressing need for housing, the latter being a need beyond my personal capacity to address. Ultimately, these challenges resulted twice in an early termination of the programme. As a consequence, my experience contradicts the portrayal of engaging as a buddy as a limited undertaking that is manageable and plannable (Raithelhuber, 2018).

During the interviews with the newcomers, I addressed my positionality by adopting an informal, non-directive approach to establish equal status as conversation partners, despite my superior social status in society. For instance, I allowed their stories to lead the conversation rather than imposing predetermined indicators (Dart & Davies, 2003). Additionally, I respected their preference, when applicable, to conduct the interviews in Dutch, even though it required more time and the use of other languages might have facilitated the interaction more effectively. Since most newcomers were highly motivated to learn Dutch, acceptance of their language choice during the interviews may value their linguistic capacities and in doing so bring about a social transformation in an unequal linguistic reality (Zschomler, 2019). Furthermore, I attempted to counteract power inequalities inherent within an interview interaction by using the strategy of 'self-disclosure' (Abell, Locke, Condor, Gibson, & Stevenson, 2006). At times, I would tell about my experience as a buddy, both the positive and challenging aspects of it, in order to construct similarity between myself as an interviewer and the respondents and to stimulate reciprocal talk (Abell et al., 2006). Furthermore, my age and young appearance appeared an advantage in softening any hierarchies. More specifically, I often consciously introduced myself as a (PhD) 'student' rather than a doctoral researcher, which, as far as I noticed, helped to avoid the perception of being the sole possessor of knowledge about buddy programmes. Instead, I aimed to present myself as open to engaging in discourse not only with newcomers but

also with other stakeholders (policymakers, coordinators, buddies) involved in the intervention. Simultaneously, I gathered the impression that some newcomers associated my affiliation with the university with a certain level of prestige, resulting in some curious questions about my position. Lastly, in the interviews with my respondents, I did not observe any clear advantages or disadvantages based on my gender. However, one newcomer indicated that he was not used to talking to women, since cross-gender conversations are not customary in his home country, stating that he was rather shy. Despite efforts to deal with my positionality in way that avoided the devaluation of newcomers, I noticed considerable gratitude among some respondents for interacting with a host society member as myself. For instance, one newcomer respondent mentioned that he wanted to stay in touch with me to have someone to talk to. Others were delighted to practice their language skills with a native speaker. Conversely, for one interview, I was invited into the newcomer's home where I was welcomed very hospitably and offered several meals. Previous research has demonstrated that reciprocation in intercultural encounters can be achieved through food sharing, indicating that newcomers also take initiative to negotiate their positionality (Hamburg, Finkenauer, & Schuengel, 2014; Vescan et al., 2023).

The aforementioned allows me to conclude that self-reflexivity informs positionality and is both a necessary prerequisite and an ongoing process for the researcher (Holmes, 2020).

7.6. Limitations

Several limitations of this study need to be acknowledged.

First, the selection of fairly homogenous cases was in play. Our sample consists predominantly of buddy programmes organised by local governments with the aim of expanding the social networks of newcomers. However, it can be argued that the greater the diversity of characteristics or circumstances of buddy programmes, the more opportunity there is to identify their different contributory elements or influences (Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2003). Due to a high non-response rate and the focus on the Participation and Networking Trajectory, I did not include organisations that vary widely from each other and scrutinize, for instance, civil initiatives supporting undocumented migrants. Previous research suggests that solidarity within these initiatives, by supporting those excluded from national order, goes beyond the neutrality assumed to be present in buddy programmes within the context of the fourth pillar of the civic integration programme (Vandevoordt, 2020). As a consequence, due to the underrepresentation of buddy programmes organised by civil initiatives, I was unable to systematically compare their contributions to the integration process of newly arrived migrants with those of buddy programmes initiated by local governments or government agencies.

Second, the attribution paradox manifested itself, as anticipated in a realist approach of a multifaceted issue (Marchal, Dedzo, & Kegels, 2010). Because of the multi-causality in research on complex issues, such as migrant integration, it is difficult, if not impossible, to assess the exact contributions of buddy programmes to particular outcomes (Hoens, Smetcoren, Switsers, & De Donder, 2021). In other words, it is difficult to isolate the impact of befriending interventions on integration outcomes from other initiatives or the overall context of the civic integration programme in which they are embedded (Philip & Spratt, 2007). As a result, the extent to which buddy programmes expand newcomers' social

networks cannot be attributed solely to the interactions with their buddies. Moreover, social network expansion might also be a consequence of an extended duration of residence in the receiving society, since it is suggested that over time, there are simply more opportunities for connections with the host population (Feeney & Boozeman, 2008). Nonetheless, the value of providing a detailed picture of the underlying assumptions about how change in buddy programmes for newcomers is brought about, remains (Boost et al., 2020).

Last, it is important to acknowledge the risk of selection bias among the respondents in this dissertation. Selection bias occurs when a researcher systematically leaves out a certain type of person, event, or behaviour when collecting data (Bell-Martin & Marston, 2021, p.159). In recruiting volunteer buddies and newcomers for interview participation, coordinators were instructed to refer to dyad members representing both positive and negative experiences with the buddy programme. This approach aimed to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the intervention's contribution to migrant integration. Previous research identified volunteer dropouts as a common issue in buddy programmes (Van Robaeys & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016). Despite the inclusion of some respondents who terminated the programme early due to insurmountable challenges, it can be argued that the majority of interviewees had a relatively positive experience with the programme, as indicated by their willingness to participate in the study. However, reaching those with negative experiences proved to be far more difficult or impossible. Therefore, it is unlikely that our sample fully reflects the reality of buddy programmes for newcomers.

PART II

Chapter 1: Research report Hannah Arendt Institute⁹: Participation and Networking Trajectories as the fourth pillar of the new Integration Decree

Summary

The former civic integration programme in Flanders consisted of three pillars: a Dutch language training course, a pathway to employment, and social orientation. In 2023, a fourth pillar came into effect: the Participation and Networking Trajectory. This extension aims to strengthen the social networks of newly arrived migrants and increase their participation in the host society. To this end, newcomers are offered a tailor-made 40-hour programme in the form of a buddy project, work placement, or voluntary work. The aim of this report is a broad exploration of buddy programmes and, by extension, social networking and participation trajectories in the research literature.

The literature review first contextualises the increasing popularity of buddy projects within the emerging discourse surrounding the socialisation of care (1). Next, the contact hypothesis and related literature outline the underlying mechanisms of intercultural encounters between newcomers and the majority population (2.1). In addition, the report highlights the possible outcomes of buddy programmes for newly arrived migrants and volunteer buddies. Improvements in psychological well-being and an acceleration of the integration process for newcomers are examples of possible benefits (2.2). Furthermore, the literature review focuses on defining a buddy programme as a volunteer methodology (3) and then distinguishes three possible roles for the buddy: mentoring, befriending, or coaching (4). Bridging social contacts do not occur automatically but favourable conditions are decisive for lasting relationships between buddies and newcomers. A key focus of the report is therefore on the success factors (5) important for organised intercultural encounters. Various factors are discussed: buddy programmes in the form of one-to-one relationships or in group formats, the duration and contact frequency of encounters, the type of support provided, the asymmetry in the supportive relationship, the dynamics of the buddy method, a basic participatory attitude on the part of the dyad, the space and setting of the meetings, as well as success factors at the organisational level, such as matching criteria, training of buddies, and follow-up of the dyadic relationship by a professional. The literature review also addresses the relationship between volunteer buddies and professional social workers and suggests complementarity between the two forms of support (6).

Further, based on the previous literature review, we focus on two substantive areas of tension (7), which we believe are crucial for the effectiveness of buddy programmes and require special attention. On the one hand, the dichotomy between instrumental and relational support in the literature on buddy programmes merits close scrutiny and raises the question of which combination is desirable for supporting the integration process of newcomers (7.1). On the other hand, the roles of volunteers and professionals regarding buddy programmes require more clarity (7.2). We then focus on an adequate methodology for studying the impact of Participation and Networking Trajectories. More

⁹This chapter constitutes an English translation of a Dutch-language report commissioned by the Hannah Arendt Institute entitled 'Sociale netwerken- en participatietrajecten met nieuwkomers als vierde pijler van het nieuwe inburgeringsdecreet'. <https://hannah-arendt.instituut/verdiep-je/rapport-wat-zegt-de-wetenschap-over-buddynetwerken-en-integratie/>

specifically, the CAIMeR model, which considers the interaction between the intervention and the specific context in which the intervention takes place is being discussed (7.3).

This literature review employs the term 'buddy programmes' or 'buddy projects', which are also known as duo-working (Van Robaeys & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016), social mentoring (Crijns & De Cuyper, 2022), or befriending (Balaam, 2015) in academic literature. The term 'buddy project' is commonly used by practitioners of the intervention in Flanders. The insights presented in this report often, though not always, also apply to other trajectories that constitute the fourth pillar of the civic integration programme. Throughout this report, the term 'buddy' refers to the volunteer, who is an established member of the host population, while 'participant' refers to the newcomer.

Buddy programmes as an increasingly popular intervention

In the past decades, buddy programmes have expanded enormously across Europe (Raithelhuber, 2023). The intervention has been applied in recent years in many areas of social and welfare policy (such as deprivation, debt, serious diseases, et cetera). Buddy programmes thus have been employed for various target groups and with different objectives, such as individuals with mental and physical vulnerabilities (Naidoo, Gathiram, & Schlebusch, 2014), individuals experiencing poverty (Dillahunt et al., 2022), and the elderly (Fakoya, McCorry, & Donnelly, 2021). These programmes turn ordinary citizens into 'buddies' for individuals from disadvantaged groups (Raithelhuber, 2023). Additionally, buddy programmes for newcomers gained popularity, especially in the wake of the 2015 European 'refugee crisis' (Stock, 2019). While initially driven by civil society, this intervention has become increasingly institutionalised in some European countries (Crijns & De Cuyper, 2022). Nevertheless, buddy programmes are not a novel concept. The intervention has its roots in the United States, where it offered emotional and practical support to individuals living with AIDS around 1970 (Burrage & Demi, 2003). Inspired by America, buddy projects developed in the Netherlands ('maatjesprojecten') from the 1990s onwards, and somewhat later in Belgium (Van der Tier & Potting, 2015).

1. Socialisation of care

It is argued that the rise in popularity of the buddy method aligns with the emergence of ideas surrounding active citizenship and the socialisation of care (Van der Tier & Potting, 2015). More specifically, Van Robaeys and Lyssens-Danneboom (2016) attribute the growing popularity of buddy programmes to shifts towards a 'participatory society' as an alternative to the traditional welfare state. Here, the notion of an active citizen who is socially engaged and responsible for themselves and their community takes precedence (Tonkens, 2014). Since the 1990s, there has been a debate surrounding a more 'activating welfare state', wherein the entitlement to benefits or services is increasingly linked to certain civic duties, with social participation being paramount. It can be stated that the rights-and-duties approach of the Integration Decree is in line with this discourse of the activating welfare state (De Cuyper et al., 2010). As a result, volunteers play an important role in such an 'active citizenship regime' (Van Bochove, Tonkens, Verplanke, & Roggeveen, 2018). Also buddy programmes for newcomers in Flanders depend on the commitment of volunteer citizens to take on the role of buddies in order to support newcomers in their integration process. In this respect, the shift towards a participatory society builds on the notion of 'socialisation', in which all members of the community are actors in a socialisation process (citizens, professionals, policy, and civil society), and where care is provided in and by society (Kwekkeboom, 2004; Van Regenmortel, 2009). In the following section, several drivers behind the process of socialisation are identified.

First, the rise of the socialisation of care and the utilisation of volunteers can be partially attributed to austerity measures (Van Robaeys & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2018). Buddy programmes are often promoted against a backdrop of cutback or shifts in public spending, growing inequalities suffered by the target group, and a change in the governance of welfare and migration (Raithelhuber, 2023). Furthermore, due to the anticipated reduction in the participant's reliance on professional services, buddy projects are perceived as cost-effective interventions (Balaam, 2015). Although buddy programmes for newcomers as part of their civic integration programme can be considered a positive trend that promotes volunteering among the majority population, it risks the instrumentalization of

voluntary work (De Waele & Hustinx, 2019). Previous research suggests that civil initiatives supporting newcomers seem to fill in gaps in the integration system created by neoliberal reforms of their national governments, such as lack of reception facilities and humanitarian support for newcomers (Vandevoordt, 2019; Vescan et al., 2023). Moreover, the increasing popularity of neoliberal discourses across the European continent leads state actors to reduce support to civil actors while simultaneously demanding more control over their work (Joppke, 2007). As a result, civil actors, such as volunteer buddies, supporting migrant integration may be perceived as 'contracted service providers' rather than political partners with considerable autonomy (Vandevoordt, 2019, p.109).

Second, objections to a dominant professional model play an important role in the shift towards the socialisation of care. It is argued that delivering 'good care' necessitates the combined efforts of both professional forces and volunteers (Van Robaeys & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016, 2018). Theoretically, the support newcomers are provided with in buddy programmes should complement the regular professional assistance available to them (Decraene, 2022). In practice, however, as suggested earlier, newcomers often rely on their buddies for addressing urgent issues such as employment, schooling for children, and housing (Vescan et al., 2023). Consequently, certain responsibilities may shift from professional caregivers to active citizens assuming the role of buddy (Van der Tier & Potting, 2015). This trend is observed across national contexts and within various public service sectors, particularly in long-term care and social work (Van Bochove et al., 2018).

Last, governments may find themselves unable to address complex problems ('wicked issues'), such as migrant integration, solely through traditional means. As a result, they increasingly turn to broader social networks, including civil society, for assistance. These networks operate temporarily and complement existing local government organisations (Pauly, Hitchins, Verschuere, & De Rynck, 2020). Consequently, welfare services are provided by hybrid arrangements that combine features of various sectors. Within these networks, volunteering in particular is increasingly positioned as a policy tool of choice to address contemporary societal challenges. In this regard, then Flemish Minister of Welfare, Public Health, and Family, Jo Vandeurzen, described volunteering as a "part of a caring society" (Hustinx & Godemont, 2012). Policymakers are thus progressively transferring responsibilities to citizens to ensure public service delivery (Van Bochove et al., 2018). Interestingly, previous research indicates that buddies frequently encounter challenges when assisting newcomers in their integration process, such as the inaccessibility of services, discrimination and racism, and excessive bureaucracy. Thus, the seemingly 'apolitical act' of being a buddy may increase these volunteers' political consciousness of migrants' right claims (Stock, 2019). In this respect, buddy projects could serve as crucial whistle-blowers, informing politicians, integration organizations, and civil society about deficiencies in the reception and integration system (Vescan et al., 2023).

Despite the rising popularity of buddy programmes, social professionals should systematically consider the suitability of the intervention for the participant's support needs and the conditions under which it can generate the desired impact (Van Robaeys & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016). After all, the particular pre- and post-migration context and socio-political status of newcomers lead to unique needs (Oberoi, 2016).

2. Expectations of buddy programmes

In what follows, we will discuss the contact hypothesis. The contact hypothesis and the literature referring to it outline the underlying mechanisms of an intercultural encounter. Then, based on a literature review, we will identify the potential benefits of buddy programmes for newcomers and volunteers.

2.1. The contact hypothesis

Buddy projects, and by extension, Participation and Networking Trajectories, allow newcomers to establish social contacts beyond their immediate living environment, and more specifically with members of the majority population, which in turn would accelerate their integration process into the host society. Moreover, participation in buddy programmes is expected to facilitate the learning of embracing diversity by both newcomers and host society members (Vlaamse Regering, 2020). This premise is partly in line with the contact hypothesis of Gordon Allport (1954), which argues that bringing different groups together is the best way to reduce prejudice and promote social integration. Intercultural contact would reduce prejudice by increasing knowledge of the out-group, reducing fear of contact, and increasing empathy between social groups. Especially affective factors, such as anxiety reduction, would result in stronger contact effects compared to cognitive factors, such as knowledge acquisition (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008; Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005). Early theorist Allport (1954) identified four conditions that must coexist for interpersonal contact to lead to less prejudice, fewer negative stereotypes, and less discrimination. First, cooperation between groups without competition is necessary. Second, in such intergroup cooperation both groups should pursue a common goal. Third, active support from authorities, law, or custom is required. One the hand, intergroup contact will have more positive effects when explicitly supported by social institutions. On the other hand, authority sanction establishes norms of acceptance and guidelines for interaction among members of different groups. Finally, equal group status in a given context is essential. Defining 'equal' status is challenging, but it is critical that both groups perceive equal status in the situation (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2005). Pettigrew (1998) adds a fifth necessary condition for reducing prejudice: the intercultural contact must offer friendship potential. Interpersonal contact can thus result in a greater nuanced understanding of 'the other' (Spijkers & Loopmans, 2020). Instead of simple tolerance, meaningful contact translates into broader respect for others. Nevertheless, interactions between different social groups would not necessarily translate into such contact or a respect for difference (Valentine, 2008). In other words, the 'transformative' potential of intercultural encounters is not automatically realised (Wilson, 2017). In the following section, we will discuss three points of interest that should be considered in buddy programmes for newcomers.

First, as proponents of social mix often argue, spatial proximity itself is insufficient to bring about social change (Valentine, 2008). A study shows that newly arrived migrants often organise themselves differently in time and space than the established population. Consequently, daily life paths do not necessarily cross. Despite a common residence, different routines might even result in parallel lives (Huizinga & Van Hoven, 2018). Moreover, Amin (2002, p.970) cautions that mere proximity, without meaningful intercultural exchange, may reinforce divisions and community segregation. To achieve social change, the author argues for the necessity of bringing together individuals from diverse backgrounds in spaces conducive to cultural destabilisation. This entails

disrupting established patterns of interaction and fostering opportunities for learning new social norms. Micro-public spaces, such as sports clubs, foster interdependence among individuals, facilitating this destabilisation. Engaging with 'strangers' in communal activities disrupts the tendency to label others as 'enemies' and initiates novel social relationships.

However, previous research indicates that the positive interactions in these settings may not always result in a significant or enduring improvement in individuals' attitudes toward minorities as a whole. Negative encounters, on the other hand, tend to have a swifter and more lasting impact. In negative encounters, minorities are often perceived as representatives of a broader social group, whereas in positive encounters, minorities are more likely to be seen as individuals (Valentine, 2008). These intercultural interactions can perpetuate prejudice by reinforcing narratives of cultural and economic victimisation among the majority group. These narratives are frequently perceived as reactions to a society in which longstanding certainties are continuously undermined by unpredictable socio-economic changes. This discourse often serves as a justification for individuals to uphold their prejudices, leading them to overlook their own biases by convincing themselves that their perspectives are grounded in legitimate rationales (Beck, 1997; Valentine, 2008; Valentine & Waite, 2012). Spijkers and Loopmans (2020) argue that intercultural interactions can indeed have effects that extend to the group level, but this presupposes a learning process embedded in group formation ('socialisation') - where individuals learn about and from each other while becoming integrated into a group. Socialisation can then foster a shared identity capable of bridging differences. These processes often necessitate prolonged and repeated interactions among diverse groups. As a result, more intensive contact may foster greater respect for cultural others than brief encounters.

Second, individuals' values and beliefs do not always manifest in behaviour (e.g. racist attitudes do not automatically translate into discriminatory actions). This discrepancy is reflected in the observation that the anticipated tensions between individuals in everyday encounters often do not materialise (Valentine & Waite, 2012). An individual can be biased and yet behave politely and kindly towards others in the (semi-)public sphere. This can be partly explained by the fact that specific normative codes of behaviour apply in each space (e.g. in work context, you have to behave 'professionally'). As a result, codes of (e.g. professional) conduct help prevent prejudice from being expressed in behaviour. Encounters, therefore, always involve a set of contextual expectations regarding appropriate modes of behaviour that regulate our coexistence (Cresswell, 1996; Valentine, 2008, p. 329). Moreover, despite positive encounters with individuals and communities different from themselves, biased individuals may still have an interest in maintaining their prejudices. Consequently, individuals with divergent values, interests, and beliefs may coexist with these differences in practice (Valentine & Waite, 2012). Therefore, tolerance among diverse social groups does not necessarily imply mutual respect for differences (Valentine, 2008). These findings, at the very least, provide a nuanced perspective on Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis, which posits that intercultural encounters would diminish individuals' deeply ingrained prejudices. Wilson (2017, p. 436) offers a more optimistic view of the contact hypothesis, suggesting that biases can evolve through repeated encounters. According to the author, perceptions can gradually shift over time. Consequently, encounters should be viewed as cumulative experiences, shaped by past interactions and expectations of future engagements (Huizinga & Van Hoven, 2018). In essence, unlocking the transformative power of intercultural encounters may require a series of meaningful interactions

(Wilson, 2017). This scenario is common in buddy programmes, where dyads are expected to meet regularly.

Third, it is essential to consider the experiences of all parties involved in intercultural encounters (Spijkers & Loopmans, 2020). Research on intercultural contact often tends to prioritise the perspective of the majority group, thereby influencing the interpretation and significance attributed to these encounters. Consequently, interactions that do not align with predetermined outcomes may be deemed insignificant. This overlooks the varied ways in which such interactions hold significance, conflating significance with positive experiences, and acknowledging only those encounters that result in enduring effects (Valentine, 2008; Wilson, 2017). This marginalises a multiplicity of perspectives and risks ignoring the context and various ways in which encounters are valued. An intercultural encounter should therefore be approached openly. Any conceptualisation of an intercultural interaction must acknowledge the inherent difficulty of fully anticipating its potential outcomes (Wilson, 2017). The responses of participants to perceived cultural differences vary and are inherently unpredictable (Spijkers & Loopmans, 2020). For instance, Huizinga and Van Hoven (2018) find that spaces where individuals with and without migration backgrounds come together based on shared interests may inadvertently reinforce feelings of exclusion among certain newcomers. These individuals perceive such spaces as highlighting their differences from the majority group and their lack of integration into the host society. Those spaces are perceived to exist due to prevalent prejudice and discrimination, which pose significant obstacles to establishing meaningful connections with the majority population elsewhere (Smith, Ní Raghallaigh, & Scholtz, 2021).

The aforementioned findings underscore the importance of meticulously assessing the circumstances under which Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis applies, a concern that Allport himself acknowledged. Simply bringing diverse groups together in an organised way does not necessarily produce the desired results, as intercultural encounters are inherently unpredictable and subject to diverse experiences. The perspective of newcomers should therefore be sufficiently included in the design of these encounters. In addition, a challenge lies in amplifying the impact of meaningful encounters occurring in Participation and Networking Trajectories, extending beyond interpersonal interactions to influence the attitudes of host society members towards newcomers at large (Valentine, 2008). Buddy programmes have the potential to influence mutual prejudice and social cohesion. Previous research shows that befrienders often raise and challenge prejudices towards newcomers among their friends, family, and colleagues, offering an alternative narrative to prevalent discourses of fear and exclusion of migrants. However, it is important to exercise caution when discussing a systemic shift in societal perceptions (Askins, 2016).

2.2. Outcomes for the participant

2.2.1. Psychological well-being

Newcomers and refugees in particular often experience psychological difficulties caused by daily stressors such as relative powerlessness, unwanted changes, loss of meaningful social roles, racism, and discrimination (Goodkind, 2005). In addition, they negotiate a new identity which seeks to balance the sometimes conflicting needs for cultural preservation and cultural adaptation (Griffiths, Sawrikar, & Muir, 2009). Although affective relationships play a significant role for the mental well-being of all people of all ages and backgrounds, newcomers can experience obstacles in forging

relationships in the receiving society due to, for instance, language barriers, trauma symptoms, and the stigma of their illegal status (Oberoi, 2016; Smith et al., 2021). Therefore, adequate social support of newcomers by host society members is key (Vescan et al., 2023). For instance, unaccompanied refugee minors would greatly benefit from having a buddy during the uncertain transition to adulthood, as reaching the age of 18 entails the loss of significant support mechanisms (Blecha, 2012).

Buddies may protect newcomers from the negative impact of the stress involved in adapting to a new country (Sánchez-Aragón, Belzunegui-Eraso, & Prieto-Flores, 2020). At the participant level, the buddy relationship is expected to improve newcomers' mental and psychological well-being by reducing loneliness, social isolation, and social exclusion on the one hand, and by increasing their resilience, self-confidence, and overall quality of life, on the other (Balaam, 2015; Oberoi, 2016; Raitelhuber, 2021; Sánchez-Aragón et al., 2020; Van der Tier & Potting, 2015). Moreover, values attached to caring relationships such as emotional closeness, trust, and respect may contribute to the newcomers' heightened sense of self-esteem and autonomy (Stock, 2019). Vescan and colleagues (2023) observed that emotional support is expressed in dyadic relationships between buddies and newcomers through active listening, emotional sharing, and engaging in activities such as eating together and discussing cultural differences. Moreover, buddy programmes may enhance newcomers' sense of belonging by fostering attachments between newcomers and their buddies, as well as with other participants in the programme and members of the host society (Oberoi, 2016). Furthermore, buddy relationships provide newcomers with a positive alternative to interactions with professionals and may facilitate the renegotiation of previous problematic relationships within the professional sphere (Philip & Spratt, 2007). Previous research suggests that a positive buddy relationship may serve as a 'corrective experience', potentially generalizing to other relationships in the participant's life (Austin et al., 2020; Rhodes, Spencer, Keller, Liang, & Noam, 2006). Nevertheless, there is no consensus in the research regarding the extent to which buddy programmes effectively contribute to the psychological well-being of participants. While Uyterlinde, Lub, de Groot, and Sprinkhuizen (2009) argue that buddy projects generate the greatest positive effects in terms of emotional capital, others contend that emotional support is the type of support mentioned the least by both buddies and newcomers (Vescan et al., 2023).

2.2.2. Promoting integration

Next to improving mental well-being, another important focus of buddy programmes is on the integration process of newcomers who often experience exclusion and accordingly struggle to actively participate in society (Balaam, 2015). More specifically, this involves gaining a foothold in society. Being able to participate fully in society is also an objective of the fourth pillar of Flemish government's civic integration programme (Vlaamse Regering, 2020).

One of the challenges newly arrived migrants face is the breakup or significant disruption of support structures due to their migration experience, including family and informal networks of support (Paloma, de la Morena, Sladkova, & Lopez-Torres, 2020). It is argued that rebuilding these social networks is not solely an individual process, but rather a shared process between newcomers and the host society (Pulinx, 2016). This is precisely where buddy programmes can compensate for the loss or disruption of newcomers' social networks by facilitating connections with members of the host

society (Stock, 2019). In other words, buddy projects are expected to create a promising social network for newcomers to accelerate their integration into the host society (Balaam, 2015; Somers, 2019). It is argued that social networks play vital roles for newcomers, contributing to their psychosocial well-being, as discussed earlier, and facilitating access to various institutions and services (Pulinx, 2016). However, research on migrant mentoring to work shows that not every mentor finds it clear or obvious that sharing their social network with the newcomer is a possible task or expectation of their volunteer work (De Cuyper & Vandermeerschen, 2018). Consequently, it can be contended that the process of network expansion for newcomers in their new place of residence does not occur spontaneously through buddy programmes. Therefore, the buddy should show active and explicit connecting behaviour to expand the participant's network beyond the dyad. A close buddy relationship in itself may thus be insufficient to increase the newcomer's social network (Austin et al., 2020). Moreover, notwithstanding the potential of buddies to strengthen newcomers' social networks through their access to social capital, contact with the majority population might induce stress for newcomers. This could be due to past experiences of discrimination or the uncertainty regarding how they will be perceived by members of the host society (Allport, 1954; Stock, 2019; Valentine, 2008).

Related to the previous argument, newcomers encounter a range of linguistic, informational, and social barriers related to adapting to a new culture. In this respect, besides expanding their social networks, buddy programmes can support newcomers in their socio-economic integration and in acculturating to the culture of the new country they have settled in (Huizinga & Van Hoven, 2018; Oberoi, 2016; Smith et al., 2021). More specifically, buddies can operate as 'cultural and system translators and interpreters' by introducing newcomers to specific cultural and behavioural norms (Oberoi, 2016). This involves the transmission of tacit knowledge or subtle dimensions of life in the host society, which might be useful to avoid misunderstandings (Esterhuizen & Murphy, 2007). Previous research on mentoring to work shows that receiving culture-specific advice is one of the elements of mentoring valued the most by newcomers in these dyadic relationships (De Cuyper & Vandermeerschen, 2018). Moreover, buddy programmes, when the volunteer buddy is welcomed into the newcomer's home, can also provide valuable contributions to the participant's social environment. For instance, they can assist family members of the newcomer with inquiries about the host country or with practical matters (Dekker, Van Straaten, & el Kaddouri, 2013). Furthermore, buddies can familiarize newcomers with public services and institutions, such as schools, education, or housing, thereby enhancing their quality of life (Esterhuizen & Murphy, 2007; Goodkind, 2005). By doing so, these volunteers could help newcomers acquire location-specific capital necessary to overcome information asymmetries in the receiving society (Weiss & Tulin, 2019). Additionally, participation in buddy programmes can enhance the communication skills of newcomers as they learn and practice the majority language through interactions with their buddy (Raithelhuber, 2021). Lastly, weak ties outside the co-ethnic community, as established through relationships with buddies, could provide newcomers with an economic advantage and potentially enhance their economic inclusion, such as facilitating quicker job placement or higher income (Allen, 2009; Griffiths et al., 2009). However, previous research has provided limited support for the role of mentoring in the acculturation process of immigrant and refugee youth (Liao & Sánchez, 2015). Given that buddy programmes are often constrained by time limitations, it is considered crucial for newcomers to exit the intervention with enhanced help-seeking skills (Austin et al., 2020).

2.2.3. Social networking

One of the objectives of Flemish integration policy is to strengthen social cohesion¹⁰ (Vlaamse Regering, 2013). The assumption that the social networks¹¹ of individuals with and without a migration background often remain separate could partly explain the perceived reduced social cohesion in Flemish society (De Cuyper et al., 2019). Indeed, newly arrived migrants¹² are often found to lack frequent encounters with host society members (Huizinga & Van Hoven, 2018). Although they express the demand or need to establish social contacts, they do not seem to succeed in doing so without active support and guidance (Pulinx, 2016). Moreover, the acquisition of language and cultural skills is not necessarily sufficient to remove barriers to networking in the host society (Smith et al., 2021). Whereas access to social capital proves indispensable for further stages of the integration process, newcomers' demand for social contacts often remains unanswered (De Cuyper et al., 2010; Pulinx, 2016). Therefore, buddy projects can prove beneficial in situations where spontaneous inter-ethnic contact is hindered by structural constraints like segregation, discrimination, and prejudices. The intervention matches a newly arrived migrant with a member of the host population, a situation that would be unlikely to occur spontaneously under other circumstances (Weiss & Tulin, 2019). Promoting social interaction among individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds could mitigate segregation and foster social cohesion (Mahieu & Van Caudenberg, 2020). Furthermore, intergroup contact, when the right conditions are met, can be an effective way to reduce mutual prejudice between different ethnic groups (Allport, 1954). Intercultural encounters can foster nuanced perceptions of 'the other' with respect for differences (Muijres & Aarts, 2011, p. 53). In this respect, buddy projects can be seen as a collective action, referring to the change brought about in the community (Balaam, 2015). More specifically, buddies take positive actions to prevent society from rejecting and stigmatising members of minority groups. They do this through their voluntary participation in a programme specifically designed to support people with limited resources (Behnia, 2007; Hagard & Blickem, 1987). It is important to recognize that bridging social contacts do not occur spontaneously; instead, it is the responsibility of the government or other organisations to create favourable conditions conducive to their development (Muijers & Aarts, 2011).

2.3. Outcomes for the volunteer buddy

In encounters between individuals, both parties exert influence and undergo experiences (Gawlewicz, 2016). Consequently, it is important to understand what the outcomes of the buddy relationship are for both parties. Drawing on the contact hypothesis theory, effects of intercultural contact on prejudice would be significantly stronger for members of the majority group than for members of the minority group (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). These effects include cognitive changes such as more positive attitudes towards minorities, but also affective processes such as less negative emotions (e.g. fear) and more positive emotions (e.g. empathy and friendship) (Allport, 1954). Nevertheless, limited research has focused on the specific benefits of buddy programmes for volunteer buddies

¹⁰ Article 4, §2, 4° of the decree of 07/06/2013 on the Flemish integration and civic integration policy

¹¹ A social network can be defined as a grouping of people with whom a person maintains more or less durable ties for the fulfilment of necessary living needs (Hendrix, 1997).

¹² Previous research demonstrates that newcomers often have more ethnically diverse social networks compared to those of the majority population (Muijres & Arts, 2011).

assisting newcomers (Martin & Sifers, 2012; Van Robaeys & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016). Since the satisfaction of buddies with the programme is related to their retention, it is important to further identify the benefits they experience (Martin & Sifers, 2012).

The limited research on this topic shows that buddies, often members of majority groups, do derive advantages from their participation in the programme. These benefits include an increase in positive pro-social traits, such as problem-solving skills and ethnic-cultural empathy (Banks, 2010; Ellison, Cory, Horwath, Barnett, & Huppert, 2019). This type of empathy involves adopting the perspective of an individual from a different culture and being open to embracing differences (Peifer, Lawrence, Williams, & Leyton-Armakan, 2016). Furthermore, empathy has been shown to mitigate intolerance, conflict, and discrimination while fostering understanding, respect, and tolerance among individuals from diverse ethno-cultural backgrounds (Wang et al., 2003). Conversely, a deficiency in empathy can fuel hostility towards ethnic groups (Rasoal, Eklund, & Hansen, 2011). In addition, participation in a buddy programme would contribute to the volunteer's self-confidence and social communication skills (Van Robaeys & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016). Previous research suggests that mentors who are more confident in their mentoring abilities tend to experience greater satisfaction with their relationship with the mentee, which may lead them to be more inclined to continue mentoring and spend additional time with their mentee (Martin & Sifers, 2012). It is crucial to acknowledge that the volunteer's satisfaction with the relationship may vary considerably over the course of the intervention. However, previous research indicates that mentor's relationship satisfaction does not significantly influence the outcomes for the mentee, such as mentee relationship quality and peer self-esteem (Spiekermann, Lyons, & Lawrence, 2020).

Whereas integration is commonly perceived as a two-way process affecting both migrants and host society members, little is known about the integration outcomes for the volunteer buddy as a resident, particularly within a super-diverse society (Penninx & Van Garcés-Mascreñas, 2016). For example, previous research demonstrates that, while the buddy programme facilitated an ethno-cultural diversification of the newcomer's informal network, the circle of friends of the buddy did not become more diverse in terms of socio-demographic characteristics (Mahieu et al., 2019). Stock (2019) suggests that buddy programmes can enhance the knowledge of buddies about migration policy, resulting in moral and political responsibility to act in accordance with their knowledge. Consequently, some buddies have been found to incorporate activism for migrant rights into their daily interactions, while others have adopted a more critical perspective on migration policies. Interestingly, Spijkers and Loopmans (2020) found that individuals with a migration background perceived contact situations as opportunities to strategically activate learning processes in their interaction partner. They took advantage of intercultural encounters by behaving in a positive way and refuting stereotypes in the hope of changing the attitudes of others. People from migrant backgrounds aim to achieve this balance by conforming to dominant norms on one hand, while also asserting their individuality on the other, with the expectation that their personal integration will foster a broader recognition of diversity (Spijkers & Loopmans, 2020, p.1152). However, the degree to which they accomplish this within the majority population remains uncertain.

3. Conceptualising buddy programmes: Buddies as volunteers

Buddy programmes are referred to by a variety of names, including 'social mentoring', 'parrainage', and 'patenschaften' (Crijns & De Cuyper, 2022). Despite this multitude of terms, there is no widely accepted definition found in the literature (Van Robaeys & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016). Given the need for buddy projects to be tailored to complex situations, the intervention cannot be rigidly defined according to an input/output logic (Raithelhuber, 2019). Drawing on literature, Van Robaeys and Lyssens-Danneboom (2016, p.36) define a buddy programme (referred to as 'duo-working' by the authors) as 'an organised social intervention in which two citizens (a volunteer and a participant) are matched one-to-one with each other, through the intervention of a (professional) organisation to meet a participant's support demand, articulated or otherwise.' To distinguish the definition of buddy programmes for newcomers from other forms of buddy programmes, Crijns and De Cuyper (2022, p.7) propose the following definition (referred to as 'social mentoring' by the authors): 'A person from the host society provides guidance to a migrant newcomer, the objective of which is to support the social participation and integration of the newcomer. [...] The relationship is initiated, facilitated, and supported by a third actor (organisation).'

Initially driven by civil society, buddy programmes could be conceptualised as a volunteer methodology wherein a specific form of care is provided by a volunteer (Crijns & De Cuyper, 2022; Van Robaeys & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016). Moreover, within the fourth pillar of the civic integration programme, buddy programmes can be framed as government-initiated volunteering (or "volunteering through government") (Crijns & De Cuyper, 2022; Haski-Leventhal, Meijs, & Hustinx, 2010). By formally incorporating buddy programmes into the PNT, the Flemish government seeks to encourage volunteering among host society members. Volunteering in buddy programmes serves as a public intervention targeted at groups in society perceived as disadvantaged or "passive", in this case newly arrived migrants (De Waele & Hustinx, 2019). In this way, the Flemish government promotes volunteering as a valuable and desirable activity. At the same time, volunteering in buddy programmes can be associated with liquid modernity, as volunteer buddies have the flexibility to choose where and when to meet with the newcomer (Vandevoordt, 2019).

The question then arises as to what type of volunteer the buddy is. According to the continuum proposed by Cnaan, Handy, and Wadsworth (1996), which spans from broad to very strict definitions of volunteering, the purest form of a volunteer encompasses an individual who acts of their own free will (1), receives no compensation (2), works within a formal organisation (3), and helps strangers (4). The public perception regarding volunteerism tends to focus more on the personal expenses incurred by volunteers rather than the societal benefits it generates. The higher the net cost incurred by the volunteer (in terms of time, effort, income), the purer the volunteering, and the higher the public perception will rank the individual as a volunteer. In accordance with the conceptual framework of Cnaan et al. (1996), we will discuss the following characteristics of buddy programmes. First, buddies in buddy programmes for newcomers are not professionals, but the programmes rely on citizen volunteers (1). Generally, the intervention assumes voluntary involvement along both sides of the dyadic relationship (De Cuyper et al., 2019). Second, in the vast majority of buddy programmes in Flanders, the buddy does not receive any compensation (2). If compensation is provided, it typically consists of the reimbursement of expenses incurred or a rather modest lump-sum payment (Van

Robaey & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016). Third, the literature suggests that buddy projects generally take place within a formal organisation (3). In most buddy programmes in Flanders, a paid professional is responsible for recruiting participants, matching the dyad, and supporting the buddy relationship (Van Robaey & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016). Last, within these organisations, a coordinator facilitates the introduction of two strangers (4) (Balaam, 2015). In this respect, Van der Tier and Potting (2015) stress that buddy projects should involve an intentionally facilitated relationship, rather than one that occurs spontaneously, where a professional organisation matches a buddy with a participant. This allows us to conclude that, according to the continuum of Cnaan et al. (1996), buddy programmes position themselves as a pure form of volunteering.

Previous research shows that the majority of buddy programmes face a dropout of volunteers because of, for instance, changes in volunteers' life circumstances, differing expectations or a lack of connection among dyad members, and loss of motivation or interest in the target group. Consequently, many organizations are concerned about finding a sufficient number of volunteers to meet the demand of participants (Behnia, 2007; Martin & Sifers, 2012; Van Robaey & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016). This could be attributed to the traditional model of volunteer management, which prioritizes recruitment over volunteer retention or support and is primarily characterized by a 'workplace conceptualization'. In response to a declining trend in volunteering hours, Brudney and Meijs (2009) introduced a new regenerative model of volunteer management. This model conceptualizes volunteer energy as a natural and renewable resource that can be nurtured and recycled, with its sustainability influenced by human intervention, both positively and negatively. This novel model seeks sustainability by prioritizing the renewal of the volunteer resource to ensure that volunteers are inclined to participate again. It adopts a community-based approach, involving multiple stakeholders, emphasises the value for both volunteers and wider society—not solely for the organisation—and addresses future organizational needs. Building upon this new conceptualization of volunteer management, the literature refers to community-based mentoring, which offers participants increased flexibility and responsibility compared to traditional mentoring approaches. For example, each dyad selects and schedules activities based on their interests, preferences, and goals, facilitating tailored responses to specific needs, circumstances, and priorities (Keller & DuBois, 2019). Related to this argument, previous research suggests that volunteers who engage with newcomers stay motivated when they can be part of the decision-making process and when they have a voice in organisational policies (Behnia, 2007). Moreover, buddies remain committed to an organization when they receive sufficient support and supervision, value their relationships with both newcomers and staff, experience alignment between their beliefs and values and those of newcomers, and perceive volunteer tasks as meaningful, feasible, and related to their interests (Behnia, 2007).

4. Supporting practices: Mentoring, befriending and coaching

Buddies can operate in buddy programmes in roughly three different ways, namely through mentoring, befriending, or coaching. These three concepts are at times used interchangeably and there can be confusion over the differences (Balaam, 2015; Crijns & De Cyper, 2022; MacDonald & Greggans, 2010). Mentoring and befriending typically take place over a longer period and coaching over a shorter one (Balaam, 2015; Stokes, Diochon, & Otter, 2021; Van Robaey & Lyssens-

Danneboom, 2016, 2018). Predominantly, the literature on buddy programmes focuses on mentoring, with befriending and coaching receiving considerably less attention (Philip & Spratt, 2007).

4.1. Mentoring

Mentoring is generally understood as a goal-oriented and time-bound process focused on learning and development, where the mentor's experiential expertise is paramount (Dekker et al., 2013; Eby et al., 2008; Mulvihill, 2011). The mentor serves as an experienced role model who inspires and motivates the participant to develop personally. Through providing learning experiences, the participant is empowered to master certain competences or skills (Van der Tier & Potting, 2015, p.26). In doing so, mentoring predominantly emphasises the instrumental function of the relationship rather than solely placing value on social contact for its own sake (McGowan et al., 2009). More specifically, in the mentoring approach, building a supportive relationship between the mentor and the mentee serves primarily as a prerequisite for working towards other goals (Philip & Spratt, 2007). In other words, mentoring places more emphasis on achieving predetermined goals as part of a time-limited process (Balaam, 2015, p. 30; MacDonald & Greggans, 2010). It is worth mentioning that the mentor is a non-parental adult and is often perceived to be relatively older than the participant (Griffiths et al., 2009; Sánchez-Aragón et al., 2020).

Mentoring occurs across a diverse range of contexts and is therefore open to a range of interpretations (McGowan et al., 2009). For instance, when mentoring takes place in a pre-specified setting or institution, such as a community centre or a school, this is referred to as 'site-based mentoring'. Here, the dyad is strongly influenced by the environment in which their relationship occurs. When mentoring takes place independently of a specific setting but is situated within the community, it is identified as 'community-based mentoring' in the literature (Austin et al., 2020; Haddock et al., 2020). In addition, research literature identifies three major trends in mentoring: youth mentoring (Martin & Sifers, 2012), workplace mentoring (De Cuyper et al., 2019), and academic mentoring (Dutton et al., 2018; Eby et al., 2013).

A new and emerging type of mentoring, known as social mentoring, has gained popularity in recent years (Crijns & De Cuyper, 2022). McGowan and colleagues (2009, p.628) employ the term 'social mentoring' to distinguish it from mentoring that occurs within educational and professional settings. The term 'social' emphasises the 'social action function' of mentoring, which aims to facilitate a shift in the individual's social status, moving them from a position of social exclusion to inclusion in mainstream society. Social mentoring often focuses on empowering vulnerable and/or disadvantaged groups in society, presenting valuable opportunities for newly arrived migrants (McGowan et al., 2009, p.627). However, the prioritisation by host countries of the labour market integration for newcomers over their social participation is reflected in the predominant focus on migrant mentoring to work, rather than social mentoring, in the literature (Crijns & De Cuyper, 2022; De Cuyper et al., 2019; Weiss & Tulin, 2019).

4.2. Befriending

Befriending is argued to be a looser form of social mentoring, as it promotes a sense of personal and social well-being, thereby improving the quality of life for vulnerable individuals (Colley, 2003; McGowan et al., 2009). In befriending programmes, individuals without adequate support systems are matched with volunteers who act as a friend and offer support and friendship for a determined period of time (Balaam, 2015; Behnia, 2007; Hagard & Blickem, 1987). Indeed, befriending aims to enhance the social participation and quality of life of individuals in vulnerable positions within society by matching them with socially engaged volunteers. Therefore, this social intervention primarily focuses on the individual and their well-being, emphasising the expressive function of the relationship. In contrast to mentoring, where the dyadic relationship serves primarily as a means to achieve predetermined objectives, the social relationship offered by befriending programmes serves as a central source of well-being (Balaam, 2015; McGowan et al., 2009; Van der Tier & Potting, 2015). Consequently, befriending mainly focuses on strengthening the mutual connection between the buddy and the participant (Philip & Spratt, 2007).

When buddies adopt such a relational support style and act as an advocate for the participant, they are also sometimes referred to as an 'ally' (Van der Tier & Potting, 2015). Through the establishment of a lasting relationship of trust, the volunteer as ally seeks to provide informal social support aimed at reducing the social exclusion of the participant (Van Robaey & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016). The popular 'maatjesprojecten' in the Netherlands, in which the support sought by individuals includes gaining social contacts, expanding social networks, broadening perspectives, seeking acceptance, or obtaining social support, align with the concept of befriending (Van der Tier & Potting, 2015, p.40). To establish a trusting relationship and emotional connection between the two individuals, it is argued that the negotiation of power and agency is essential. These negotiations often include the degree of reciprocity, duration of the intervention, and timing of contact (Balaam, 2015; Lester, Mead, Graham, Gask, & Reilly, 2012).

It is important to note that befriending is a complex concept, which, although similar to friendship, differs in four key ways (Balaam, 2015; Behnia, 2007). First, whereas friendship assumes voluntary choice, the relationship between the volunteer and the participant is arranged by a third party (Behnia, 2007). Second, while friendship entails a commitment to the future, befriending programmes are typically time-limited, allowing the dyad to terminate the relationship at the end of the programme (Hagard & Blickem, 1987). Third, while a friendship is generally symmetrical, characterised by a relationship between individuals of equal status, befriending assumes an asymmetrical dynamic, as one party seeks help and the other offers it (Behnia, 2007; Hagard & Blickem, 1987). Last, befriending differs from a typical friendship because of the guidelines imposed by the organisation, (e.g. regarding contact frequency, language, and confidential information) which the dyad must take into account (Van Robaey & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2018). This allows us to conclude that the relationships between buddies and newcomers in buddy programmes, informed by befriending principles, are best defined as 'friend-like' (Balaam, 2015; Chambon et al., 2001; McGowan & Jowett, 2003; Mitchell & Pistrang, 2011).

Mentoring and befriending share many similarities, particularly in their focus on building supportive relationships (Balaam, 2015; Philip & Spratt, 2007). However, it is important to highlight their distinct

agendas. Whereas befriending emphasises the value of a strong relationship between the buddy and the participant, with other developments being rather incidental, mentoring generally includes other goals, such as fostering career development and enhancing academic performances (Dutton et al., 2018; Harris & Ogbonna, 2023; Philip & Spratt, 2007). Some argue that the distinction between mentoring and befriending can be presented on a spectrum. Mentoring places greater emphasis on objectives, particularly in areas such as training and development, while befriending prioritises the dyadic relationship to offer emotional support and companionship to participants (Cullen, 2006; De Cuyper et al., 2019; Van Robaeys & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016).

4.3. Coaching

Programmes in which the volunteer operates as the coach are generally classified in literature as 'mentoring' (Van Robaeys & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016). Nevertheless, Van der Tier and Potting (2015) distinguish coaching and mentoring as separate categories based on identified differences in the volunteer's characteristics. Similar to mentoring, coaching sets concrete (learning) goals, and the volunteer adopts an instrumental support style towards the participant (Van Robaeys & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016). However, a key difference is that the mentor is someone with seniority, possessing certain experience and expertise and acts as a role model, while the coach is more likely to act as a guide or motivator. Consequently, the coach serves as a process-based expert, whereas the mentor acts as a content-based expert, possessing direct knowledge and experience of the environment in which the mentee operates (Stokes et al., 2021; Van der Tier & Potting, 2015; Van Robaeys & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016). More specifically, coaching is defined as a human development process that involves structured, focused interaction and the use of appropriate strategies, tools, and techniques to promote desirable and sustainable change (e.g. in behaviour, mindset, skills) for the benefit of the participant, a practice commonly observed within economic domains (Bachkirova, Cox, & Clutterbuck, 2018). In addition, coaching tends to focus on short-term performance goals, while mentoring is more likely to have a long-term holistic focus (Stokes et al., 2021). Stokes et al. (2021) argue that pursuing a conceptual distinction between mentoring and coaching in purely theoretical terms is problematic. It is the context that primarily determines which aspects of mentoring and coaching buddies tend to utilise. Acknowledging a fundamental interconnectedness between coaching and mentoring allows buddies to draw on a range of different behaviours.

5. Success factors

Drawing on research literature, several factors important to consider for an organised intercultural encounter in buddy programmes can be distinguished. The first factor relates to whether the relationship between the buddy and the newcomer occurs within a one-to-one setting or within a group context.

5.1. One-to-one relationship versus group context

Although the vast majority of studies identify a one-to-one relationship as a hallmark of buddy programmes, group initiatives are also considered to be beneficial for increasing the resilience and

empowerment of newcomers in the host society (McGowan et al., 2009; Paloma et al., 2020; Van der Tier & Potting, 2015). As an alternative to traditional dyadic experiences, the concept of group mentoring involves a collection of three or more individuals, each aiming to foster the personal and professional development of the others. Unlike conventional mentoring, where the mentor's expertise is paramount, power and authority are distributed in group mentoring, with each member taking on leadership and mentoring responsibilities (Dekker et al., 2013; Eby et al., 2008; Kroll, 2016; Mulvihill, 2011). Although a relatively recent topic in scholarly discussions, literature has documented the benefits of group mentoring in intercultural contexts (De Cuyper et al., 2019; Kuperminc & Deutsch, 2021).

It can be argued that group mentoring serves a valuable tool for addressing issues unique to minority groups, such as racism and discrimination, culture clashes, and socioeconomic disadvantage (Awujo, 2016; Griffiths et al., 2009). Individual interventions may, in some cases, such as in collectively oriented communities, be inappropriate and underutilise the strengths already present in the participant's (ethnic) network (Goodkind, 2005). Research on Christian African women in the UK, for instance, has shown that group mentoring can have a greater impact than one-to-one interactions in terms of finding practical solutions and positively shaping mindsets. This finding supports the notion that group mentoring can yield similar benefits to those observed in one-to-one relationships (Haddock et al., 2020). While the collective nature of certain cultures may explain the preference for group mentoring, research indicates that young people, in particular, prefer guidance from multiple buddies (Awujo, 2016; Oberoi, 2016). Consequently, it can be concluded that one-to-one relationships are not necessarily a key component in the definition of buddy programmes. Thus, a newcomer can be matched with several buddies (De Cuyper et al., 2019; Kroll, 2016).

Critics, however, argue that multiple relationships might not adequately address the individual needs of participants in buddy programmes (Feeney & Boozeman, 2008). The true value of buddies, they contend, lies in a personalised one-to-one approach. In this respect, the dyadic relationship enables volunteer buddies to provide participants with exclusive individual attention and tailored support (Van Robaeyns & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2018). The individualised attention provided by buddies is believed to foster the development of a trusting relationship between dyad members (Philip & Spratt, 2007). Moreover, the decision of individuals to volunteer in a buddy programme rather than in another welfare setting is often associated with the opportunity for close one-to-one contact with participants (Van Robaeyns & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2018, p.59). A study by Haddock et al. (2020) on the other hand, showed that group mentoring, compared to one-to-one settings, neither offers advantages nor disadvantages in terms of outcomes and quality of the relationship. Therefore, buddy programmes are suggested to benefit from both structures. This finding highlights the flexible use of the intervention; buddy programmes could be effective in a variety of programme designs.

5.1.1. Peer support

The most popular form of group mentoring is peer support or peer mentoring, although the intervention can also occur within a one-to-one context (Kroll, 2016; Paloma et al., 2020). The main difference between traditional buddy programmes and peer support is that the latter does not involve an asymmetrical relationship (van der Tier & Potting, 2015). More specifically, the peer buddy has experienced the same particular issue or situation themselves and shares similar characteristics with

the participant. This is not necessarily the case with befriending, where the volunteer and the participant might have different backgrounds, characteristics, and interests (Van Robaey & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016). As a result, sharing similar experiences through peer-support would establish reciprocal supportive relationships (Paloma et al., 2020). Within the context of migrant integration, it can be argued that a newcomer who has completed the civic integration programme themselves can operate as a buddy. This person can act as an expert by experience, and is familiar with the newly arrived migrants' questions and difficulties in a new place of residence. It is claimed that these peer buddies can offer enhanced psychological support by drawing on cultural values that prioritise interpersonal relationships and social interconnectedness (Eby et al., 2013; Griffiths et al., 2009). In this regard, peer mentors can serve as role models for participants as they navigate the complex journey of developing a bicultural identity (Oberoi, 2016).

Furthermore, if the buddy and the newcomer share the same background, their connections to their ethnic community may play an additional role in the identity formation and social well-being of newcomers (Pulinx, 2016). These ties to one's ethnic group can offer a sense of security, enabling newcomers to navigate the unfamiliar host society, and may contribute significantly to their sense of belonging (Huizinga & Van Hoven, 2018; Smith et al., 2021). In this scenario, an organisation might match a trained newcomer volunteer with more vulnerable newcomers. In addition, committing to the well-being of one's community has been linked to a heightened sense of control over one's life, potentially leading to improved psychological well-being among buddies. This participatory approach acknowledges newcomers' strengths and fosters their abilities as active citizens (Paloma et al., 2020). Drawing from their experiences, these peer buddies can enhance organisational diversity and promote greater accessibility for individuals from similar backgrounds (Hustinx & Godemont, 2012). Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge the challenge of finding buddies who share the same ethnic background as the participant. Therefore, establishing partnerships with ethno-cultural associations and communities, and evaluating the effectiveness and cultural suitability of buddy programmes and their services, may be beneficial (Griffiths et al., 2009).

However, while access to co-ethnic social capital through peer mentoring can be advantageous, it may also have negative implications for newcomers' integration outcomes in certain cases. For example, in situations involving family reunification, refugee women may feel pressured to adhere to ethnic community norms, such as refraining from seeking employment, leading to adverse effects on their earnings (Allen, 2009). Moreover, it is proposed that buddies from ethnic-minority backgrounds may be perceived as less capable of providing instrumental support to newcomers compared to those from the majority group, likely due to their (perceived) lower social status, power, and access to resources (Eby et al., 2013; Ragins, 1997).

5.1.2. Internships

Besides participating in a buddy programme, an introductory internship in a company, local government, organisation, or association is also an option for newcomers in order to fulfil the fourth pillar of their civic integration programme (Somers, 2019; Vlaamse Regering, 2020). In this respect, newcomers may develop a sense of connection to the receiving society when they are able to make meaningful contributions to the host country (Huizinga & Van Hoven, 2018). For instance, in the context of an internship, the shared responsibility for completing tasks collectively can foster a

common identity among colleagues, potentially bridging ethno-cultural differences between newcomers and members of the majority population (Spijkers & Loopmans, 2020). Intergroup cooperation, working towards a common goal, and interdependence can reinforce shared experiences of newcomers and host society members in the workplace. Based on the contact hypothesis, it is anticipated that these factors will lead to more positive attitudes towards each other, including decreased prejudices (Allport, 1954). However, it can be argued that the necessity to collaborate effectively in a professional context may leave racist attitudes towards newcomers unchallenged (Spijkers & Loopmans, 2020).

5.1.3. Sports

If the language of interaction is Dutch, participating in a sports activity can also count as a part of the PNT (Vlaamse Regering, 2020). Sports participation can be beneficial for promoting the integration of newcomers into the host society by enabling them to engage in activities with the established population and creating opportunities for social interaction (Blecha, 2012). It is contended that participation in extracurricular activities can lead to the expansion of social networks and the development of new friendships (Austin et al., 2020). Additionally, it provides newcomers with the opportunity to learn about the norms and values of the majority population (Walseth & Fasting, 2004). Research on mentoring activities suggests that joint participation in sports activities is the strongest predictor of the continuity of a buddy relationship and the benefit for the youth involved (Karcher & Hansen, 2014). It is worth noting that, despite the provision of increased financial support to the organised sports sector under the assumption that newcomers' participation in these clubs will foster their social integration, research indicates that minorities are more inclined to opt for other types of organisations, such as commercial fitness clubs (Walseth & Fasting, 2004). This finding challenges the notion that non-commercial civil society organisations, and the way they organise sports, are indeed the optimal platforms to facilitate migrant integration (Blecha, 2012). Moreover, integration in this context is not always understood as a reciprocal process. Majority groups may only undertake limited initiatives to interact with newcomers. In addition, organisational structures of sports initiatives may lack sensitivity to the cultural needs of migrants. Consequently, newcomers often have too limited influence on the sports culture of the host society (Walseth & Fasting, 2004).

5.1.4. Volunteering

Volunteering represents a final option for newcomers within the fourth pillar of the civic integration programme. Volunteer participation is generally associated with an improved quality of life, offering newcomers several specific advantages (Voicu & Voicu, 2009). For instance, personal empowerment and a stronger identification with the host society are among the most significant outcomes of volunteering for newcomers within an organisation. Finding a meaningful role in volunteering can also compensate for the loss of a professional identity and the lack of job opportunities in the receiving society. Simultaneously, the voluntary engagement of newly arrived migrants may indirectly facilitate their entry into the labour market (Khvorostianov & Remennick, 2017). Moreover, volunteering provides newcomers with an opportunity to gain insights into the culture, social norms, and unwritten rules of the host country (Oberoi, 2016). Additionally, by participating as volunteers and interacting with members of the majority population, newcomers can expand their social networks. Consequently, volunteering offers them a chance to partially regain the cultural and social capital lost

during the migration process (Handy & Greenspan, 2009). It is noteworthy that newcomers tend to have a smaller presence in mainstream non-profit organisations and instead prefer to volunteer for the benefit of their own ethnic community. In addition, language barriers frequently hinder their volunteer participation in other formal organisations (Khvorostianov & Remennick, 2017). Providing the PNT in the form of volunteering should address these barriers and prioritise establishing social relationships with the host population to complement newcomers' intra-ethnic ties.

5.2. Duration and contact frequency

Buddy programmes for newcomers typically have a time limit (Behnia, 2007; Hagard & Blickem, 1987). While the buddy and the newcomer may choose to keep in touch beyond this period, organisational guidance ends after a set duration to allow new dyads to participate in the programme (Crijns & De Cuyper, 2022). In the literature, various perspectives exist regarding the minimum duration that volunteers and participants should spend together to generate outcomes for the latter. Esterhuizen and Murphy (2007) suggest that both buddies and participants should commit to a relationship lasting at least one year. They argue that longer relationships lead to greater benefits for refugee integration. Uytterlinde et al. (2009) also claim that projects lasting between six months and a year are considerably more successful than short-term interventions, particularly in fostering significant correlations with emotional and social capital.

The participants in longer-term relationships tend to perceive greater psychological support and higher relationship quality (Eby et al., 2013). Extended buddy trajectories indicate successful buddy relationships at a basic level. Moreover, over time there are simply more opportunities for newcomers to be introduced to and connected with third parties. Therefore, the participant's social network may potentially expand with the duration of the relationship with the buddy (Feeney & Boozeman, 2008). Another study on migrant mentoring shows that the duration of time spent together by the buddy and the participant correlates positively with programme effectiveness, career functions, and satisfaction (Neuwirth & Wahl, 2017). Van der Tier and Potting (2015) contend that buddy projects lasting less than a year achieve minimal or no effects for participants. Short-term programmes do not provide dyads with sufficient time to develop a trusting relationship. Consequently, the long-term benefits associated with buddy programmes, such as increased confidence and self-esteem, fail to materialise (Griffiths et al., 2009). Shorter-duration relationships not only tend to be less effective but could also potentially be harmful for participants, particularly when the dyadic relationship ends before the initial time commitment had been fulfilled (Spencer et al., 2019).

Other scholars argue that the longevity of the relationship is not necessarily a success indicator of the buddy programme. While short-term relationships are often dismissed as having little impact, Wilson (2017) argues that intercultural encounters can gradually accumulate and influence relationships and behaviour over time. Feeney and Boozeman (2008) also suggest that the relationship between the duration and the outcomes of a buddy project is ambiguous. Short-term relationships within buddy programmes, when based on a well-considered match, can also achieve significant results for participants. Short-term relationships in buddy programmes often prioritise achieving specific and predetermined goals, such as increasing knowledge of a specific job sector or enrolling in a particular professional course, implying a mentoring or coaching approach (Esterhuizen & Murphy, 2007; Van der Tier & Potting, 2015). These findings suggest that instrumental support can

occur at any point in the buddy relationship (Eby et al., 2013). Consequently, there should be consideration given to shortening the minimum duration of a programme for participants with concrete goals that could be achieved more quickly, although this would entail the risk of the project becoming less effective (Esterhuizen & Murphy, 2007; Van der Tier & Potting, 2015).

It is argued that, rather than the duration of the relationship, the frequency of contact between dyad members significantly influences the successful implementation of buddy programmes (Mahieu et al., 2019). Increased interaction between newly arrived migrants and their buddies correlates with higher probabilities of achieving integration outcomes, such as more frequent use of the majority language, greater understanding of customs and cultural values, and greater likelihood of maintaining contact with their buddy after the project concludes. In this respect, it is suggested that newcomers who maintain more frequent contact with their buddy acquire additional skills and knowledge, thereby enhancing their participation in the host society (Mahieu et al., 2019). Other authors also underscore the importance of regular and consistent interactions, even over an extended period (Haggard, Dougherty, Turban, & Wilbanks, 2011). When buddies and participants interact more frequently, the relationship is perceived as more supportive (Eby et al., 2013). This is consistent with the finding that newcomers who have experienced the buddy project positively, tended to maintain more frequent contact with their buddies (Mahieu et al., 2019). More specifically, the frequency of contact is positively linked to perceptions of instrumental support, psychosocial support, and relationship quality (Eby et al., 2013). Furthermore, the 'deep-level similarity' among dyad members, consistently associated with participants reporting more instrumental and psychological support, would be linked to both the duration of the relationship and the frequency of interaction. After all, similarities in values, beliefs, and personality are not immediately observable and require time to emerge (Eby et al., 2012, 2013). However, other scholars challenge the aforementioned findings, arguing that neither the average frequency of contact between buddies and participants, nor the duration of the relationship determines the outcomes or quality of the buddy relationship (DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002).

5.3. Combination of instrumental and relational support

Previous research on the social mobility of intergenerationally impoverished individuals shows that an instrumental event, such as finding employment, increasing income, or obtaining higher qualifications, serves as a positive turning point in the journey out of poverty only when accompanied by an expressive (psychological) dimension, such as expanding social networks and enhancing well-being. Consequently, a positive impetus toward mobility stems from the intersection of instrumental and expressive factors (Thys, 2003). Weiss and Tulin (2019) also emphasise the importance of expressive support for instrumental progression. Previous research on mentoring to work demonstrates that buddy programmes offer better employment prospects for newcomers when friendships between newcomers and the settled population are simultaneously fostered, as opposed to buddy programmes that do not (Weiss & Tulin, 2019). Studies confirm that employing different support styles by the buddy (instrumental, relational, active, etc.) is indicative of a successful supportive relationship between the buddy and the participant. This approach yields significant results in terms of transferring social, cultural, academic, and emotional capital (Dekker et al., 2013; Uytterlinde et al., 2009). Thus, buddy programmes are likely to generate more favourable outcomes

when relationally oriented activities are balanced with goal-oriented, instrumental activities (Karcher & Hansen, 2014; Keller, Perry, & Spencer, 2020; Spiekermann et al., 2020). In this respect, buddy programmes may serve as a versatile tool capable of addressing a range of dimensions, from psychological aspects to the establishment of a professional network for newcomers (De Cuyper & Vandermeerschen, 2018). In other words, buddy programmes for newly arrived migrants have the potential to integrate both dimensions, wherein valuable connections with buddies can serve as a catalyst for anchoring instrumental change into sustainable transformation.

5.4. Asymmetric but reciprocal

5.4.1. At the level of relationship content

It is argued that the dyadic relationship in buddy programmes should be asymmetrical (Crijs & De Cuyper, 2022; De Cuyper et al., 2019; Van der Tier & Potting, 2015). The central focus of the intervention should be on the participant's request for help rather than fulfilling the needs of the volunteer buddy (Balaam, 2015; Stock, 2019). Therefore, the support offered by the buddy is functional in nature (McGowan et al., 2009; Van Robaeys & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016, p.19). However, this asymmetry does not preclude volunteer buddies from benefiting from the relationship. It is possible that newcomers possess knowledge and experience in other areas, leading to mutual exchange between the buddy and the participant (De Cuyper et al., 2019).

In this regard, it is worth noting that the asymmetrical nature of buddy programmes relates to the content of the support provided rather than the nature of the relationship between dyad members (De Cuyper et al., 2019). While the buddy, as a host society member, has privileged access to cultural capital, economic, and social capital, further reinforcing imbalances in their relationship, interactions with the newcomer should be reciprocal (Philip & Spratt, 2007; Stock, 2019). The learning processes within buddy programmes for newcomers ideally entail a two-way exchange, wherein both the buddy and the participant learn about each other's cultural backgrounds, an objective also outlined by the fourth pillar of the civic integration programme (Mahieu & Van Caudenberg, 2020; Somers, 2019; Vlaamse Regering, 2021). In mentoring literature, reciprocity is understood as a combination of two factors. Firstly, there should be a shared relational commitment; a genuine desire on both parts of the dyad to invest in and be present in the relationship. Secondly, experiential empathy refers to the process in which mentors connect with their mentees, offer advice, and normalise their experiences by sharing their own life experiences (Lester, Goodloe, Johnson, & Deutsch, 2019). The regular relationship with social professionals is often perceived as lacking reciprocity. In this respect, a buddy can partially compensate for this (Vandevoordt, 2016). When reciprocity has not been established by the two individuals, the relationship is commonly characterised as unsuccessful (Balaam, 2015). However, in practice, it is found that the relationship between buddies and newcomers often places a strong emphasis on meeting the practical and informational needs of newcomers, which may take precedence over the creation of a deeper relationship based on reciprocity. In other words, altruistic considerations tend to overshadow the norm of reciprocity in buddy programmes for newcomers (Vescan et al., 2023). In this regard, Van Robaeys and Lyssens-Danneboom (2018) describe reciprocity in buddy programmes as 'altruistic reciprocity', where buddies provide more support than they receive from participants.

5.4.2. At the level of the buddy's characteristics

Not only does asymmetry relate to the content of dyadic relationships, it also pertains to the characteristics of buddies (Crijns & De Cuyper, 2022). Within buddy programmes for newcomers, the buddy is generally assumed to be an 'established', relatively privileged resident volunteer, whereas newcomers often face insecure future prospects, have little economic means, and hold low social status (Raithelhuber, 2021; Stock, 2019). This imbalance is also reflected in the literature on mentoring, in which the dyadic relationship is defined as a one-to-one relationship between a more experienced and older individual (mentor) and a less experienced individual (mentee) in an organisational set-up. In other words, mentoring essentially involves one individual having more knowledge and authority than the other (Feeney & Boozeman, 2008). Consequently, scholars imply hierarchical differences to be present between the mentor and the mentee, with the mentor occupying a higher position of power (DuBois et al., 2002; Haggard et al., 2011). Within the context of migrant integration, volunteer buddies possess specific valued competences, such as knowledge of the majority language, institutions, and services, which newcomers generally lack (Vescan et al., 2023). Although befriending primarily focuses on strengthening mutual contact, which may mitigate this asymmetry in the dyadic relationship, these power hierarchies risk resulting in suboptimal integration outcomes, despite buddies' good intentions (Philip & Spratt, 2007; Rashid & Cepeda-García, 2021; Stock, 2019). Others argue that differences in knowledge and experience do not necessarily imply a hierarchy. There are many situations in which a person with lower status guides and supports someone in a higher position (Feeney & Boozeman, 2008).

5.5. Dynamism

It is important to note that recently arrived immigrants often have very intense needs, which require a range of immediate and comprehensive support services. Scholars argue that buddy programmes may only be of benefit when these immediate needs are met and other intensive settlement support begins to wane (Griffiths et al., 2009; Stock, 2019). In this respect, it is argued that the dyadic relationship in buddy programmes is dynamic and evolves over time. More specifically, the nature of the buddy relationship and support functions evolve throughout the process (Raithelhuber, 2021; Van der Tier & Potting, 2015; Van Robaeys & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016). For newly arrived migrants, instrumental support (e.g. administrative assistance, transportation, material goods) may be more beneficial during the initial adjustment process, whereas the need for emotional support may arise later or a shift towards leisure activities may occur (Crijns & De Cuyper, 2022; Oberoi, 2016; Vescan et al., 2023). When engaging with refugees, initial encounters may be characterised by humanitarian and depersonalised care logics; however, the relationship with their buddy may evolve into an emotional connection with someone they actively choose (Stock, 2019). Indeed, it has been found that newcomers desire to deepen their relationship with their buddy as time goes on, while this wish was less prevalent among these volunteers (Vescan et al., 2023). Consequently, the impact of the supportive relationship also evolves as buddies and newcomers spend more time together (Dekker et al., 2013; Van der Tier & Potting, 2015; Van Robaeys & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016; Uytterlinde et al., 2009). Others suggest that a 'good' buddy does not support a participant in a singular manner but is capable of switching between different support styles (Uytterlinde et al., 2009).

Moreover, throughout the buddy programme, volunteers and participants negotiate the frequency of contact, the overall duration of the intervention, and the nature of their relationship (Balaam, 2015; Van Robaeys & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016). Frequent communication, for instance, between buddies and newcomers would be especially important in the initial phase to facilitate mutual acquaintance and trust-building, but less so in subsequent phases (Oberoi, 2016). As newcomers improve their knowledge of the majority language and gain independence and confidence, power dynamics within the dyadic relationship may also be renegotiated (Balaam, 2015; Crijns & De Cuyper, 2022). Although a certain degree of power imbalance is inevitable at the beginning of the buddy relationship due to the unequal positions of host society members and migrant newcomers, power tends to become more evenly distributed as the relationship progresses. Peer mentoring, where guidance for newcomers is offered by former newcomers with similar characteristics, presents a more egalitarian model, ensuring that power is equally distributed throughout all phases of the programme (Gay & Stephenson, 1998; McGowan et al., 2009).

5.6. Basic participatory attitude

Processes of reciprocity, trust, and empathy are key components of an effective buddy relationship (Rhodes, 2002). However, such a relationship can only be established if both parties are receptive to it. A willingness to engage in intercultural contact and to approach the other without prejudice are essential components of a basic participatory attitude (Van Robaeys & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2018). Previous research indicates that positive experiences with buddy programmes are typically characterised by a mutual high interest in social contact (Mahieu et al., 2019). Given that most buddy programmes match buddies without a migration background with participants of foreign origin, the willingness to socialise becomes an important criterion for participation (Peifer et al., 2016). More specifically, one of the most commonly cited expectations of buddy programmes for newcomers is that volunteers should maintain an open attitude and be receptive to the diversity and 'otherness' of participants (Van Robaeys & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016). Relationships characterised by buddies' efforts to understand and respect the newcomer's cultural background tend to exhibit better relationship quality in terms of closeness. Therefore, the organisation should take into account the attitude of future buddies towards migration policy and newly arrived migrants in general (Oberoi, 2016). Two factors may already indicate a participatory attitude among volunteers engaging in buddy programmes for newcomers. First, the voluntary time contributed by buddies can be perceived as a genuine interest in assisting migrants (Griffiths et al., 2009). Second, these buddies often have prior experience in voluntary initiatives assisting newcomers, which suggests a particular sympathy towards the target group (Stock, 2019).

Related to the previous argument, the empathic ability of buddies is considered crucial in facilitating successful buddy relationships (Rhodes et al., 2006). Research on youth mentoring describes empathy as, on the one hand, the buddy's ability to step outside their own perspective and take the participant's point of view or at least understand it, and on the other hand, the buddy's adaptability, i.e., openness to the participant's wishes, needs, and experiences, and the ability to be flexible and receptive in the relationship. Consequently, buddies who are open-minded or able to let go of their initial expectations of the relationship are generally better at adapting to and meeting participants' needs, building stronger connections, and expressing greater satisfaction with their relationship

(Spencer, Pryce, Barry, Walsh, & Basualdo-Delmonico, 2020). Another study on minority mentoring programmes highlights the importance of ethnic-cultural empathy from buddies, or an empathetic and engaged attitude towards culturally diverse groups. This empathy contributes to participants' ethnic identity formation, which is associated with an improved mental well-being and buffers against the negative effects of discrimination (Peifer et al., 2016). Interestingly, the cultural empathy of buddies supporting newcomers significantly increases over the course of the programme (Mahieu et al., 2019).

5.7. Success factors at the organisational level

To better realise the above preconditions, coordinators of buddy programmes can pay special attention to the following three organisational aspects: the matching process (1), the training of volunteer buddies (2), and the follow-up of dyadic relationships (3).

5.7.1. Matching

The process of matching between the buddy and the newcomer is considered to be of crucial importance (Crijns & De Cuyper, 2022; Van Robaeys & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016). Several studies show that the quality of the match often impacts the success of the buddy programme in terms of outcomes (Esterhuizen & Murphy, 2007; Van 't Hoog, van Egten, De Hoog, & Vos, 2012). Moreover, the match determines whether or not a relationship of trust is established, which is perceived as the basis of a successful supportive relationship between the buddy and the participant (Van der Tier & Potting, 2015). It is argued that the organised relationships within buddy programmes should approximate the natural attraction between two individuals encountered in informal relationships (Menges, 2016). In order to increase the chances of creating a connection or attraction between buddies and newcomers, a number of factors can be taken into account in the matching process.

First of all, the preferences of dyad members in buddy programmes should be considered. Research on youth mentoring found that matching based on mentor preferences predict mentor satisfaction, investment and ultimately, relationship commitment (Drew, Keller, Spencer, & Herrera, 2020). In addition, mentees seemingly appreciate the opportunity to express a preference (Esterhuizen & Murphy, 2007). The most common preference 'categories' in buddy programmes for newcomers include age, gender, and family structure (Crijns & De Cuyper, 2023). It should be noted that matching based on similar socio-demographic backgrounds (i.e. similarities at surface level), such as age and gender but also place of residence and ethnicity, is demonstrated to only have a limited impact on the outcomes and the perceived quality of the relationship between buddies and participants (DuBois et al., 2002; Neuwirth & Wahl, 2017; Uytterlinde et al., 2009; Van 't Hoog et al., 2012; Van Robaeys & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016). For example, mixed dyad are equally likely to develop a fruitful supportive relationship as same-sex dyads (Uytterlinde et al., 2009). This aligns with the observation that while the significance of considering participants' preferences is underscored, coordinators of buddy programmes do not deem such factors as decisive for establishing a good match between newcomers and volunteers (De Cuyper & Crijns, 2023).

Previous research suggests that deep-level similarities, such as character traits, outlooks, values, beliefs, and life experiences, among the buddy and the newcomer positively influence perceptions of support and relationship quality, as well as satisfaction and effectiveness of the programme (De

Cuyper & Crijns, 2023; Eby et al., 2013; Menges, 2016; Neuwirth & Wall, 2017). Particularly, shared interests between dyad members are considered one of the strongest variables in fostering a positive buddy relationship (Kern, Harrison, Custer, & Mehta, 2019). Similarities at a deeper level can lead to identification processes, both cognitive and affective, thereby yielding desired outcomes for the participant (Eby et al., 2013; Van 't Hoog et al., 2012). Neuwirth and Wahl (2017) found that the more migrants perceived themselves as subjectively similar to their buddies, the more positively they evaluated the programme across all assessment categories, including psychosocial functions and programme satisfaction. Simultaneously, it cannot be ruled out that participants reporting higher relationship quality tended to perceive their buddies as more similar to themselves (Eby et al., 2013).

However, sociodemographic characteristics of both buddies and participants are not entirely unimportant. For instance, a significant age difference between a buddy and a participant could positively impact the transmission of emotional, academic, social, and cultural capital (Uyterlinde et al., 2009). Furthermore, buddies who share similar backgrounds with newcomers can serve as role models, and in doing so positively influence the outcomes of buddy programmes (Eby et al., 2013). For instance, when the dyad shares the same socio-economic and ethnic background, and the buddy has achieved success in academics or business, the likelihood of success increases, as instrumental support is more likely to be transferred (Dekker et al., 2013). In this manner, newcomers seeking assistance may find inspiration in witnessing tangible progress (Crul, 2001). It is worth noting that individuals with higher socio-economic status are more likely to volunteer, meaning that role models from similar backgrounds may not always be readily available to everyone (Hustinx et al., 2010).

Next to the general matching criteria discussed earlier (e.g. age, gender, practical considerations), coordinators of buddy programmes may employ newcomer-specific criteria (i.e. needs and goals) and buddy-specific criteria (i.e. knowledge, skills, and professional background) (Dekker et al., 2013). Since the ultimate goal of these buddy programmes is to facilitate migrant integration, the needs and objectives of newcomers should take priority to ensure the best possible match. Commonly mentioned needs and goals include expanding social networks, becoming familiar with the city or municipality, and practicing the majority language (De Cuyper & Crijns, 2023; Stock, 2019). However, it is suggested that, rather than assuming the existence of an 'objective' need, social support functions emerge dynamically in the very process of experiencing and negotiating the buddy relationship (Raithelhuber, 2021). Buddy-specific criteria on the other hand, refer to a specific background or skillset that can prove useful depending on the needs of the newcomer. Some buddies, for instance, may possess considerable knowledge regarding the local housing market or the school system (De Cuyper & Crijns, 2023). Consequently, meticulous matching based on the expectations of dyad members and the coordinator's knowledge of potential matches is required (Drew et al., 2020; Esterhuizen & Murphy, 2007). In practice, the actual use of these matching criteria largely depends on the available pool of candidates and the specific objectives of the buddy programme involved (De Cuyper & Crijns, 2023). Last, it should be noted that there is always something intangible explaining the connection between a buddy and an immigrant newcomer, which cannot be captured by the matching criteria discussed above (De Cuyper & Crijns, 2023).

5.7.2. Volunteer training

The training of volunteers would promote the quality of buddy programmes (DuBois et al., 2002; Neuwirth & Wahl, 2017; Van Robaeys & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016). More specifically, the amount of time buddies spend in training prior to the actual matching would positively influence their investment in the relationship with the participant. Research on mentoring has demonstrated that mentors who receive prematch training increasingly meet their minimum time commitment and generally have longer matches, thus positively influencing mentor commitment (Drew et al., 2020; Herrera, DuBois, & Grossman, 2013; Kupersmidt, Stump, Stelter, & Rhodes, 2017). In addition, a greater degree of training is associated with greater mentor satisfaction with the dyadic relationship (Martin & Sifers, 2012). The amount of the training offered to volunteers depends on the type of buddy programme. When the volunteer assumes the role of an 'ally', as commonly observed in befriending interventions, the perceived need for training is limited (Balaam, 2015). Whereas in the case of coaching and mentoring programmes, wherein buddies transfer specific skills or knowledge, the significance of training is deemed relatively high (De Cuyper et al., 2019; Van Robaeys & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2018).

A quality training informs buddies about the objectives of the buddy programme and their roles and responsibilities. In particular, training sessions could avoid the creation of unrealistic expectations, since buddy dissatisfaction often stems from unrealistic expectations of the relationship (Spencer et al., 2019). The newcomer's rather practical, instrumental expectations may contrast with the buddy's high expectations of social contact and vice versa (Esterhuizen & Murphy, 2007; Mahieu et al., 2019; Vescan et al., 2023). The alignment of mutual expectations and goals by a professional is important to prevent the dropout of volunteers (Keller & DuBois, 2019; Spiekermann et al., 2020; Van Robaeys & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016, 2018). In addition, typical training sessions offered by buddy programmes for newcomers focus on areas such as effective communication and using plain language when interacting with non-native speakers, understanding the psychological well-being and the specific needs of refugees, and understanding life in the reception centre (Crijns & De Cuyper, 2022). In this respect, training sessions could foster cultural self-awareness among buddies supporting newly arrived migrants, in order to prevent them from judging newcomers' behaviour according to their own cultural norms, values, and worldviews (Griffiths et al., 2009; Reeves, 2017). However, other scholars argue that the consideration of cultural differences and competences has no significant impact on the outcomes of the buddy relationship (Oberoi, 2016; Van 't Hoog et al., 2012). Furthermore, during training, buddies need to be exposed to scenarios that may not result in success (DuBois et al., 2002). Buddies should be prepared for potential challenges and issues, such as unclear responsibilities and the intense needs of newcomers, with the understanding that these factors are not necessarily detrimental to the relationship or the outcomes of the programme (Spiekermann et al., 2020). Consequently, training could focus on setting boundaries and practicing self-care (Crijns & De Cuyper, 2022).

It is noteworthy that training sessions are often exclusively provided to candidate-buddies, without the inclusion of newly arrived migrants (Drew et al., 2020; Neuwirth & Wahl, 2017; Reeves, 2017). In practice, the 'training' of newcomers typically involves a group information session or intake interview, during which they are briefed about the buddy programme, including its objectives, duration, phases,

practices, expectations, and responsibilities. Simultaneously, newcomers are typically assessed for their language proficiency and motivations, potentially leading to the rejection of their application (Crijns & De Cuyper, 2022).

5.7.3. Professional follow-up

Although the role of the coordinator is often overlooked in research on buddy programmes, the internal organisation plays a crucial role regarding follow-up and quality assurance of the dyadic relationship (De Cuyper & Vandermeerschen, 2018; Ellison et al., 2019; Van Dam & Raeymaeckers, 2017). Research on youth mentoring suggests that factors at the organisational level are even more consistently and frequently associated with the quality of the relationship than the individual variables of the mentor and the mentee (Keller & DuBois, 2019). Thus, these professional coordinators are not passive observers, but actively influence newcomer-buddy dyads (Dutton et al., 2018). In the following section, we will discuss two ways in which the supportive role of coordinators of buddy programmes may be expressed.

First, professionals could regularly communicate with dyads through one-to-one meetings, telephone calls, and e-mails to monitor the progress of the programme and prevent misunderstandings and dropout (Behnia, 2007; Esterhuizen & Murphy, 2007). It should be noted that in buddy programmes aimed at fostering migrant integration, the complexity of cultural differences and language barriers poses significant challenges to interpersonal communication (Behnia, 2007). Monitoring programme satisfaction by professionals can ensure that any issues compromising the relationship are quickly addressed (Griffiths et al., 2009; Spiekermann et al., 2020). In addition, the buddy and the newcomer may have divergent perceptions of what constitutes a qualitative relationship (Spiekermann et al., 2020). For instance, it is found that, whereas mentors perceive conversations about family and friendships as indicative of a successful relationship, for mentees conversations about school and future plans are significant predictors of relationship quality (Eby et al., 2013; Kern et al., 2019). Related to the previous argument, earlier research has shown that mentors tend to rate the relationship lower than mentees (Dutton et al., 2018). Through their ongoing supervision of various relationships within buddy programmes, coordinators can provide a uniquely distant perspective on their quality (Dutton et al., 2018). Consequently, in situations of conflict, the presence of the coordinator as an impartial party may offer dyads advice or a third opinion, thus providing them with a sense of security (Brinker, 2021). In other words, regular contact and thus a higher level of supervision from the organisation would enhance the effectiveness of the buddy relationship (Van der Tier & Potting, 2015; Uytterlinde et al., 2009). In contrast, a non-directive approach, or what is referred to as a 'laissez-faire approach', to supporting dyads would result in lower quality of the buddy relationship. Coordinators employing such an approach do not provide explicit advice and allow matches to develop naturally with minimal guidance (Keller & Dubois, 2019).

Second, coordinators providing structured activities for buddies and participants could positively influence the outcomes of the dyadic relationship (DuBois et al., 2002; Karcher & Hansen, 2014). Scholars suggest that structured mentoring programmes with defined guidelines and activities often lead to better outcomes for mentees (Martin & Sifers, 2012). These activities may include support groups and social events where participants can share their experiences with the buddy programme and engage in collective problem-solving (Esterhuizen & Murphy, 2007; Van der Tier & Potting, 2015).

For instance, it is found that buddies value the opportunity to share their worries, ideas, and feelings about the programme and feel supported by listening to similar or different stories from co-buddies in a confidential environment (Mahieu et al., 2019). While training is more formal and structured, peer-learning generally occurs within a more informal setting and tends to be more focused on the immediate concerns and experiences of buddies (Crijns & De Cuyper, 2022). In addition, group activities with other dyads can potentially result in new social relationships and thus expand the social networks of newcomers, this is often also an objective of the buddy programme (De Cuyper & Crijns, 2023; Griffiths et al., 2009). In this way, collective and participatory events can contribute to a sense of community among buddies and newcomers and set the stage for more engagement during the programme period (Crijns & De Cuyper, 2022).

Nonetheless, contextual factors of the buddy organisation, such as changes in and shortage of supportive staff, can lead to inconsistent guidance of dyads and even contribute to an early termination of relationships (Spencer et al., 2019). It is reported that a significant number of mentoring programmes are characterised by insufficient resources, and a significant proportion of buddy relationships end prematurely. In some cases, this might reinforce participants' negative experiences with social services (Keller et al., 2020). A recent study showed that coordinators of buddy programmes for newcomers often choose more distant forms of follow-up due to limited resources, even though many prefer close follow-up (Crijns & De Cuyper, 2022).

5.8. Space and setting

Buddy programmes for newcomers can be understood as a form of social intervention operating at the nexus of the private sphere, where transformative experiences are believed to occur, and the public realm, supported remotely by a professional organisation (Raithelhuber, 2023). Space is argued to be a crucial dimension of intercultural encounters, shaping the nature of the learning processes that unfold. Although research on intercultural contact often overlooks private spaces, intimate settings are assumed to lead to the most meaningful encounters (Spijkers & Loopmans, 2020). Within buddy programmes, meetings in a home setting are not necessarily encouraged, with coordinators generally leaving the decision to the dyads (Esterhuizen & Murphy, 2007). This limits access to the 'strange other' (Spijkers & Loopmans, 2020). Nevertheless, a study has demonstrated that the positive impact of dyads meeting at home, as it strengthens their relationship. Specifically, it provides newcomers with the opportunity to meet the volunteer's family, fostering bonds of trust and friendship (Esterhuizen & Murphy, 2007). Furthermore, when dyads perceive each other as kin, buddies may ritualise the newcomer's 'membership of their family' by inviting them into their homes (Stock, 2019).

Institutional spaces, on the other hand, provide opportunities for socialisation. Similar to semi-public spaces, institutional settings (such as workplaces or schools) bring people together regularly and for significant periods of time. An important distinction is that actors in charge within institutional spaces can actively intervene in social processes. They play a crucial role in shaping a 'diversity climate', which encompasses organizational practices and procedures aimed at promoting fair treatment and social inclusion (Boehm et al., 2014; Chrobot-Mason & Aramovich, 2013; Spijkers & Loopmans, 2020, p. 1159). A positive diversity climate is thus essential for meaningful encounters. Where institutional actors fail to cultivate such a climate, even prolonged and repeated interactions may not lead to

meaningful encounters. This finding is consistent with Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis, which suggests that institutional support fosters positive intercultural relationships, ultimately reducing prejudice between groups. When newcomers struggle to establish lasting connections with the host population, they often construct new social places based on shared memories and customs from their homeland (Huizinga & Van Hoven, 2018).

While buddy programmes can leverage the aforementioned preconditions, external factors also influence the achievement of integration outcomes. Buddy projects do not take place in a social vacuum; context and organisation thus impact the buddy relationship (McGowan et al., 2009). In the following chapter, we will explore the relationship between the volunteer buddy and the professional, which significantly influences the quality of the dyadic relationship.

6. Buddy versus professional: complementarity or substitution ?

A certain degree of trust between the buddy and the newcomer is necessary, but insufficient to sustain their relationship alone (Philip & Spratt, 2007). Even when the bond between dyad members is relatively strong, the dyadic relationship is unlikely to withstand obstacles that arise in other interconnected relationships in the buddy 'system'. It is crucial to understand the buddy relationship within a broader system of connections involving buddies, coordinators, newly arrived migrants, and other social professionals, all of which are in turn influenced by contextual factors of the buddy organisation (such as staff and programme policies) and societal factors (Harris & Ogbonna, 2023). For instance, disruptions in the relationship between buddies and coordinators (e.g. due to a lack of professional support and follow-up) can lead to premature termination of the relationship with the newcomer (Spencer et al., 2019). Therefore, it is imperative to further examine the relationship between volunteer buddies and professionals.

Ideally, buddy projects should operate complementary to regular professional assistance for newcomers (e.g. social assistance, housing service, labour market counselling, psychological support etc.) (Decraene, 2022). More specifically, the buddy initiative should address an unmet support need that newly arrived migrants cannot or should not seek assistance for through professional channels, such as the need of social interaction with host society members or companionship (Van Robaeys & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2018). Hence, buddy programmes have the potential to supplement institutionalised social support and enhance newcomers' accessibility to these services (Mahieu & Van Caudenberg, 2020). In this context, the primary benefit of the dyadic relationship between newcomers and volunteer buddies appears to stem from its informal and spontaneous nature of support (Stock, 2019). Unlike professional services, assistance from a buddy is readily accessible. In other words, the strength of buddy programmes lies in their informal and non-performance-oriented approach to learning (Mahieu & Van Caudenberg, 2020). In addition, it is argued that the voluntary and altruistic motives of buddies to engage in the programme are an important added value (Van Dam & Raeymaeckes, 2017; Van Robaeys & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2018). Previous research has demonstrated that participants perceive their buddies' voluntary commitment as an indication of a genuine interest in supporting them, in contrast to professional caregivers who are obliged to do so (Griffiths et al., 2009). This may facilitate the development of a trusting relationship between buddies

and participants, enabling significant progress in providing both emotional support and practical assistance (Dekker et al., 2013). However, recent literature on buddy programmes for refugees has suggested that buddy volunteers tend to be deputized for personal councillors, thus substituting instead of complementing their civic integration programme (Vescan et al., 2023).

Previous research stresses that buddy programmes should be considered in the context of a wider social support network in which the participant is located (Uyterlinde et al., 2009). It is argued that a 'portfolio' of support, which includes mentoring/befriending as one component, would be more valuable than a buddy project as a stand-alone intervention (Philip & Spratt, 2007). Indeed, a multidisciplinary support framework can result in more in-depth insights into the needs of newcomers, improve the ability to provide adequate support, and facilitate cooperation between different institutions (Mahieu et al., 2019). Establishing a strong connection between the buddy organisation and a broader network of support ensures that participants can receive adequate care in the event of escalating situations or if needs are found to be more serious than initially anticipated (Uyterlinde et al., 2009). This enables the referral of newcomers to the appropriate professional organisation (Mahieu & Van Caudenberg, 2020). Moreover, collaborations with social organisations during the intervention would increase the likelihood of lasting change in the host community (Paloma et al., 2020). Finally, a broader support framework is often considered a requirement by buddies to participate in the buddy project (Mahieu et al., 2019).

The aforementioned demonstrates that the relationship between buddies and social professionals has important implications for the effectiveness of buddy programmes (Behnia, 2007). There are several ways in which this relationship can take form. Van Bochove et al. (2018) distinguish between '*demarcation work*', which refers to efforts to keep boundaries between professionals and volunteers clear and intact, and '*welcoming work*', which indicates inviting volunteers into the professional domain and minimising differences between volunteers and professionals. In the social services sector, two structural features indicate a potential shift towards welcoming work in relation to buddies supporting newcomers. Firstly, there is an increased workload resulting from austerity measures, leading professionals to perceive volunteers as a means of support in alleviating workload rather than a threat (Van Robaey & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016). Secondly, the vulnerable status of professional social workers is suggested to facilitate 'welcoming work'. It can be argued that the position of these professionals might be strengthened, as they are tasked with delegating and coordinating these volunteers (van Bochove et al., 2018). Furthermore, van Bochove and Verhoeve (2014) identify three possible collaboration patterns between volunteers and professionals, which can serve as an inspiration for buddy programmes. In a first possible partnership, responsibility remains with the professional, who is always available. The volunteer buddy serves as an extra with additional tasks and has limited decision-making authority. A second possibility is for the volunteer and the professional to share responsibility. In this scenario, known as a 'counterpart' arrangement, the volunteer takes over some tasks from the professional and possesses greater decision-making authority compared to the first collaboration pattern. While professionals may not always be present, they still play a significant role in guiding these volunteers. The final pattern entails 'voluntary responsibility'. As a so-called 'owner', the volunteer assumes nearly all tasks previously handled by the professional. The volunteer only seeks assistance from the professional in specific cases, with the latter providing guidance from a distance.

Although the previous section suggests the existence of clear partnerships between buddies and professionals, earlier research on so-called 'godparents' of unaccompanied refugee minors illustrates the ambivalent relationship of buddy programmes with the professional field (Raithelhuber, 2018). Firstly, godparents should operate as well-trained, certified professionals within this programme. However, the concept of the 'professional godparent' implies certain contradictions. This buddy assumes responsibility only up to a certain extent, beyond which other "full" professionals become involved. Moreover, professionals typically do not handle non-specific issues requiring a holistic approach, whereas such a holistic approach is expected from these godparents. Secondly, this buddy should also assume the role of the 'family-like godparent'. This familial and personal nature of the buddy relationship allows for certain actions that would not normally occur if these buddies function strictly adhered to the role of the professional godparent. Consequently, creating distance and declaring incompetence as a professional godparent can be problematic in the intimate relationship with the minor newcomer. Finally, for the 'contractually committed godparent', the role of being a buddy godparent is depicted as a limited commitment that is manageable and plannable. Simultaneously, the intervention places emphasis on the importance of a 'click' between dyad members. These three roles offer different perspectives on the role of being a buddy, potentially harbouring contradictions and exhibiting at least partial ambivalence in nature (Raithelhuber, 2018). The above observations allow us to conclude that the relationship between buddies and professional caregivers is complex and requires special attention.

7. Tensions and challenges: An examination of complexities

Based on the preceding literature review, three key challenges related to buddy programmes for newcomers can be identified. First, we address two substantive areas of tension that are crucial for the effectiveness of the intervention and require further research. The second component involves assessing the impact of buddy programmes, with a particular focus on developing an adequate methodology for measuring their social impact.

7.1. Dichotomy between instrumental and relational support

A striking dichotomy in the literature on buddy programmes is the one between instrumental and relational support. This distinction is reflected in the definitions of mentoring, befriending, and coaching. When the buddy assumes the role of mentor, the emphasis is on providing instrumental support, such as assistance in job seeking, whereas befriending prioritises nurturing the relationship between the buddy and the newcomer, thereby emphasising relational support (De Cuyper et al., 2019; Philip & Spratt, 2007). Also coaching involves the volunteer adopting an instrumental support approach towards the participant (Van Robaeys & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016). As a consequence, buddy projects seem to be distinguished by their objectives, between those of a practical-goal nature and those of a relational-affective nature. It is worth noting that scientific evidence supporting the effectiveness of mentoring is significantly stronger than that for befriending. This is despite the fact that most buddy programmes in Flanders operate based on the concept of befriending (Van Robaeys & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016).

Buddy programmes typically address each axis separately, contrasting with previous research on generational poverty which emphasises the importance of integrating instrumental and relational elements. Expressive support alongside instrumental progress seems to be crucial for fostering positive mobility impulses (Thys, 2003). In practice as well, mentoring and befriending frequently appear to occur simultaneously. For example, research on buddy programmes for ex-prisoners shows that upon release, they need a volunteer to assist them with practical challenges, while also attending for their emotional well-being, lending a 'listening ear' (Van Dam & Raeymaeckers, 2017). With regard to integrating newcomers through volunteer buddies, the search is on as to which combination of relational and instrumental support is most desirable. Attention to broadening the social networks of newcomers is essential in facilitating their integration process into the host society, but insufficient if other needs are ignored (Pulinx, 2016; Vlaamse Regering, 2020). Previous research suggests that addressing instrumental, functional needs (e.g. housing, legal support, job placement, schooling for children) should take precedence for recently arrived newcomers, before there is an opportunity to address emotional support within the buddy-newcomer relationship (Griffiths et al., 2009; Oberoi, 2016; Vescan et al., 2023). Comprehensive interventions which encompass material, social, and educational needs, as well as psychological support, and capitalise on newcomers' strengths are crucial (Goodkind, 2005). Simultaneously, it can be argued that a commitment to both instrumental and relational support for newcomers within a buddy project may impose burdens on the involved parties. Additionally, there is a question regarding whether addressing the aforementioned instrumental needs of newcomers exceeds the capacities of volunteer buddies (D'Eer et al., 2019). In essence, while the literature on buddy programmes often suggests a strict dichotomy between interventions focussing solely on instrumental or on relational support, in practice, empowering newcomers involves navigating a complex balance between these two forms of assistance.

7.2. Relationships between buddies and professionals

As discussed earlier, the relationship between volunteer buddies and professional social workers requires special attention. While some studies highlight a certain complementarity between the support provided by buddies and that of professional caregivers, there are contrasting expectations towards these volunteer buddies (Decraene, 2022; D'Eer et al., 2019; Dekker et al., 2013; Raitelhuber, 2018; Uytterlinde et al., 2009; van Bochove et al., 2018; Vescan et al., 2023). On the one hand, volunteers, as buddies, are expected to differ; more specifically, they are expected to offer personal rather than impersonal support to newcomers (van Bochove et al., 2018). Van der Tier and Potting (2015) affirm that the support provided by the buddy should be distinct from that provided by paid workers. Buddies should, for instance, ensure the transfer of informal knowledge to newcomers; knowledge that is not explicitly covered in formal educational trainings or institutions, such as the introduction to cultural and behavioural norms of the host society (Mahieu et al., 2019; Oberoi, 2016). On the other hand, volunteers are simultaneously expected to exhibit a degree of professionalism (Raitelhuber, 2018). For instance, buddies often undergo training courses before commencing their volunteer duties and are required to adopt a professional demeanour (van Bochove et al., 2018). Moreover, the challenges encountered during the support process, such as the balance between maintaining appropriate distance and establishing rapport, closely resemble the obstacles faced by social professionals in their interactions with service recipients (Van Robaey & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2018, p.67). At the same time, buddy programmes underscore that the buddy's role is

distinct from that of a counsellor (Dekker et al., 2013; Van Robaeys & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2018). However, research indicates that many buddies receive requests for assistance from newcomers that are actually intended for professional helpers, leading these volunteers to assume informal helper roles (D'Eer et al., 2019). Critics argue that buddy programmes are thus prone to transferring some of the tasks of social professionals to active citizens (Van Robaeys & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2018). It is suggested that an overly instrumental use of volunteering can result in unpaid labour (Hustinx & Godemont, 2012). Within the context of a participatory society, the feasibility of shifting tasks and responsibilities traditionally undertaken by professionals to volunteers may be questioned (van Bochove & Verhoeve, 2014). Socialisation involves more than mere task delegation, rather, it entails a collaborative relationship between voluntary citizens and professionals (van Bochove, Tonkens, & Verplanke, 2014). It is advisable for paid professionals to handle specialised counselling and allow volunteers to provide lighter (and complementary) support (D'Eer et al., 2019). As discussed earlier, buddies are expected to address specific needs of newcomers that existing initiatives cannot remedy (Van Robaeys & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016). Therefore, establishing clear and unambiguous agreements on the division of labour among the involved parties and a shared explicit vision of the project are essential (De Cuyper & Vandermeerschen, 2018). Ambiguity in task allocation can lead to misunderstandings and tensions between professionals and volunteers, ultimately impacting the relationship between buddies and newcomers (Spencer et al., 2019; van Bochove & Verhoeve, 2014).

7.3. Methodological challenges

Although the literature suggests that buddy programmes can provide valuable support to newcomers, several studies have found that the objectives of this social intervention are not always achieved. For instance, De Cuyper and Vandermeerschen (2018) found that migrant mentoring aimed at improving access to the labour market made only a small contribution in terms of job placement. Similarly, expectations regarding the expansion of newcomers' social networks are not automatically met (De Cuyper & Vandermeerschen, 2019). More specifically, a buddy project does not necessarily result in close, lasting relationships. The relationship between dyad members can also remain superficial or purely functional (Mahieu et al., 2019; Muijres & Aarts, 2011; Vescan et al., 2023). Furthermore, some outcomes of buddy programmes appear to be temporary. One study showed that newcomers' civic knowledge and quality of life increased during the programme but declined after its conclusion (Goodkind, 2005). Additionally, several studies suggest that buddy programmes have modest effects and a limited impact on emotional and psychological outcomes for participants (DuBois et al., 2002; Eby et al., 2008, 2013; Keller et al., 2020). Van der Tier & Potting (2015) conclude that buddy projects typically do not yield spectacular, tangible outcomes (e.g.: employment or degrees). Instead, they involve a series of incremental gains that prove beneficial in the long run, such as a more optimistic outlook on the future and enhanced self-confidence. The benefits of buddy projects primarily pertain to social-emotional aspects; therefore, measurable results during the course of the intervention are rather scarce (Uyterlinde et al., 2009). Additionally, it is uncertain whether buddy programmes directly cause these outcomes for participants (Eby et al., 2008). Indeed, it is difficult to isolate the impact of mentoring and befriending interventions from other initiatives or the overall context of support in which they are embedded (Philip & Spratt, 2007). Consequently, establishing causal relationships between buddy projects and social outcomes proves difficult (Van Robaeys & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016). Nevertheless, it should be noted that buddy programmes do result in outcomes

for participants, albeit not always in the form of hard, tangible results. These 'hard' outcomes represent only one aspect of the potential contributions of the intervention. This is exemplified by a study on migrant mentoring to work, which, despite not leading to higher employment rates, increased newcomers' country-specific knowledge and understanding of the functioning of the labour market (De Cuyper & Vandermeerschen, 2018).

While a direct positive effect (attribution) of buddy programmes on specific objectives often appears to be lacking, our understanding of outcomes outweighs our knowledge of participants' perceptions of the dyadic relationship and other contextual factors (contribution) (De Cuyper & Vandermeerschen, 2018; Eby et al., 2013; Raithelhuber, 2023). Based on the concept of attribution, relationship quality is frequently measured by the instrumental support provided. However, it is important to differentiate between the perceived quality of the relationship - encompassing the psychosocial aspect, such as general evaluative feelings about the relationship- and the perceptions regarding the nature and the extent of the support provided (Eby et al., 2013). In this respect, the lack of qualitative studies on how dyads experience their relationships and make sense of their involvement is striking. There is a need to shift the research focus from outcomes to the dynamics of buddy interactions (Raithelhuber, 2018).

For this reason, it is beneficial to approach buddy projects from the perspective of their contribution, asking how they influence specific outcomes among various contextual factors. The significance of contextual considerations is underscored by a study that, in contrast to De Cuyper and Vandermeerschen (2018), identified a positive impact of mentoring on the labour market integration of newcomers. This effect was especially notable when the project incorporated an educational component and facilitated the establishment of social connections with members of the host population (Weiss & Tulin, 2019). The false contradiction between the presence and absence of buddy projects, when viewed as isolated interventions, may potentially account for their modest outcomes. Indeed, integrating a buddy programme with other support services could yield better results (Dekker et al., 2013; DuBois et al., 2002; Van der Tier & Potting, 2015). In other words, the context is not neutral, but agentic, as it actively shapes the implementation of buddy programmes (Stokes et al., 2021).

Therefore, it is crucial to consider and examine the effectiveness of the intervention within its specific context (Chen, 2012). Realist evaluation aims to pay particular attention to the aforementioned preconditions that determine the success or failure of an intervention. This broadens the focus beyond empirical observations to theorising about underlying and often invisible causes or generative mechanisms that give rise to particular events (Boost et al., 2020). This will reveal not just 'what works', but 'what works, for whom, why, and under what circumstances' (White, 2009). To achieve this, realist evaluation develops, tests, and refines so-called 'programme theories' that outline the underlying assumptions about how change is brought about (Boost et al., 2020). For instance, the CAIMeR model emphasises the interaction between the intervention and the specific context in which it occurs (Hermans, 2014). The model describes interventions according to their context, actors, interventions, mechanisms, and outcomes with a view to identifying working principles (Blom & Morén, 2009). This model shapes the programme theory and provides tools to make assumptions of

different stakeholders involved explicit and capture them from a context-explicit perspective (Boost, Cools, & Raeymaeyckers, 2017).

The present report enables us to draw lessons on the conditions under which volunteers can make a difference in supporting newcomers. There is a scarcity of evaluation studies providing empirically grounded responses to inquires regarding the effectiveness of buddy programmes from a context-specific perspective (Van der Tier & Potting, 2015).

8. Conclusions

While Flemish integration policy seemingly advocates for buddy programmes as a straightforward intervention, this literature review illustrates that simply bringing together volunteers and newcomers does not necessarily guarantee success. Several preconditions must be effectively addressed to ensure a meaningful impact on the integration of newcomers, such as a well-considered match, comprehensive volunteer training, and professional follow-up. Moreover, while Flemish integration policy suggests that any member of the host society can serve as a buddy, the preceding literature review emphasizes several desired characteristics (e.g. empathic ability, knowledge of institutions and services, cultural self-awareness, proficiency in the majority language, and the ability to leverage social networks), placing significant expectations on these volunteers. Furthermore, the relationship between volunteer buddies and social professionals warrants careful consideration, as there may be ambiguity regarding their respective roles and responsibilities. Consequently, the dyadic relationship between the buddy and the newcomer should not be analysed in isolation; rather, it should be understood within the broader contextual factors surrounding the buddy system to gain a deeper understanding of the conditions that facilitate its desired impact. In the following sections, I will identify two research gaps present in the existing literature, which I will further address in my empirical chapters.

First, the current literature review predominantly relies on studies related to established practices of mentoring, characterized as a goal-oriented and time-limited process aimed at learning and development (Dekker et al., 2013; Eby et al., 2008; Mulvihill, 2011). This focus on mentoring leads to an emphasis on the outcomes and effectiveness of buddy programmes within the existing literature. Befriending, on the other hand, primarily focuses on strengthening the mutual connection between the buddy and the newcomer and is closely linked to the policy objective of social networking for newly arrived migrants, yet it receives significantly less attention (Philip & Spratt, 2007; Somers, 2019). Since it is difficult to delineate the causal relationship between befriending and integration outcomes, observational evidence alone cannot fully explain why these types of buddy programmes might contribute to the social integration of newcomers (Dalkin et al., 2015). Moreover, the social support provided through befriending practices cannot be understood using the simple input/output logic found in mentoring literature. Therefore, this dissertation aims to provide a deeper understanding of the lived experiences, social relationships, activities, and interactions within befriending interventions, rather than focusing solely on tangible outcomes. In doing so, I aim to contribute to the emerging call in befriending literature to understand how buddy programmes for newcomers are 'performed' in practice (Raithelhuber, 2018, 2023). Next to that, I adopt a multi-stakeholder perspective as policymakers, social professionals, volunteers, and newcomers do not necessarily have the same implicit and explicit assumptions of how and why buddy programmes may

contribute to social network expansion of newcomers. In the following chapter, I aim to identify policymakers' perspectives on the mechanisms underlying the empirical level, explaining why they believe outcomes may come about (Dalkin et al., 2015). Subsequently, I focus on behavioural orientations of buddies and coordinators within befriending interventions, thereby going beyond the usual focus on effects or outcomes in studies on migrant integration and buddy programmes (Obstfeld et al., 2014, p.141; Raithelhuber, 2023). By doing so, this dissertation aims to contribute to the scholarly research on what makes buddy programmes effective in achieving network expansion in the host society (Crijns & De Cuyper, 2022).

Secondly, the existing literature on buddy programmes predominantly emphasizes the complementarity between the buddy and the newcomer, exploring the conditions under which the buddy's expertise can effectively support the integration process of newly arrived migrants. Consequently, it tends to overlook the unequal power dynamics between host society members and newcomers, or at least considers these dynamics to be unproblematic. While this literature review acknowledges the asymmetrical nature of the dyadic relationship—where the intervention primarily focuses on addressing newcomers' needs and the buddy typically holds a position of greater power—there is a lack of critical research on buddy programmes regarding how dyads navigate power imbalances arising from differences in knowledge, authority, language, ethnicity, and socio-economic background at the micro-level of interaction (Crijns & De Cuyper, 2022; Van der Tier & Potting, 2015; Van Robaeys & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016). Within this context, the norm of reciprocity is regarded as a crucial condition for a quality supportive relationship in the literature on buddy programmes and is proposed as a means to mitigate unequal positions (Balaam, 2015). Previous research, however, shows that creating a relationship based on reciprocity between newcomers and buddies is difficult to achieve, since buddies' altruistic considerations often take precedence over reciprocal support exchange (Vescan et al., 2023). In addition, it is important not to conflate reciprocity with equality, as the positions from which newcomers and buddy volunteers engage in the relationship are fundamentally unequal. Examining power dynamics in negotiation is particularly important, as buddy programmes risk reinforcing hierarchical relationships of dependence, which can ultimately lead to suboptimal integration outcomes and undermine the intervention's objectives (Raithelhuber, 2023; Stock, 2019). Therefore, the final empirical chapter of this dissertation focuses on identifying power dynamics in the interpersonal relationships between buddies and newcomers, as well as the strategies these individuals employ to negotiate these power asymmetries. In doing so, I examine the agency of the dyad members, analysing how their interactions can either reinforce existing disparities or foster collaborative dynamics. Through this analysis, I aim to provide deeper insights into how differences between newcomers and buddies may be exacerbated, potentially leading to further exclusion of migrants, or, conversely, be partially or wholly subverted, thereby enabling newcomers to fully integrate into the host society.

In summary, this dissertation seeks to fill critical gaps in the existing literature by examining both the lived experiences and power dynamics within buddy programs. By emphasizing the importance of context and the complexities of interpersonal relationships, it aims to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how these interventions can effectively support the social integration of newcomers, informing both policy and practice.

Chapter 2: Buddy programmes for newly arrived migrants: Perspectives of policymakers on generative mechanisms for newcomer integration

Publication status: Submitted, 28/09/2024, Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies

Abstract

Driven by an increasing focus on active citizenship, buddy programmes have gained popularity in various areas of social policy over the last decades. In this paper, we aim to provide a greater understanding of the perceptions of individual policymakers regarding buddy programmes for immigrant newcomers. Drawing on a realist approach, we focus on identifying policymakers' perceptions of mechanisms that may generate integration outcomes for newly arrived migrants. The findings reveal differences in the assumptions of local and supralocal policymakers, as well as discrepancies between these assumptions and official policy documents. Moreover, four key mechanisms were identified, namely informality, equivalence, reciprocity, and one-to-one contact, giving rise to results such as social network expansion and increased knowledge of institutions and services. In this way, the study enhances our comprehension of how and why buddy programmes for newcomers work according to the perspectives of policymakers. The results suggest that trust-building is considered critical in developing a successful buddy programme. The article concludes that further research, adopting a multistakeholder perspective, is required to test these assumptions and enhance the credibility of the findings.

Keywords: buddy programmes, active citizenship, local turn, migrant integration, mechanisms

Introduction

This paper focuses on the perceptions of individual policymakers regarding buddy programmes for immigrant newcomers and their impact on integration outcomes. Recently, for a variety of reasons, local governments and cities have started more proactively developing their own strategies to address challenges concerning migration flows (Flamant, 2020). These strategies are often characterized by pragmatic problem-solving in response to specific local situations and may differ from national models of integration (Penninx & Garcés-Mascreñas, 2016). Concurrently with the bottom-up emergence or strengthening of local migrant integration policies, a top-down induced decentralisation of parts of integration policy has occurred. This combined bottom-up and top-down emergence of local migrant integration policies has been referred to as the 'local turn' in migrant integration policies (Poppelaars & Scholten, 2008). This local turn goes hand in hand with an increasing emphasis on active citizenship in society and policy-making, which shifts more responsibility to citizens to address social issues such as social exclusion. All of this strengthens the importance of the local as a site for migrant integration (Flamant, 2020).

The trend towards active citizenship promotes the idea of participating in activities that support a local community (Tonkens, 2009). In this context, initiatives in which local volunteers undertake responsibilities for migrants in order to foster their integration process have emerged. This paper attempts to shed light on one particular intervention, namely buddy programmes. A buddy programme essentially concerns a (one-to-one) supportive relationship between a local volunteer (the buddy) and an immigrant newcomer facilitated by a professional organization (Stock, 2019). This relationship may be one of mentoring, befriending, or coaching. While a mentor offers guidance or instruction, a befriender acts as a friend (Behnia, 2007). Coaching, on the other hand, has a shorter-term performance focus (Stokes et al., 2021, p.142). While the majority of research appears to concur that buddy programmes positively contribute to migrant integration into the host country, it is noted that the expectations regarding this social intervention are not always fulfilled (De Cuyper et al., 2019; Oberoi, 2016; Reeves, 2017).

In the literature, three significant research gaps can be identified on buddy programmes for newcomers.

First, the scholarship on buddy programme policies so far tends to focus predominantly on official documents and policies. Therefore, we have little insight into the actual discourse of individual policymakers within the field of migrant integration regarding buddy programmes (Flamant, 2020). As these individual policymakers often have to implement policies on the ground, their perceptions may differ significantly from officially documented discourse. To gain a deeper insight into the practical implementation of migrant integration policy, it is essential to grasp their perspectives. Second, there is an absence of qualitative studies in the literature on buddy programmes. Available studies are focused on quantitatively measured outcomes and use 'before and after' designs. This quantitative research bias primarily concentrates on causes and effects (Raithelhuber, 2018, p. 257). The issue is that the impact of buddy programmes is difficult to measure and may even escape measurement altogether. Consequently, our knowledge of how and why buddy programmes are effective in facilitating migrant integration is rather limited. Therefore, this paper aims to identify mechanisms, while also considering contextual factors.

Third, while mentoring has been studied extensively in recent years, less attention has been paid to buddy programmes that offer befriending relationships. Therefore, in many cases befriending and its impact remain poorly understood and under-researched (Balaam, 2015). This gap is important to address as befriending predominantly concentrates on strengthening the dyadic relationship between the buddy and the newcomer, offering companionship to the latter (Philip & Spratt, 2007). Befriending thus holds the potential to expand the social networks of immigrant newcomers, an aspect often deemed crucial in their integration process into the receiving society (Behnia, 2007; Pulinx, 2016).

The current study seeks to fill these gaps in the literature by examining the perceptions of both local and supralocal policymakers regarding buddy programmes that offer befriending relationships to newcomers. Rather than simply approaching buddy programmes from an input-output logic, we adopt the principles of realist evaluation to delve into the underlying assumptions of policymakers about how buddy programmes and their integration outcomes are defined, and why they think buddy programmes may specifically contribute to the integration process of immigrants (Pawson & Tilley, 1997). In contrast to the aforementioned quantitative research bias, this broad view of evidence-based practice acknowledges the complexity of the effectiveness of social interventions (Hermans, 2014). Moreover, this paper provides new insights by illuminating the perspectives of individual policymakers on generative mechanisms that may lead to causal regularities in buddy programmes, specifically in befriending interventions for immigrant newcomers. Since mechanisms are often hidden and sensitive to contextual variations, gaining insight into policymakers' perceptions of what might make buddy programmes effective for migrant integration provides a valuable complement to the content of official policy documents (Dalkin et al., 2015). This approach allows us to gain a clearer understanding of how the intervention will be implemented as an integration measure. Lastly, our study on buddy programmes contributes to the broader research on recent trends in integration policies, including the local turn and the increasing emphasis on active citizenship. Our study is guided by the following research questions:

- How do policymakers describe buddy programmes for newcomers?
- According to these policymakers, what are the possible outcomes for the integration process of newcomers?
- Why do policymakers think buddy programmes are effective in facilitating newcomer integration (i.e. generative mechanisms)?

In order to answer these questions, this study presents arguments based on data drawn from 15 interviews with local and supralocal policymakers in Flanders, the northern region of Belgium. The remainder of the paper will delve into the broader social context of buddy programmes, the case study of the new Flemish Integration Decree, and key concepts. Subsequently, we outline our methodology. We then present the main research findings and discuss them in relation to findings from other studies. We finish with our conclusions by outlining implications for further research.

1. Theoretical framework

1.1. Active citizenship and the local turn in integration policies

During the past decades, buddy programmes have gained significant popularity in many areas of social welfare policy, such as mental healthcare, housing, and poverty. To fully understand the

growing popularity of buddy programmes, it is necessary to consider a broader social context. Two policy trends are considered crucial in explaining the increasing prominence of buddy programmes, namely the local turn in migrant integration policy and the increasing focus on active citizenship.

Traditionally, scholars considered social policies as national policies (Kazepov & Barberis, 2013). The same was true for migrant integration. The concept of national models of integration resulted in an overemphasis on differences between national integration models in academic discourse (Scholten & Penninx, 2016). Recently, however, a local turn in immigrant integration research acknowledges migration governance as a multi-level process (Caponio, Scholten, & Zapata-Barrero, 2017). This is because local authorities, particularly large cities, are becoming increasingly entrepreneurial in developing their own integration philosophies and policies. From a sociological perspective, this is logical since it is at the local level that newcomers meet others and build a life (Scholten & Penninx, 2016). Moreover, cities are primarily affected by migration issues (Flamant, 2020). The local turn in migrant integration policy can be explained by a divergent logic behind problem framing of immigrant integration on the national and local level of government (Poppelaars & Scholten, 2008). While ideas of nation states about how to integrate often are drenched with ideas about national identity and national communities, local policies tend to be driven by pragmatic problem-solving (Mahieu & Van Caudenberg, 2020; Penninx & Garcés-Masareñas, 2016; Poppelaars & Scholten, 2008). Consequently, different approaches to migrant integration, even within the same countries, emerge (Scholten & Penninx, 2016, p. 91). Some scholars even characterise the contrast between national and local policies as “two worlds apart”, due to their divergent logics of policy formulation (politicization at the national and pragmatic problem-solving at the local level) (Poppelaars & Scholten, 2008; Scholten & Penninx, 2016, p. 100). As a result of the multilevel governance of migrant integration, complex relations have emerged between local, regional, national, and EU institutions (Scholten & Penninx, 2016).

The local turn in migrant integration policies cannot solely be attributed to a bottom-up approach of local governments tackling migrant settlement issues, but also to a central state-initiated process of decentralisation which shifts responsibility for migrant integration policy from national to local authorities (Alexander, 2003, p. 412; Lahav, 1998). This is in line with trends towards subsidiarization of social policies in Europe based on the principle that matters ought to be handled by the smallest competent authority (Kazepov, 2008, p. 248). The concept of subsidiarity includes not only a vertical dimension, such as the territorial reorganization of regulatory powers, but also a horizontal dimension, such as the multiplication of actors in social policies (Kazepov & Barberis, 2013). Thus, decentralisation also reinforces prevailing notions about active citizenship. Governments specifically highlight citizen involvement, encouraging individuals to assume responsibility and initiative within established social support systems, particularly in long-term care and social work (van Bochove et al., 2018). In addition, governments utilise active citizenship as an important tool for promoting social cohesion in a super-diverse society (Pulinx, 2016). The shift towards a participatory society aligns with the socialisation of care, involving the redistribution of responsibilities, including the transfer of tasks from public authorities and professional caregivers to citizen volunteers (Tonkens, 2009).

There are various reasons for this process of socialisation. Austerity measures may partly explain the trend. Moreover, objections towards a dominant professional model are significant. It is argued that

achieving good care requires the combined efforts of both professional staff and volunteers (Van Robaeys & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016). Volunteers are not only more cost-effective than paid professionals, they are also assumed to possess certain knowledge of service users' needs and contribute to social cohesion (Van Bochove et al., 2018). Finally, the government increasingly relies on civil society to address wicked problems such as immigrant integration, characterised by ongoing debates about problem definition and appropriate policy measures (Pauly et al., 2020; Poppelaars & Scholten, 2008).

1.2. Case study: The new Flemish Integration Decree and buddy programmes

The Flemish Government has introduced buddy programmes as a new formal instrument in migrant integration policy. In addition to the three existing pillars of the civic integration programme- namely, participation in Dutch language courses, social orientation courses, and career coaching- a fourth pillar has been added: 'social networking and participation'. Newcomers are offered a tailor-made trajectory of at least 40 hours, which includes participation in a buddy programme, an introductory internship in a company, an association, organisation or local administration, or volunteer work. The implementation of buddy programmes within the civic orientation programme aims to enable newcomers to establish social contacts with the host population and build trusting relationships. In some cases, participation in a fourth pillar trajectory is mandatory, particularly for refugees and migrants who are not employed, enrolled in education, or not already voluntarily engaged in an integration trajectory (Vescan et al., 2023; Vlaamse Regering, 2020). Importantly, newcomers themselves are responsible for demonstrating that sufficient efforts are being made under the fourth pillar through documentation and procedures. The strong nationalism in the Flemish community stimulates this highly centralized, professionalized, and controlled integration policy, in contrast to its francophone counterparts (Adam, 2013).

We argue that buddy programmes within this Flemish context reflect recent trends of the local turn in migrant integration policy and the increasing emphasis on active citizenship for various reasons. First, we observe a decentralisation concerning the organisation of buddy programmes for newcomers. While the Reception Offices (AgII) serve as the central providers of the civic integration programme, local governments are assigned a coordinating role in implementing this fourth pillar, thus overseeing buddy programmes (Adam et al., 2018). Second, despite buddy programmes being proposed as a 'new' pillar of the civic orientation programme, several local governments had already implemented buddy projects long before they were officially recognized as a policy instrument for migrant integration. In this regard, local actors, particularly cities, have shown proactive engagement in migrant integration, often tailored to their specific local contexts (Alexander, 2003; Scholten & Penninx, 2016). Last, the proposed buddy programmes will rely heavily on the efforts of local volunteers in order to provide guidance to immigrant newcomers (Crijns & De Cuyper, 2022). In this respect, a buddy programme can be regarded as a cost-effective intervention, since it would diminish the participant's reliance on professional assistance. Consequently, certain responsibilities of professionals may be delegated to active citizens (Balaam, 2015).

1.3. Befriending as a key concept

The relative paucity of evidence-based evaluation research is partly related to the vague conceptualisation of buddy programmes. In research literature, different terms are not only used next to each other, but also used interchangeably, such as 'parrainage', 'social mentoring', and 'maatjesprojecten' (Crijns & De Cuyper, 2022; Reidsma & De Cuyper, 2020; Van der Tier & Potting, 2015). Despite the absence of a universally accepted definition, Van Robaeys & Lyssens-Danneboom (2016) developed a conceptual framework for buddy programmes based on an extensive literature review of diverse types of buddy programmes. According to Van Robaeys and Lyssens-Danneboom (2016, p.36), a buddy project can be defined as follows: "an organized social intervention in which two citizens (a volunteer and a participant) are matched one-to-one, through the intervention of a (professional) organisation, to meet an articulated or non-articulated request for support from the participant". More specifically, a buddy programme introduces two strangers to each other, rather than relying on spontaneous relationships (Balaam, 2015). Furthermore, the buddy is not a professional, and the project assumes a voluntary involvement on both sides of the relationship (De Cuyper et al., 2019). Lastly, the relationship does not operate in isolation, but takes place within the framework of an organisation, where the buddy and the newcomer establish regular contact (Crijns & De Cuyper, 2022; McGowan et al., 2009). In the context of immigrant integration, buddies may assist newcomers in their efforts in rebuilding their support systems in the host society. Furthermore, a buddy can offer helpful guidance in various areas, such as job search, language skills improvement, increasing awareness of the values of the host society, and enhancing abilities to access resources and services (Behnia, 2007).

Buddy projects are utilized for diverse target groups and serve various objectives. Therefore, each buddy programme may employ different approaches. Buddies can operate in roughly three different ways, namely, through befriending, mentoring, or coaching. Befriending and mentoring typically take place over a longer period, whereas coaching tends to be of shorter duration (Stokes et al., 2021). This study will address befriending, as it appears to be prioritised by the Flemish government within the fourth pillar of the revised civic orientation programme. Buddy programmes are implemented to build a social network for newcomers in the receiving society, potentially fostering their integration process (Vlaamse Regering, 2020). Befriending emphasises the expressive function of the dyadic relationship. Here, the buddy programme primarily concentrates on the participant without a support system and their well-being (unlike the more instrumental relationship favoured by mentoring and coaching programmes) (Balaam, 2015; McGowan et al., 2009; Van der Tier & Potting, 2015). The buddy aims to provide the participant with informal and social support aimed at reducing social exclusion, achieved through the establishment of a lasting relationship of trust (Van Robaeys & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016). Therefore, befriending primarily focuses on strengthening the mutual connection between the volunteer buddy and the immigrant newcomer (Philip & Spratt, 2007). Thus, the social relationship serves as source of well-being and fosters a sense of belonging (Van der Tier & Potting, 2015). Apart from offering relational support, Balaam (2015) identifies three key characteristics typical of befriending: a one-to-one, friend-like relationship; that it is an organised intervention; and the negotiation of power and agency among dyad members. While the befriending relationship shares similarities with friendship, it differs in crucial aspects. Friendship is inherently a free choice and is typically future-oriented, whereas the relationship between buddies and newcomers is arranged by an organisation and often has a predetermined duration (Behnia, 2007).

2. Data and methodology

2.1. A realist approach

The findings reported in this paper are drawn from realist interviews with policymakers to gain a greater understanding of the contribution of buddy programmes to the integration process of newcomers. The chosen methodology of a realist evaluation is part of the ongoing debate on the body of knowledge in social work (Hermans, 2014). During the last ten years, social work is under pressure to demonstrate the impact, effectiveness, and efficiency of its practices. Consequently, the idea of evidence-based practice is introduced to provide scientific support for social work practices (Blom & Morén, 2010). Nevertheless, observational evidence alone cannot establish causal relationships between variables (Dalkin et al., 2015). Therefore, this research adopts a broad view of evidence-based practice, which acknowledges the complexity of the effectiveness concept in buddy programmes (Hermans, 2014). A realist evaluation focuses on 'what works, how, in which conditions, and for whom', rather than simply asking whether an intervention 'works' (Dalkin et al., 2015). Importantly, this article primarily aims to identify policymakers' perspectives on generative mechanisms that are often hidden in buddy programmes. Astbury and Leeuw (2010, p.368) describe mechanisms as 'underlying entities, processes, or structures which operate in particular contexts to generate outcomes of interest.' In scientific realism, Pawson and Tilley (1997) define a mechanism as the combination of resources offered by the intervention and stakeholders' reasoning in response. The authors argue that mechanisms will only be triggered under the right circumstances (Dalkin et al., 2015, p.3). A realistic evaluation is then guided by a conceptual framework or a programme theory, which outlines how an intervention contributes to a chain of interim results and, ultimately, an intended impact (Funnel & Rogers, 2011).

2.2. Data collection and analysis

Prior to conducting the interviews, a document analysis was performed on policy texts related to the fourth pillar of the new Flemish Integration Decree. The insights from these policy documents informed the design of the semi-structured questionnaire, allowing interviewees to reflect on official discourse. To foreground the perspectives of policymakers, realistic interviews were conducted to explore their assumptions about the effectiveness of buddy programmes in facilitating the integration process of newcomers, addressing questions of how, where, when, and why such programmes may or may not be effective. Through this approach, the interviewees were able to confirm, falsify, and refine pre-existing presumptions (Manzano, 2016, p.344; Pawson & Tilley, 1997). Both local and supralocal policymakers (N=15) in the Flemish integration sector were interviewed in May and June 2021 until theoretical saturation was reached, meaning that no new information emerged from the interviews. Additionally, further interviews were deemed unnecessary as interviewees consistently suggested the same potential respondents. An employee of the cabinet of the minister responsible for Integration initiated the first contact. Later, snowball sampling was utilised to invite other participants. The focus shifted gradually from supralocal administrations to predominantly local actors, such as aldermen and staff members employed at the reception offices. The variation in policy positions rendered different steps of the implementation process of buddy programmes visible.

Given the COVID-19 measures in place at the time, the interviews took place online through Microsoft Teams. The Ethics Committee for Social Sciences and Humanities of the University of Antwerp granted

permission for the conduct of the study (SHW_21_150). Participants provided verbal informed consent before the interviews began. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Before conducting a more in-depth qualitative analysis, we thoroughly immersed ourselves in the transcribed data by repeatedly actively reading them with attention to meanings and patterns. Subsequently, the transcripts were imported into the software programme MAXQDA. We utilised the programme to categorize and add codes to the data based on a thematic analysis (Clarke & Braun, 2017). The units of analysis in this realist evaluation are the underlying ideas and assumptions of policymakers regarding how, why, and under what circumstances buddy programmes may contribute to newcomer integration (Dalkin et al., 2015). Finally, the resulting themes were labelled as the conceptualisation of the intervention, integration outcomes, and mechanisms.

3. Findings

The findings of the interviews are presented under the following headings: conceptualisation of the intervention, integration outcomes, and generative mechanisms.

3.1. Conceptualising buddy programmes

To begin, policymakers were prompted to provide their own descriptions of buddy programmes for newcomers. Four distinct characteristics emerged: a locally organised friendship-like relationship, in which the buddy assumes a supportive role; the dyad maintains temporary regular contact; all within the context of a professional organisation.

3.1.1. A locally organized friendship-like relationship

The policymakers identify a buddy programme as an organized one-to-one relationship between an immigrant newcomer, on the one hand, and a local volunteer, who has been living in the host country for a longer period, on the other. This implies that not only native-born citizens but also former newcomers can fulfil the role of buddy. Moreover, there is a strong local character to this organized relationship. Several respondents characterise a buddy programme as an intervention occurring within the local community of a specific city or municipality. A buddy accompanies a newcomer to help them become more acquainted with their new surroundings. Therefore, some interviewees consider it important that the buddy and the newcomer share the same place of residence. Besides offering the newcomer a local contact person, some respondents characterise the buddy approach as a way to develop a human connection, bringing people and cultures together. According to multiple respondents, the relationship has the potential to develop into a friendship. It is noteworthy that dyads who form friendships are often cited as successful examples of buddy programmes. The interviews confirm that policymakers indeed envision befriending when referring to these initiatives. This is illustrated by the following quote of a supralocal policy maker: "In my view, buddy programmes for newcomers should facilitate partnerships between newcomers and long-time residents or natives. The primary aim should be for the newcomer to perceive the buddy as a friend within an equal relationship."

3.1.2. Supportive role

In addition to the local networking component, policymakers consider it essential for buddies to offer guidance and support to newcomers. Consequently, the content of the buddy programme is not

entirely a matter of free choice. This assistance can encompass both socio-emotional support and practical help related to adjusting to life in a new country. The majority of policymakers believe that this approach calls upon the responsibility of the host population to facilitate the integration process of immigrants into the receiving society. This aligns with policy documents, which assert that buddy programmes provide newcomers with access to an informal point of contact through the efforts of the host population. However, there is some disagreement among the respondents regarding the responsibilities of the buddy. While some, particularly supralocal policymakers, believe that having a buddy creates job and housing opportunities for newcomers, others explicitly state that this should not be the buddy's task. Some even caution against the potential of role shifting, wherein volunteer buddies provide support that would typically be provided by professional caregivers, such as administrative assistance. Hence, several policymakers stress the importance of clear agreements concerning the responsibilities of buddies. Conversely, other interviewees suggest that buddies should have the autonomy to determine the type of assistance they prefer to provide, as highlighted in the following quote of an interviewee employed by a reception office: "If the buddy is undeterred by that [providing professional support], I don't see why that should be a problem. If that buddy likes to get involved, I don't think that we as professionals should say that it's impossible."

3.1.3. Regularity and temporality

Another crucial element of buddy programmes is the regularity with which the dyads meet. Policymakers assert that meeting regularly is necessary to achieve integration outcomes. In this regard, the frequency of encounters is not entirely left to chance. They believe that, if left to the spontaneity of the participants, too few meetings would occur. However, regarding the 40 hours mandated by the new Integration Decree, one respondent, employed at the Agency for Integration and Civic Integration, suggests that this is a rather specific temporal delineation.

It's possible that it's going to take twice as long to develop that trusting relationship, to achieve language acquisition, and for it to really pay off. Personally, I struggle a bit when they really stick a number of hours on it.

Additionally, most policymakers emphasise the temporary nature of buddy programmes. This time-limitation makes the commitment to the programme and relationship feasible in terms of time availability and engagement. After all, participation in the project requires perseverance and discipline to regularly meet the other party. The primary reason for this limited time frame is not to deter potential dyads with long-term responsibilities. This approach may help prevent early dropout from the buddy programme. Moreover, due to limited resources, most buddy organisations offer guidance for only a few months. Some interviewees argue that dyads are allowed to keep in touch with each other after the end of the programme; however, this is not necessarily expected.

3.1.4. Within the context of a professional organisation

Finally, the policymakers do not perceive the relationship between buddies and newcomers to be an isolated one. A professional organisation initiates and guides the dyadic relationship from the beginning of the trajectory up till a certain end date. For example, the buddy organisation ideally takes sufficient time for the matching process, but also pays attention to screenings and trainings, and provides several evaluation sessions, possibly involving interactions with other dyads. The

emphasis of the organisational guidance appears to be primarily on the buddy rather than on the newcomer. Additionally, the importance of a contact person whom the dyad can approach in case of difficulties is underscored. Furthermore, three respondents consider it an important responsibility of the involved professional to establish clear expectations on both sides of the relationship: "I think that you do need that person on the sideline. If only for people to know, "OK, we can go somewhere."

3.2. Outcomes of buddy programmes

Multiple policymakers state that the objectives of buddy programmes depend on the newcomers' profile and needs. In other words, outcomes cannot be enforced by default. Nonetheless, presumed results in five key areas can be distinguished. Particularly, social network expansion and increased knowledge of institutions and services are highlighted as significant contributions of buddy programmes.

3.2.1. Increased psychological well-being

The majority of policymakers point out that participation in the buddy project would have a number of beneficial psychological outcomes for newcomers. Firstly, the buddy can offer the newcomer socio-emotional support. One respondent refers to possible traumas caused by migration, such as social network disruption. A buddy may lend an ear and may act as a confidant.

Secondly, six interviewees believe that buddies could enhance the self-confidence of immigrant newcomers. Interacting with a local volunteer could encourage newcomers to engage more actively in speaking and practising the language of the host society. As a result, newcomers feel more comfortable asking their buddy questions and seeking support.

Thirdly, a buddy can significantly enhance immigrants' sense of belonging in the host society, particularly within the city or municipality in which they settle. The buddy promotes a welcoming culture and makes the newcomer feel at home, which in turn would foster their integration process. One local policymaker expresses his expectation as follows: " [that] the newcomer feels welcome and at home, and good in the city, and does not feel like a stranger. This is the added value that a fourth pillar project should and can have."

3.2.2. Social skills

Several policymakers state that buddy programmes may initiate a socialisation process. Spending time with the buddy, "an insider" who is a member of the host population, can help the newcomer gain insight into the behavioural norms and unwritten rules of the receiving society, which the newcomer may adopt in turn. This is illustrated by the following quote of a local policymaker who was a buddy herself:

The newcomer I was matched with once asked: "I've always wondered why people never talk on the bus?" I responded that it's just not something we [Belgians] typically do, and it's nothing personal. These insights about the local population might come in handy.

In addition, the buddy can provide feedback to the newcomer on how certain behaviours may be interpreted by the host population. One interviewee noted that the extent to which cultural differences are discussed depends on the depth in the dyadic relationship.

3.2.3. Knowledge of institutions and services

Throughout their interaction, the buddy can inform the newcomer about local institutions and services that are helpful during the initial period of arrival in the receiving society. To prevent misunderstandings, other respondents prefer professionals making referrals to specific organisations. Additionally, several interviewees place an important emphasis on increasing the self-reliance of immigrant newcomers: the capacity to navigate institutions and services, establish connections, and autonomously seek support or information. Ideally, by the end of the buddy programme, newcomers should be able to navigate these processes independently. In addition to familiarising newcomers with available institutions and services, buddies may also accompany them to specific organisations or associations. Eight interviewees assume that, by joining the newcomer on such visits, buddies can significantly reduce barriers faced by newly arrived migrants. In other words, buddies can enhance the accessibility of facilities by introducing newcomers, thereby serving not only as referrals but also as facilitators in overcoming obstacles. In this respect, one local policymaker states that: "I think that 'going along' is something very important. Even if that's just once or twice, until the buddy feels the newcomer has found their niche."

3.2.4. Language acquisition

Despite the fourth pillar of the civic orientation programme focussing on social networking, the majority of respondents highlight the language acquisition of newcomers as an important outcome of their participation in buddy programmes. In some cases, the buddy can act as an interpreter, such as when making phone calls or visiting institutions. More importantly, various interviewees assert that buddies provide newcomers with the opportunity to practice the language of the host society in depth, complementing the classes already offered to them. These classes would not be sufficient according to some policymakers. The non-school, informal context allows newcomers to become acquainted with the actual spoken language, including dialects. Several respondents therefore emphasise that participants in buddy programmes should ideally communicate exclusively in the language of the host country.

3.2.5. Social network expansion

A buddy programme presents newcomers with the opportunity to engage with individuals from the host population, particularly local volunteers who assume the role of buddies. According to various policymakers, this expansion of social networks may be advantageous for newcomers for several reasons.

Firstly, a buddy can alleviate the social isolation often experienced by newcomers by providing companionship during a given period. While the relationship between a buddy and a newcomer has the potential to develop into a friendship, this may occur to a limited extent. Nonetheless, the buddy can introduce the newcomer to their own social network and local organisations. However, one policymaker states that the buddy should not be expected to introduce the newcomer to family and friends. Group activities offered by the buddy programme, where participating dyads engage with

each other, may also lead to new social connections for newcomers. These new social relationships could compensate for the loss of a social network due to migration.

Secondly, while the relationship between a buddy and a newcomer is typically temporary, some policymakers state that the ethno-cultural diversification of the social networks of newcomers could lead to upward social mobility (e.g.: improvements in their position in the labour and housing markets). After all, the buddy possesses knowledge about the ins and outs of the host society that can be passed on to the newcomer. In this regard, one respondent notes that:

[Buddy programmes offer] a network with populations that have access to power. I mean: you can obviously know a lot of people, but if none of them knows how that gets you inside a particular company or sector, then you remain an outsider. So the buddy programme is a way to become an insider.

Another supralocal policymaker states that: "I often refer to a study showing that when you know someone outside your ethnic group, your chances double in the job market."

Thirdly, several interviewees suggest that diverse social networks can challenge opinions and views and improve the intercultural competences of both newcomers and established residents. Conversely, other, particularly local, policymakers prioritise newcomers' autonomy. If the newcomer feels comfortable having a social network composed solely of people from the same ethnic background, this preference should be respected. However, this stance contrasts with official policy documents that advocate for diverse social networks among newcomers. Four respondents suggest a middle ground: maintaining connections with one's ethnic community while also fostering diverse relationships. Such relationships with ethnic communities can provide a safe haven for engaging in inter-ethnic interactions.

Last, promoting ethnically diverse social relationships, according to policy documents, would ensure that both immigrants and the host population, learn to embrace diversity (Somers, 2019; Vlaamse Regering, 2020). However, most policymakers are sceptical and view this assumption as an overly ambitious outcome of buddy programmes. Moreover, a selection effect is likely, as buddies inherently have a predisposition to embracing diversity to some extent, given their voluntary involvement in an intervention targeting migrants. On the other hand, other respondents believe that buddies can share positive experiences about their interactions with newcomers within their own social circles, potentially fostering greater tolerance towards ethnic diversity in society.

3.3. Mechanisms

Based on the interviews with policymakers, it is possible to identify four mechanisms that explain why and how buddy programmes can contribute to the integration process of newcomers: informality, equivalence, reciprocity, and one-to-one contact.

3.3.1. Informality

The informal nature of buddy programmes appears to be of great value in generating outcomes. Although many buddy programmes are facilitated by professional organisations, all interviewees associate them with an informal approach. Policymakers characterise informality in this context as

the absence of obligations, sanctions, and predetermined outcomes. For example, unlike social workers, volunteer buddies cannot influence a newcomer's income or civic integration certificate in case of non-compliance. These assumptions contradict the implementation of the fourth pillar in the civic integration programme, which focuses on networking. Completing this pillar determines whether some newcomers obtain their integration certificate.

Another aspect of informality is the human-centred design of buddy programmes. Whereas integration courses tend to be generic and supply-oriented, buddies can offer a more personalised, small-scale, and demand-oriented approach. Since the dyad has a certain degree of freedom in shaping their relationship, buddies can consider the interests, questions, and preferences of the newcomers involved. Moreover, buddies are not constrained by strict office hours or fixed meeting places, allowing them to better cater to the needs of newcomers. As a result, several policymakers assume that newcomers may perceive their buddies as more approachable and flexible compared to professionals with clearly defined responsibilities. In this regard, one local policymaker notes that:

Nothing within a buddy programme is mandatory. Newcomers already have many obligations. Now, they can simply ask their buddy where to go for a good coffee. There are no strings attached. For example, they don't have to submit a piece of paper with a signature on time.

Another local policymaker echoes this sentiment: "In a classroom context, it is more like: You have to perform, you are evaluated, you have an exam, you get homework. Things like that. That's normally not the case with a buddy."

Given this informal atmosphere, the newcomer is expected to feel less pressure to perform and would be more likely to ask their buddy for help. Additionally, the newcomer's assumed fear of making mistakes is reduced. Furthermore, more than half of the respondents believe that newcomers would be more inclined to discuss sensitive matters with their buddies. In other words, the low-threshold nature of the buddy programme may contribute to a sense of safety for the newcomer, fostering trust in the buddy.

3.3.2. Equivalence

Although some respondents acknowledge that there is an inevitable asymmetry between newcomers and buddies, given the difference in language proficiency and understanding of the host society, most policymakers believe that a certain degree of equivalence is necessary to foster a friendship-like relationship. When defining equivalence, they generally refer to the blurring of the distinction between the target group, immigrant newcomers, on the one hand, and the service providers, volunteer buddies, on the other. The respondents distinguish three ways by which equivalence could be achieved.

First, the interviewees, both local and supralocal policymakers, consider it crucial that both participate voluntarily in the buddy programme. This would avoid a discrepancy between those who voluntarily participate in the intervention and those who are obliged to do so. Moreover, the voluntary participation of buddies and newcomers would testify of a genuine interest and motivation in getting to know each other and making the most of their shared journey. In this regard, one policymaker argues that: "For me, a buddy must be equal to the newcomer, but there should also be mutual trust

and a personal choice. Therefore, voluntariness is paramount.” Remarkably, the significant emphasis placed on voluntariness stands in stark contrast to that found in official policy documents, which (in some cases) makes participation in buddy programmes compulsory for certain groups of newcomers, while it remains voluntary for candidate buddies.

Second, assigning equal responsibilities to the dyad in organising activities is considered effective in achieving equivalence. This means that both the buddy, who is a member of the host population, and the newcomer can take initiative in organising activities. This approach helps to avoid paternalism in the relationship. This is exemplified by the following quote: “People are equal in the buddy-newcomer relationship and they decide together: What are we going to do? When and where are we going to meet? That’s all in consultation with each other.”

Last, the majority of policymakers state that matching buddies and newcomers should be based on common interests or similar backgrounds (e.g. family background or age). The rationale behind this is that commonalities foster recognition. Moreover, emphasising similarities rather than differences can help prevent hierarchy in the buddy-newcomer dyad. Simultaneously, four policymakers presume that as buddies and newcomers become acquainted, commonalities will naturally emerge, leading to greater mutual appreciation. Several interviewees argue that, despite ethno-cultural differences, individuals share common aspirations and concerns. Interventions like buddy programmes would demonstrate that buddies and newcomers share more similarities than differences, highlighting the commonalities that unite us rather than the differences that divide us. Consequently, differences become irrelevant. One policymaker states that: “Everyone has the same wishes and desires. You want the people you love to be safe, healthy, and happy. That is universal. So I think it's important to have these kinds of conversations with the buddy.”

3.3.3. Reciprocity

Most policymakers emphasise the significance of the reciprocal nature of the relationship between buddies and newcomers. Respondents associate reciprocity with the commitment of those involved: both must be willing to invest time and effort into the relationship. This entails showing initiative and genuine interest in each other. Ideally, buddies are interested in learning more about immigrants and contributing to their integration process. Conversely, newcomers are eager to meet locals and gain insights into the host country. Within this context, policymakers argue that a mutual learning process may unfold, as both parties possess valuable knowledge to share. Interpersonal communication facilitates this exchange of information. For instance, discussions about cultural differences allow buddies to gain insights into the challenges of migrating to a foreign country, while newcomers might familiarise with unwritten norms of the receiving society. This aligns with the principles outlined in policy documents related to the fourth pillar of the civic integration programme. Furthermore, while engaging in activities together, newcomers and buddies can observe each other’s experiences and discuss them, thus creating a win-win situation where both parties benefit and broaden their horizons. Moreover, several policymakers believe that gaining insights into each other’s world fosters mutual appreciation and could even mitigate inter-ethnic prejudice. One local policymaker refers to the contact theory in this context (Allport, 1954):

The more individual contacts occur, the more group stereotypes can dissolve, replaced by concrete, personal interactions that add nuance to perceptions. In this way, individuals are no longer confined to the group identity assigned to them, but it becomes a more nuanced image.

3.3.4. One-to-one contact

Finally, almost all policymakers attach great importance to the one-to-one interactions between buddies and newcomers as an effective way to build trust in the relationship. The one-to-one relationship provides a sense of security for newcomers and, in addition, encourages them to speak up and practice the language of the host country. In group settings, there is a risk that those with a better command of the language may dominate the conversation. Moreover, the buddy programme offers participants the opportunity to get to know each other on a deeper level, beyond small talk—an effect that is further enhanced by the reciprocal nature of the relationship between buddies and newcomers (as discussed earlier). Furthermore, this intimate setting allows for the creation of depth and closeness in the relationship, as the buddy can respond more appropriately to the individual needs of the newcomer. In contrast, social workers interact with numerous clients or within group contexts, resulting in relatively superficial levels of contact with individuals. As a result, the one-to-one setting increases the likelihood of fostering a bond among dyad members. One local policymaker states that trust in the dyadic relationship may extend to broader social trust: “It's great that someone gets one-to-one attention [...] I think it provides a safe space that can gradually become larger. And the trust that grows on a small scale can also have an effect on others.” Another local policymaker emphasises the atmosphere of trust which a buddy can create:

[...] it's mainly a one-to-one story, in which the newcomer can learn the language of the host country faster in an environment of trust, expand his social network to find a job or a house, or all sorts of other things.

However, two policymakers argue against the notion that buddy programmes must always involve one-to-one interactions to be successful. Some newcomers may benefit from support within group contexts, such as families.

4. Discussion and conclusion

We contribute to the literature on buddy programmes for newcomers within the context of migrant integration policy by (a) documenting the perspectives of individual policymakers beyond official policy documents, (b) identifying generative mechanisms in buddy programmes assumed to facilitate immigrant integration, and (c) focusing on befriending interventions. From this, three tentative take-home arguments emerge.

First, our research shows that the perceptions of policymakers at different levels of the policy-making chain, from national policymakers to local functionaries, differ not only from each other, but also from the assumptions regarding buddy programmes outlined in official policy documents. This finding is significant in light of the local turn in migrant integration policies, which may result, as observed here, in the involvement of actors from various government levels in policy development and implementation, thereby allowing for different assumptions regarding the effects and mechanisms of

policy programmes to coexist. The local turn underscores the divergence between local implementation and national integration philosophies (Poppelaars & Scholten, 2008). The existence of different perceptions of buddy programmes becomes evident, for example, when interviewees, especially local policymakers, assign more weight to the voluntary participation in and the informal character of buddy programmes than what is outlined in the new Flemish Integration Decree, which establishes buddy programmes as the fourth pillar of the civic integration programme. Previous research has emphasised the importance of voluntary participation in befriending programmes for establishing reciprocity and fostering friendship (Fakoya et al., 2021). However, the fourth pillar mandates newcomers' participation in buddy programmes in certain cases. Moreover, newcomers must provide documentation to demonstrate their efforts in bringing the process to a successful conclusion, which could potentially undermine the informality that policymakers consider crucial for generating integration outcomes. Due to the compulsory nature and structural embeddedness of buddy programmes in integration policy, Flanders holds a unique position compared to other European countries (Reidsma & De Cuyper, 2020). The strong politicization of immigration and integration in Flanders may explain the mandatory nature of the integration programme (Adam et al., 2018, p. 249). The policymakers also mention potential outcomes not addressed in official policy texts, such as language acquisition and increased social mobility. This suggests a tendency among policymakers to attribute the effects of buddy programmes to all aims of migrant integration policy, indicating a lack of attention to the specific generative mechanisms of buddy programmes, and thus leading to an overestimation of their impact.

Second, we identified four generative mechanisms based on policymakers' perceptions: informality, equivalence, reciprocity, and one-to-one contact. These mechanisms may contribute to generating various outcomes, such as expanding social networks, enhancing psychological well-being, and improving social skills. Consequently, unlike other quantitative research, our study provides a deeper understanding of how and why buddy programmes that offer befriending relationships are considered effective in facilitating migrant integration. These findings underscore the heightened emphasis placed by policymakers on the significance of networks and relationships in facilitating newcomers' access to knowledge, both from others and from informal sources outside formal institutional learning structures (Lo & Teixeira, 2015). This increased policy attention is consistent with earlier research indicating that connections with the host population play a pivotal role in the social integration of migrants into the receiving society (Arpino & de Valk, 2018). The policymakers believed that promoting these links between diverse individuals, i.e. local volunteers (buddies) and immigrants, is of vital importance in order to gain access to resources not otherwise available, and to provide newcomers with sufficient social capital aimed at social mobility in the receiving country (Putnam, 2000). Moreover, these bridging relationships with the broader host community are assumed to increase newcomers' sense of belonging to their new host society (Pulinx, 2016). Nevertheless, recent literature stresses that (intercultural) encounters are events of relation and thus inevitably risky and unpredictable (Wilson, 2017). The extent to which buddy programmes realise their potential seems to be heavily reliant on the nature of social interactions (Mahieu & Van Caudenberg, 2020).

Third, the theme of trust between buddies and newcomers emerges repeatedly in the interviews as a crucial factor for establishing a successful buddy project in terms of outcomes. For instance, the informal nature of the approach, characterised by the absence of obligations, sanctions, and

predetermined outcomes, fosters a sense of safety among newcomers. Additionally, policymakers emphasised that matching should be based on shared interests or similar backgrounds to achieve a level of equivalence among dyads. This is in line with Hurley's (2006) trust theory, which posits that individuals are more likely to trust those who share similar interests and appear similar to themselves. Moreover, one-to-one interactions between dyad members foster a sense of trust, as this intimate setting facilitates the formation of deeper relationships. Interpersonal trust underscores the active involvement of citizens-volunteers in migrant integration and reinforces the shift towards active citizenship, as discussed earlier (Tonkens, 2014). It reflects the belief of policymakers that government intervention has clear limitations in promoting migrant integration. The establishment of buddy programmes as an explicit component of integration policy exemplifies their efforts to mobilize active citizenship in a top-down manner to address these limitations.

Our study illuminated the perspectives of individual policymakers regarding the significance, outcomes, and mechanisms of buddy programmes for newcomers. However, it is imperative to contextualise the dyadic relationship within a broader network of relationships encompassing buddies, operational staff, and immigrant newcomers. These relationships are further influenced by organisational contextual factors, such as staff and programme policies (Spencer et al., 2019). Each of these stakeholder groups may have varying assumptions regarding how and why buddy programmes for incoming migrants work (Chen, 2005). Therefore, adopting a multistakeholder perspective in future research is required to strengthen the credibility of the findings.

Acknowledgements

We thank all respondents for participating in this research. We also thank the Hannah Arendt Institute for making this research possible.

Funding

This work was supported by the Hannah Arendt Institute [grant number 36197].

Disclosure statement

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

Chapter 3: The key to success? Social network brokerage in buddy programmes for newly arrived migrants

Publication status: Published, 05/08/2024, Journal of International Migration and Integration

Abstract

This qualitative study investigates how social network brokerage takes place in buddy programmes for newly arrived migrants from the perspectives of local volunteers and coordinators. There is research showing a positive effect of brokerage on social capital, but the literature on migrant mentoring shows that the objective of social networking is not always achieved. In this study, we aim to provide a more fine-grained picture of how buddy programmes contribute to the social networks of newcomers by adopting a multi-stakeholder perspective. We examine (a) the experiences of volunteers who take on the role of buddy to support the newcomer and (b) the modus operandi of coordinators responsible for monitoring the buddy programme. This will give us more insight into how they fulfil their brokerage role and which conditions of success there are for brokerage in buddy programmes for newcomers. We do this on the basis of interview data within a case study of buddy programmes in the Flemish region of Belgium. We find wide variety in brokerage behaviour of buddies (conduit, tertius gaudens, and tertius iungens). Our findings suggest that buddies can act as gatekeepers, where newcomers are deliberately kept separate from the host society. This exposes the limitation of working with volunteers to achieve network expansion. The paper concludes that integration policies take too little account of the agency of those involved, impacting brokerage behaviour.

Keywords: brokerage, social networks, immigrants, buddy programmes, integration

Introduction

Driven by an increasing focus on active citizenship, buddy programmes have gained popularity in various areas of welfare policy during the past decades, such as mental health care, youth care, and poverty alleviation (Raithelhuber, 2023). Buddy programmes essentially concern an organized social intervention in which two citizens are matched one-to-one, through the intervention of a (professional) organization, to meet a request for support from one of the two parties. Generally, the volunteer, who will be referred to as 'buddy' in this paper, and the help receiver spend dedicated time together (Stock, 2019). Commonly, a distinction is made between three types of buddy programmes: mentoring, befriending, or coaching. While a mentor offers guidance or instruction in order to achieve pre-determined goals as a part of a time-limited process, a befriender acts as a friend often over a longer period of time (Balaam, 2015, p.30). Coaching, on the other hand, has been associated with a shorter-term performance focus to stimulate a personal change process (Stokes et al., 2021, p.142). Spurred by the 'local turn' in migrant integration policies and especially following the European refugee crisis of 2015, buddy programmes are now also being implemented to promote the integration of newly arrived migrants (Poppelaars & Scholten, 2008). In the context of immigrant integration, a buddy may provide emotional, informational, and instrumental support, such as guidance in the newcomer's job search, improving language skills, increasing awareness of values of the host society, and increasing access to resources and services (Behnia, 2007). The premise is that these buddies, who are established members of the host society, have privileged access to relevant cultural, economic, or social capital to facilitate migrants' integration into society (Stock, 2019).

In this paper, we focus on social network expansion within buddy programmes for three reasons. First, buddy programmes for newcomers are a new and barely studied practice. Moreover, although it is an important goal of the intervention, scholarly research on what makes buddy programmes effective in achieving network expansion for newcomers in the host society is lacking (Crijns & De Cuyper, 2022). Second, previous research results are ambiguous. Studies to date show that the expectation of social network expansion is not automatically realised. Research on migrant mentoring to work has, for example, demonstrated that buddies do not always perceive building the social network of newcomers as a task (De Cuyper & Vandermeersch, 2018). Furthermore, the organized encounters that take place within buddy programmes do not necessarily translate into close, long lasting relationships (Mahieu et al., 2019). Third, the existing literature on buddy programmes for newcomers primarily draws from research on workplace mentoring, with relatively limited attention allocated to befriending initiatives, which focuses more on social relationships and are increasingly advocated as policy tools for migrant integration (Balaam, 2015; Lai, Shankar, & Khalema, 2017).

In our research, we address these limitations by exploring how local volunteers (buddies) and coordinators of buddy programmes, operating according to the befriending method, contribute to expanding the social networks of newcomers in the receiving society. In order to do so, this paper draws on literature on brokerage and social networks to improve our understanding of how and under which conditions buddies and coordinators perform their brokerage role with a view to strengthen the newcomer's social network (Obstfeld, 2005). This approach offers new insights as we focus on conduct, and in that way go beyond the usual focus in studies of buddy programmes on effects or outcomes (Raithelhuber, 2023). Rather than examining social network structure, our focus lies on

behavioural orientations. In addition, we examine how the agency of newcomers plays a role in brokerage behaviour, as individual volition and action are often overlooked by the structural approach to brokerage (Tasselli & Kilduff, 2021). In contrast to earlier studies focusing on social network structure, the scientific value of this paper is thus the analysis of brokerage behaviour from a multi-stakeholder perspective, explaining network expansion within the context of buddy programmes. New insights into brokerage within buddy programmes may enable practitioners to potentially refine these programmes, thereby enhancing their effectiveness in facilitating network expansion for newcomers. More research on how buddy programmes impact network expansion for newcomers is necessary, because investing in building social networks is essential in realising integration policy (Pulinx, 2016). The following research question was posed:

How do volunteers (buddies) and coordinators of buddy programmes fulfil their brokerage role with a view to expand the social network of immigrant newcomers in the host society?

In order to answer this question, the study presents arguments based on data drawn from 40 interviews with buddies and coordinators in Flanders, the northern region of Belgium. The structure of the article is as follows. The next section presents the theoretical framework (1), which includes a conceptual overview of brokerage theory, which will be utilised in this paper to better understand the network expansion of newcomers, and discusses the importance of (ethnically diverse) social networks. Then, I describe the methodology (2) adopted to conduct the research. Subsequently, I present our case study, namely buddy programmes within the context of the renewed Flemish Integration Decree. In section 3, I present the findings structured according to the different forms of brokerage behaviour exhibited by buddies (i.e. conduit, tertius iungens, and tertius gaudens) and by coordinators of buddy programmes (i.e. brief and sustained iungens). Last, we pay special attention to the agency of newcomers. The paper ends with concluding remarks (4) on the objective of social network expansion in buddy programmes and the implications for further research.

1. Theoretical framework

Social network brokerage: Conceptual overview

This paper focuses on brokerage behaviour by volunteers (buddies) and coordinators to understand social network expansion of newcomers within buddy programmes. In a buddy programme, a coordinator assumes a brokerage role by introducing two individuals who are strangers to each other, a local volunteer (buddy) and newcomer, to each other (Balaam, 2015). This corresponds to the non-tie condition in Burt's (2004) definition of structural holes, which is based on the absence of ties between two alters. Literature on social networks and brokerage typically employs this very specific meaning of brokerage, involving a particular structural pattern in which two otherwise disconnected alters are connected through a third party, here the coordinator (Marsden, 1982; Obstfeld et al., 2014, p.136). In other words, brokerage literature traditionally tends to focus on social network structure. However, Obstfeld and colleagues (2014) claim that brokerage can occur without structural holes, while structural holes can exist without any form of brokerage. Thus, since the identification of structural holes within a network does not necessarily implicate any specific social activity, including brokerage, Obstfeld et al. (2014) argue for a broadened approach to brokerage to emphasise the many different forms of social behaviour it encompasses. Therefore, a distinction is made between

so-called 'brokerage structure', which refers to social network structure (open vs. closed networks), and the social behaviour of third parties, referred to as 'brokerage process'. Thus, the authors broaden the definition of brokerage to the following: "behaviour by which an actor influences, manages, or facilitates interactions between other actors", to imply a broader range of social activity that different forms of brokerage activity might involve (Obstfeld et al., 2014, p.141). We will employ this definition, which focuses on social behaviour, to examine how buddies and coordinators fulfil their brokerage role, aiming to broaden the social networks of newcomers, in this article. We build our analysis on the distinction made between three strategic orientations to brokerage action: conduit brokerage, *tertius gaudens*, and *tertius iungens*. In conduit brokerage, the relationship between alters is not necessarily changed. Whereas in moderation brokerage, as in the case of *tertius gaudens* and *tertius iungens* brokerage, the broker B alters the relationship between A and C in some way (Obstfeld et al., 2014, p.145).

First, conduit or "channelling" brokerage involves purely the passing of information, ideas, or other knowledge between the brokered parties, without the broker necessarily changing their relationship (Obstfeld et al., 2014). This brokerage activity is consistent with the knowledge advantage associated with structural holes (Burt, 2004).

Second, *tertius gaudens* or "the third who enjoys", refers to conflict, competition, or unfamiliarity between alters actively encouraged by the broker (Obstfeld et al., 2014, p. 145). The broker benefits by not intervening in the conflict or the disconnection between the brokered parties or actively pits them against each other (Obstfeld et al. 2014, p. 138). This brokerage orientation may bring the broker into a dominating or favourable position (Simmel, 1950).

Third, and most relevant to our case study, *tertius iungens* or "the third who joins" brokerage involves the broker's introduction of disconnected individuals or the facilitation of the new coordination between connected individuals (Obstfeld, 2005, p.100). In buddy programmes, this broker orientation causes that two strangers, the buddy volunteer and newcomer, are introduced to each other. Where the *gaudens* leverages disconnection or negative ties, the *iungens* actively pursues coordination. Network expansion is likely to involve this connecting of previously unconnected parties (Obstfeld et al., 2014). Obstfeld (2005) suggests a distinction between brief *iungens* and sustained *iungens*. Whereas brief *iungens* refers to discrete episodes of introduction, sustained *iungens* brokers continue to coordinate the relationship.

In practice, processual brokerage often entails a combination of these strategies, since the triad enables more complex social dynamics than those found in the dyad (Simmel, 1950). However, greater heterogeneity in relationships poses anyone operating in such a network context with more of an 'action problem', or the challenge of coordinating individuals with different interests, unique perspectives, and language, presenting greater risk of failure (Obstfeld, 2005). Increases in heterogeneity would therefore demand greater brokerage intensity in order to produce cooperation, coordination, or other results. Therefore, *tertius iungens* behaviour increases in importance in contexts of diversity, such as in buddy programmes. Nevertheless, *tertius iungens* might create unintentional or unseen harm by facilitating a bad match (Obstfeld et al., 2014). When there is a mismatch between the buddy and the newcomer, benefits of the intervention are significantly lessened or may even cause stress to the participants (Crijns & De Cuyper, 2022). Immigrant

newcomers may be uncertain about how they will be received by the majority group, including their buddies in this case (Valentine, 2008).

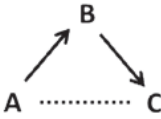
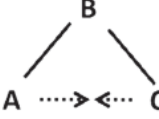
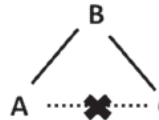
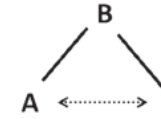
Three Forms of Brokerage Process			
		 	
	<i>Conduit</i>	<i>Tertius Gaudens</i>	<i>Tertius Iungens</i>
<i>Open Network (absence of A-C tie)</i>	<i>B transfers information, knowledge, or other resources between A and C where A and C have no prospect of meeting</i>	<i>B plays A and C against one another or keeps A and C apart</i>	<i>B introduces A and C where A and C have no prior tie</i>
<i>Closed Network (presence of A-C tie)</i>	<i>B facilitates transfer between A and C and may help synthesize new knowledge</i>	<i>B cultivates conflict, competition, or separation between A and C (divide et impera)</i>	<i>B coordinates new collaborative action between A and C</i>

Fig. 1. Three Forms of Brokerage Process – Obstfeld et al. (2014)

Buddy programmes and social networks

Social networks are seen as important sources of social capital for migrants in order to access social support in the host society, such as companionship, but also emotional, informational, and instrumental support (Ryan, Sales, Tilki, & Siara, 2008). Social network formation is not solely an individual endeavour, but rather a collaborative process involving both newcomers and the receiving society (Pulinx, 2016). However, previous research indicates that newcomers often lack frequent encounters with the host population. Despite newcomers frequently expressing the need or demand for social contacts, they do not seem to succeed in making contact with host society members without active support and guidance (Pulinx, 2016). The primary reason is that interethnic contact is often subject to structural constraints (Huizinga & Van Hoven, 2018; Lamba & Krahn, 2003; Muijres & Aarts, 2011; Smith et al., 2021). Spatial proximity by itself, for instance, is insufficient to facilitate social relationships between migrants and host society members (Valentine, 2008). It is often observed that newcomers organize themselves differently in time and space than the established community, resulting in daily life-paths of newcomers and established citizens that may not necessarily cross (Huizinga & Van Hoven, 2018). Different daily routines may even result in parallel lives (Valentine, 2008). Additionally, encountering prejudice and discrimination are seen as significant obstacles to build social bonds with the established population. Furthermore, the acquisition of language and cultural skills appears not always sufficient to eliminate barriers to friendship formation (Smith et al., 2021). The lack of inter-ethnic contact between newcomers and host society members

can lead people to focus on activities inside their 'own group' (e.g. ethnic minority). Consequently, so-called 'structural holes' are created in the information flow between groups in society (Burt, 2004).

A buddy programme is a dedicated intervention to bring newcomers and host society members together, a situation thus unlikely to occur spontaneously. Buddy programmes may address the aforementioned challenges related to inter-ethnic and intercultural contact. By doing so, it offers newcomers the opportunity to engage in bridging in the host society beyond their ethnic community (Weiss & Tulin, 2019). Bridging social groups is the mechanism through which brokerage becomes social capital. More specifically, people whose networks are not limited to their own social group have greater ability to bridge the structural holes between groups, and thus have greater access to a broader diversity of information (Burt, 2004). In other words, brokerage across the structural holes between groups may provide newcomers with life chances and options otherwise unseen (Burt, 2004, p.349, p.354). Although participation in a buddy programme automatically expands the network of non-family ties of newcomers by at least one member of the host population, earlier research indicates that the dyadic relationship as such may be insufficient to increase the newcomer's social network (Austin et al, 2020; Jaschke et al., 2022). Recent literature on youth mentoring stresses that to take full advantage of the potential to broaden the participant's social network, explicit connecting behaviours are required to increase newcomers' social connections beyond the dyad (Austin et al., 2020). This allows us to conclude that, despite buddy programmes having great potential to expand newcomers' social networks in the host society, this expectation is not automatically realised.

2. Data and methodology

This qualitative study investigates the process of brokerage within buddy programmes aimed at expanding the social networks of immigrant newcomers in the receiving society.

2.1. Case selection

Purposeful sampling was utilised to understand brokerage behaviour of both volunteer buddies and coordinators. We selected those buddy programmes based on the concept of befriending and explicitly aim to enhance the social network of the newcomer, alongside other objectives such as familiarising them with the city or municipality and improving language skills. This selection provides insights into the process of social network brokerage. This means that we focus on buddy programmes that aim to provide relational rather than instrumental support (Balaam, 2015). Buddy programmes that, for example, exclusively focus on finding housing or employment for newcomers are thus not included in our sample. The selected buddy programmes are implemented both in cities and smaller municipalities. Newcomers typically join a local buddy programme through their social assistant, the Integration Agency, or by word of mouth. Once buddies and newcomers are matched, the coordinator generally organises a joint kick-off event to explain the programme's details and offer tips for smooth interaction. Buddies and newcomers then collaboratively decide on activities they wish to engage in together, such as going for a walk, visiting the library, or cooking. The organisation encourages regular meetings, typically twice a month. Throughout the programme, participants may receive evaluations, as well as engage in group activities involving all dyads. After a certain period, organisational guidance ceases, but buddies and newcomers are free to continue meeting independently.

On the one hand, interviews were conducted with local volunteers (N=25) committed to take on the role of buddy. Buddies are established members of the host community, which means that they have been living in the host country for a long time and are proficient in the majority language, and thus commit to offer guidance to a newcomer for a certain period (e.g. six months). These volunteers are often, but not always, female (N=16), retired (allowing them to have sufficient time), and active in various voluntary initiatives. Buddies are in a unique position as brokers, as they can deliberately create bridging ties between newcomers and host society members (Jaschke et al., 2022). These volunteers generally join the programme by word of mouth or through local communication channels (e.g. regional newspaper). No prior knowledge is required, but volunteers receive support from the coordinator of the local buddy programme. Some have participated in the programme multiple times. In five instances, the buddies terminated their involvement prematurely before the scheduled end date of the buddy programme. The main reasons for early termination of the programme are differing expectations between dyad members, different styles of communication, not clicking, because the newcomer felt obliged to participate in the project, or because the newcomer is forced to return to the country of origin.

On the other hand, coordinators (N=15) of fifteen different buddy programmes were interviewed. Coordinators are typically paid professionals employed by the city or municipality to monitor the buddy programme. Coordinators are important brokers within buddy programmes since these professionals are responsible for matching the dyad and facilitating their relationship. It is important to note that coordinating the buddy project is rarely a full-time occupation, but is often only one part of these professionals' job responsibilities. Next to that, most of the buddy programmes examined do not have a long history of existence, with the exception of two projects that have been active for over ten years. In the selected cases, evaluations and training sessions offered by coordinators often concentrate exclusively on the buddies, rather than on the newcomers, suggesting a potential imbalance on whom the coordinator's brokerage role focuses.

2.2. Data collection and analysis

Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews with buddies and coordinators (N=40) between December 2022 and April 2023, until theoretical saturation was reached. We focus on the brokerage role of these two groups of stakeholders, because coordinators are responsible for matching a newcomer with a local volunteer (buddy), while a buddy can be seen as an intermediary between the newcomer and the established population. The individual interviews lasted between 45 and 120 minutes and were conducted in Dutch. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. The data were analysed in line with the thematic analysis techniques of Braun and Clarke (2017), using NVivo-software. After repeatedly reading the transcribed data with attention to meanings and patterns, codes and themes were generated. Ultimately, we categorised our interview data into three main themes: Brokerage behaviour of buddies, Brokerage behaviour of coordinators, and Network agency of newcomers.

2.3. Ethical aspects

Participants were informed about the objectives of the study, data processing, and their right to withdraw from the research. All respondents gave both their verbal and written informal consent for an audio-recorded interview. To protect the identity of the respondents, all interview data were anonymised. The study followed the guidelines of the Social Sciences and Humanities Ethics Advisory Committee of the University of Antwerp (SHW_21_150).

2.4. Case study: The new Flemish Integration Decree and buddy programmes

Buddy programmes for newcomers have been in existence in Belgium since 2011. While originally driven by civil society, buddy programmes have become more and more institutionalised in some European countries (Crijns & De Cupyer, 2022). Also the Flemish Government has introduced buddy programmes as a new formal instrument in migrant integration policy. Besides the three existing pillars, namely the participation of newcomers in a Dutch language course, a social orientation course, and career coaching, a fourth pillar has been added to the civic integration programme, namely 'social networking and participation'. Newcomers are offered a tailor-made trajectory of at least 40 hours in the form of a buddy programme, an introductory internship in a company, an association, organisation or local administration, or volunteer work. Compulsory integration participants (so-called third country nationals including refugees), who are not working or studying, are obliged to participate in the networking and participation programme from the 1st of January 2023. Making (components of) the civic integration programme obligatory is a convergent trend in European states' policies on migrant integration (Joppke, 2007). The purpose of implementing buddy programmes in the civic integration programme is to allow newcomers to establish social contacts with the host population and to build trusting relationships. The Flemish government hopes that people, both the person integrating and those around them, will gain insight into the world of others and learn to embrace diversity. The host society would also make the necessary efforts to this end (Vlaamse Regering, 2020). Buddy programmes seem to lie at an intersection of integration models, with some criticising them as assimilating, while others attribute multiculturalist characteristics to them (Joppke, 2007). Importantly, the directing role for implementing the fourth pillar rests with local governments. Both the subsidiarisation of social policies and the emergence of local migrant integration policies strengthens the importance of the local as a site for migrant integration (Poppelaars & Scholten, 2008). In short, buddy programmes for newcomers are introduced as a promising tool for promoting integration by means of a low-cost intervention (Jaschke et al., 2022).

3. Findings

This paper draws on brokerage theory to gain insight into social network expansion within buddy programmes for newcomers. The findings are presented under the following headings: Brokerage behaviour of buddies, Brokerage behaviour of coordinators, and Network agency.

3.1. Brokerage behaviour of buddies

The buddy can assume a meaningful brokerage role by bridging the gap between newcomers and the host population. We find that buddies perform three brokerage strategies: conduit, tertius iungens, and gaudens brokerage.

3.1.1. Conduit brokerage role

A first brokerage role the buddy takes on is that of a conduit broker. Conduit brokerage involves the passing of information between parties, where the broker B (the buddy) is a go-between or intermediary between A (the newcomer) and C, without necessarily changing their relationship (Obstfeld et al., 2014). In this role, the buddy, who is more familiar with the local environment, thus provides the newcomer with informational support by offering advice and suggestions (Ryan et al., 2008). By doing so, he can be an important referrer for the newcomer. The interviews showed that buddies inform newcomers about all kinds of services which can come in handy if you are new to a city or municipality, such as where to find the library or how to register with the local hobby club. The buddies also argue that they often accompany the newcomer the first time, hoping to lower the threshold this way. Several buddies believe that this will give the newcomer access that would otherwise not be available due to discrimination and other obstacles. Next to providing this practical information, several buddies indicate that they inform newcomers about customs and cultural norms of the host society, enabling them to better understand and adapt to situations. By exchanging information and showing them the way, these volunteers hope that newcomers will use these services and possibly meet host society members there. The conduit broker role of buddies thus emphasises the self-reliance of newcomers in broadening their social networks. "You do build bridges. When you, as a buddy, accompany the newcomer, you're much less likely to get fobbed off." (buddy 16)

Precisely to make them feel that there are many things to experience here and that they should not stay in their [...] small circle. That they have to get out there because if you don't show them, they won't do it. They stay [...] with the limited people they know. That way [by informing and showing the way], they dare to enter into our society. (buddy 19)

However, we argue that two dynamics may affect the conduit brokerage role of buddies. First, this brokerage role presupposes a certain profile, namely someone with a considerable amount of knowledge of the local landscape of institutions, services, and associations, and their operation in order to inform and refer the newcomer. Consequently, not every buddy is able to perform this role and thus contribute to newcomers' network expansion in this manner. The following quote from a coordinator confirms this assumed knowledge profile of the buddy: "They just know how the social fabric works in the municipality." (coordinator 11)

Second, buddies are more likely to take on a conduit brokerage role when the coordinator of the buddy programme assumes a more restrained role (brief iungens). When activities within the buddy programme are not clearly defined by the coordinator, it is common for buddies to assume responsibilities that extend beyond the actual task description of the buddy programme, such as providing information in terms of housing, job search, and finances. About half of the buddies suggest that this has shifted the focus from social networking to offering far-reaching informational support to newcomers, thus jeopardizing the original objective. Fulfilling this informational need of newcomers was often perceived by buddies as more urgent than focusing on the relational aspect.

3.1.2. Iungens brokerage role

As discussed earlier, tertius iungens brokerage involves the broker's introduction or facilitation of two other parties (Obstfeld et al., 2014). We find that some buddies assume this role by introducing the newcomer to their own social network, by connecting newcomers with family members, friends, neighbours or other acquaintances, inviting them into their homes, etc.

For me, it was about opening doors and showing possibilities. For example, I know she [the newcomer] used to play badminton. So I put her in touch with a friend who is very much into badminton so they could play together. (buddy 10)

One buddy (18) indicates that, for practical reasons, he integrates the newcomer into his social life: "I tried to integrate him [the newcomer into his own circle of friends], because if that was an extra 'task' that came with it [seeing him one-to-one], it would not have been doable for me." Various buddies emphasise the importance of spontaneity in this type of brokerage. They do want to introduce the newcomer into their network, but only if this feels 'organic' and not forced. Conversely, we find that buddies, although matched with a single person, frequently establish connections with the newcomer's family and, in some cases, offer them assistance. Apart from the newcomer's family, the buddies indicated limited interaction, if any, with other individuals of migration backgrounds. Therefore, we find that network expansion often occurs unilaterally and buddies' social networks do not diversify. The ethno-cultural diversification envisaged by the renewed Flemish integration policy evidently applies solely to the newcomer's network and not that of the buddy.

Nevertheless, there are three important observations which complicate tertius iungens behaviour of buddies. First, our findings indicate that not every buddy has a social network to introduce the newcomer to. Some are even lonely and therefore participate as volunteers to meet new people. This is illustrated by buddy 20: "I don't see many people myself, so how would I introduce the newcomer to new people?"

Second, about six respondents indicate that they see a limited role for buddies in the ethnic diversification of social networks. According to them, newcomers eventually fall back on their own ethnic community. Newcomers with children, they said, have more opportunities to build a network since there are more points of contact, such as school and play groups. Having children requires local practical support and enables to access particular types of localized networks (Ryan et al., 2008).

Last, although it is an objective of buddy programmes in this study, we find that some buddies did not perceive network expansion as a task or were not even aware that this is an objective of the programme, resulting in their limited efforts to connect newcomers with third parties. These three findings demonstrate that buddies do not fulfil, or only to a limited extent, a iungens brokerage role.

3.1.3. Tertius gaudens

The interviews show that not every buddy allows the newcomer to enter their private sphere. Some explicitly stated that they do not want to share personal matters with the newcomer nor build an intimate relationship. Coordinators therefore noted that introducing newcomers to buddies' social networks cannot be expected from these volunteers. "I don't want too much mixing. That's why I deliberately don't introduce the newcomer to my network. I need my privacy." (buddy 5)

Sometimes the buddy's social network is not open to meeting the newcomer. Several volunteers testified about distrust among their friends and family regarding migration and ethnic-cultural diversity and therefore do not introduce the newcomer. One buddy even stated that she did not tell her peers that she was engaging in volunteering for newcomers, assuming they would disapprove of it. This finding is supported by the constrict theory, positing that increased diversity may result in people less trusting of other ethnic groups (Putnam, 2007). The following quote indicates fear in the buddy's social circle about the influx of migrants, holding her back from bringing the newcomer she was matched with: "You know, I have a lot of friends, but in that area there is a lot of restriction in the circle of friends. The distrust of: "There are more and more of them [migrants] coming." (buddy 4) The deliberate exclusion of newcomers from the buddies' social network shows that buddies assume the role of a *tertius gaudens* broker, maintaining unfamiliarity between parties in the absence of similarities (Obstfeld et al, 2014; Simmel, 1950). In this respect, buddies operate as gatekeepers of their social network. The *tertius gaudens* role of buddies highlights two underlying dynamics.

First, we find that a certain segment of the host population is shielded from the newcomer by the buddy. Furthermore, we observe that buddies often make the decision of separation in the newcomer's place, indicating a specific form of paternalism. For example, buddy 8 didn't introduce the newcomer to his friends to avoid an uncomfortable situation due to a language barrier, without consulting the newcomer. Second, despite implications from the Flemish integration policy, it is important to note that the settled population is not homogeneous. The reluctance within the social circles of buddies to engage with the newcomer suggests that only a segment of the host society is receptive to integrating into newcomers' social networks. This is also reflected in a selection effect: buddy programmes often attract volunteers who are already (somewhat) open to ethnic diversity, and thus only reach a part of the host population.

3.2. Brokerage behaviour of coordinators: *Tertius iungens*

When examining the brokerage role of coordinators, we observe strong differences in the intensity or relative effort of brokerage behaviour (Obstfeld et al., 2014). We can distinguish between, on the one hand, brief *iungens*, where the role as coordinator is rather limited, temporary, or distant, and sustained *iungens* on the other, where the facilitation of the coordinator is ongoing (Obstfeld, 2005).

3.2.1. Brief

This more distant form of follow-up is typically forced because of limited resources and time available to coordinators (Crijns & De Cuyper, 2022). In a brief *iungens* role, brokerage is limited to matching and possibly an introduction of the dyad. The coordinator matches buddy and newcomer, often based on gut feeling, but also on common interests, geographical location (i.e. ideally, the dyad lives in the same city or municipality), and participants' preferences. It should be noted that three coordinators indicated that they match the next available volunteer with a newcomer, without too much consideration of specific criteria, due to a lack of time. Subsequently, the coordinator can facilitate their initial introduction during a preliminary meeting, typically arranging their subsequent appointments. However, this meeting does not always take place. Two coordinators facilitated solely the exchange of phone numbers between the parties, refraining from further intervention under the assumption that their direct communication would suffice. After getting acquainted, the coordinator

lets the dyad shape their relationship largely on their own and only seldom or never intervenes. In other words, a coordinative role diminishes in importance over time or is simply not offered (Obstfeld et al., 2014). The following quote is from a coordinator who moved into the background after the dyad's introduction:

Then I'll let it go. You guys can agree. You can communicate by yourselves. Decide for yourselves what you are going to do, send me a picture every now and then, and let me know how it has been. Then I say: 'OK, we'll see each other again in three months.' (coordinator 11)

The restrained role of coordinators has important implications for broadening the social networks of newcomers and raises some significant issues. Although networking is an objective of the intervention, some coordinators stated that they do not know whether they effectively achieve network expansion for newcomers with the buddy programme, which reveals a limited understanding of the actual effects of their brokerage role. Another reason for coordinators' limited involvement is that network building is often not the primary objective of the buddy programme, with the focus instead being on practising the majority language and familiarising newcomers with the city or municipality. The 'official' objective of network expansion pursued by the Flemish government thus risks to become subordinate. Nevertheless, the interviews with the buddies show that they did not necessarily perceive the brief iungens role of coordinators as negative. For the majority of the buddies interviewed, knowing that there is someone they can turn to, is enough. Additionally, several volunteers stated that they appreciate the autonomy they were given. Only one buddy complained of being on her own and of having figured out for herself which services she and the newcomer could turn to for certain questions.

3.2.2. Sustained

When coordinators have more time and resources at their disposal (e.g. when coordinating the buddy programme is a full-time job), they are more inclined to take on a sustained brokerage role. In a sustained iungens role, several coordinators claim that they first meet potential buddies and newcomers separately before bringing them together. In these meetings, expectations regarding the programme are probed. Moreover, the coordinator polls whether the match in mind is the right one. This might be understood as an expression of the double interact referring to the act-response-adjustment interactions between parties (Obstfeld et al., 2014; Weick, 1979). These double interacts lay the foundation for the actual matching, where the coordinator assumes a sustained tertius iungens role.

In sustained activity, coordinators continue to facilitate the relationship between the buddy and the newcomer after their introduction. They constantly monitor the relationship between dyad members by contacting them regularly to assess how the relationship develops. In case of difficulties, they indicated to intervene. Sustained coordinators also check whether the contact frequency is sufficiently high. To achieve integration outcomes, these coordinators claimed that it is necessary for the dyad to meet on a regular basis. In addition, some coordinators reported suggesting activities to dyads, such as visiting the library or theatre. Furthermore, training sessions, group activities, and interventions were organised, providing opportunities for dyads to share their experiences with the programme.

These sessions also served as evaluation platforms for coordinators to gain insight into the progress of outcomes. Group activities, facilitating interaction among different dyads, were highly appreciated by the buddies. These activities fostered discussions on shared challenges and promoted collective problem-solving. Some buddies also indicated that they have met up with other dyads afterwards.

You see that a lot comes up during these intervision sessions, because they hear things from others. And you see that buddies are relieved like: 'I'm not the only one who comes across that' or 'It's normal that I sometimes struggle with that'. (coordinator 13)

These findings suggest that a sustained iungens role of coordinators can positively impact networking of newcomers, as there is a greater focus on thoughtful matching, regular evaluation of the dyadic relationship, and more guidance in general, ensuring the long-term commitment of buddies, thus increasing the chances of lasting relationships (Behnia, 2007).

3.3. Network agency

In the majority of traditional sociological research on networks, individual agency is absent (Tasselli & Kilduff, 2021). Nevertheless, individual attributes of the target group, here immigrant newcomers, cannot be overlooked as they were found to significantly impact brokerage behaviour. We can distinguish between individual volition on the one hand and complex life circumstances on the other.

First, in the interviews different buddies stated that, for various reasons, not every newcomer wishes to interact with other people besides the buddy or to broaden their social network in the host country. For example, some primarily wish to make use of the buddy programme to practice the majority language or to receive practical support, such as help with administration and the search for housing. "The newcomer I was matched with wanted to be able to speak Dutch as soon as possible to get his degree, so he was little interested in those informal contacts." (buddy 18) Other newcomers are considering returning to their country of origin one day. A key finding here is that many buddies indicated that the assumption that newcomers entering a buddy programme have no or a limited social network is not always true. Some newcomers already have a network in the host society, often consisting of people from their ethnic community. This refutes the portrayal of newcomers as "passive" and shows that they do take initiative in building social networks in the established society (Lamba & Krahn, 2003). Nevertheless, ethnically homogeneous networks are being devalued by renewed integration policies (Vlaamse Regering, 2020). In addition, the roles of buddies are largely responsive to needs. Consequently, if the newcomer does not want to establish new social relationships with the host population, the buddy becomes limited in engaging in a tertius iungens broker role, thus in introducing the newcomer to other parties. Additionally, akin to buddies, not all newcomers desire intensive contact, resulting in weak ties with these volunteers.

Second, the living conditions of newly arrived migrants may complicate brokerage behaviour by volunteer buddies. The interviews show that post-migration stressors, such as stress about housing and job search and mental health problems (e.g. refugee trauma), in some cases dominate the dyadic relationship (Gower et al., 2022). Likewise, limited financial resources would reinforce the social isolation of newcomers. Several buddies also mention a lack of time among newcomers who are often forced to combine a job with an integration course and childcare. According to five respondents, some

newcomers have enough on their plate and do not prioritise networking with the host population, which impedes iungens activity of buddies. Simultaneously, the pressing demand of newcomers for practical assistance during their initial integration period in the host country promotes conduit brokerage, wherein buddies inform newcomers about various resources. Moreover, the need for practical support is often perceived by buddies as more urgent than establishing informal contacts or forging friendships. Thus, transferring information (conduit) becomes more relevant in complex life circumstances than establishing connections with the established population (iungens), as illustrated by the following quote: "It turned into a pretty functional affair, where I did some things for him like translating documents and informing him about schools, but there wasn't really a friendship." (buddy 12) The aforementioned highlights the impact of the agency of newcomers on brokerage in buddy programmes.

4. Discussion and conclusion

With this study, we contribute to the literature on buddy- and more specifically befriending programmes for newcomers. We draw on brokerage theory to understand social networking of newcomers within the context of the renewed Flemish Integration Decree. Therefore, we focus on brokerage behaviour of volunteer buddies and coordinators of buddy programmes.

Our study shows that buddies perform their brokerage role according to three strategic orientations towards brokerage (conduit, tertius iungens, and gaudens), with especially iungens activity revealing valuable networking opportunities for newcomers (Obstfeld et al., 2014). We find a strong variation in brokerage behaviour shown by these volunteers, for which we distinguish three possible explanations. One explanation relates to the buddy's profile. A conduit role, for instance, presupposes buddies with extensive knowledge of institutions and services in order to inform newcomers, while a tertius iungens role presupposes buddies with a well-established social network to introduce the newcomer in. In a tertius gaudens role, buddies face distrust within their social network, leading them to operate as gatekeepers to deliberately separate newcomers from host society members. Another explanation for this wide variation in brokerage behaviour is the impact of the coordinator's brokerage behaviour on that of the buddy. Our research demonstrates that when coordinators take on a brief tertius iungens role, the focus of buddies may shift from networking to providing far-reaching informational support (conduit). Sustained coordinators on the other hand, may exert greater influence on how these dyadic relationships develop, thus positively influencing network expansion. A last explanation includes the agency of newcomers, which is found to play a critical role in what orientation towards brokerage buddies adopt. Some newcomers do not wish to expand their social networks in the host society, complicating tertius iungens behaviour by buddies. Moreover, we find that complex life circumstances of newcomers foster a conduit broker role of buddies.

The wide variation in broker behaviour shows that networking through volunteers cannot be enforced. This is due to the fact that buddy programmes for newcomers occur partially within the realm of the private sphere (Raithelhuber, 2023). Volunteer buddies hold a position of power in deciding whether or not to facilitate the networking of newcomers. Therefore, networking seems dependent on their goodwill, indicating an asymmetry in the relationship with the newcomer. Moreover, we find that an ethno-cultural diversification solely applies to the newcomer's social network and not to that of the buddy, suggesting that networking in buddy programmes is one-way only, as implied by previous

research (Mahieu et al., 2019). This implies that the social network of some newcomers in the host society, mostly consisting of individuals from their own ethnic community, is not perceived as valuable as the social capital offered by the volunteers. This entails the risk that status inequalities and relationships of dependence between newcomers and buddies are rather reproduced in buddy programmes than effectively transformed (Stock, 2019). Buddy programmes thus seem to lead to mixed results for network expansion for newcomers. This is in line with previous research that states that the expectation of network brokering is not automatically realised (De Cuyper & Vandermeerschen, 2018; Mahieu et al., 2019; Muijres & Aarts, 2011). While some dyads turn into close relationships (strong ties) and connect with third parties, for others the contact remained rather superficial or instrumental (weak ties). This is not necessarily disadvantageous, as within the context of migrant integration, weak ties are recognized as important resources for facilitating mobility opportunities (Granovetter, 1973). These variations are consistent with earlier studies showing that these organized relationships vary considerably (Brinker, 2021).

Our findings have clear implications for the renewed Flemish Integration Decree. The underlying assumption of implementing buddy programmes as a policy instrument for migrant integration is the belief that newcomers will build a social network through one-to-one interactions with their buddy. A certain degree of transitivity is taken for granted, with newcomers connected to their buddies' connections (Holland & Leinhardt, 1971). However, our study shows that this policy assumption takes too little account of the agency of those involved. Complex life circumstance revealed that the actual needs of newcomers may diverge from the primary objective of expanding networks with the host population within buddy programmes, thus causing this objective to become secondary. Some buddies, on the other hand, were not willing to introduce newcomers into their social networks, assuming a *tertius gaudens* role. We argue that the context is agentic and determines which broker orientations participants of a buddy programme adopt (Stokes et al., 2021). As a result, social connections for newcomers with individuals other than their buddy resulted from the buddy programme selectively. This allows us to conclude that the Flemish integration policy's assumption, that a buddy automatically results in an expanded social network for the newcomer, is incorrect. The paper concludes that, despite the agency of stakeholders significantly impacting brokerage behaviour, buddy programmes may positively stimulate newcomers' social connectedness, as the support provided by buddies can take many different forms. Since network expansion is not achieved automatically, the paper argues that a gain can be made by making stakeholders explicitly aware of their role as intermediaries (De Cuyper & Vandermeerschen, 2018).

In the course of conducting this research, some limitations became apparent. First, given the temporary involvement of these volunteers, it remains unclear what the long-term impact of participation in buddy programmes is on network opportunities for newly arrived migrants (Gower et al., 2022). It remains to be seen how social networks of newcomers develop. Over time some will grow and diversify, while others stay within their ethnic-specific network. Second, the mere focus in this paper on the social capital provided by local volunteers assuming the role of buddy, fails to capture the importance of the spatial dispersion of migrants' social networks (Ryan et al., 2008). Third, it should be noted that, in practice, different orientations towards brokerage are intertwined and behaviours of buddies and coordinators are not necessarily straightforwardly classifiable into these roles. Further research on the impact of buddy programmes on the social network expansion

of newcomers should pay more attention to social ties in spatial and temporal terms (Ryan et al., 2008). Moreover, future research could further address asymmetries between buddies and newcomers, as the intervention seems prone to reproduce power imbalances (Raithelhuber, 2023). Last, interviewing newcomers is imperative to gain more insights into networking outcomes within the context of buddy programmes.

Chapter 4: (Em)powering newcomers? Power asymmetries and negotiations between newly arrived migrants and volunteers within buddy programmes

Publication status: Accepted with minor amendments, 15/09/2024, International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring

Abstract

Research on buddy programmes for newly arrived migrants focuses predominantly on integration outcomes. However, the intervention is also prone to reproducing power imbalances. This qualitative study investigates how power asymmetries between volunteers (buddies) and immigrant newcomers are characterized. We draw on interview data to scrutinize how power is reproduced and negotiated in the dyadic relationships within buddy programmes. We suggest that both practices of Othering and De-othering take place, resulting in mixed networking outcomes for newcomers in the host society. The findings provide important insights for policy and practice, employing buddy programmes as a tool for fostering migrant integration.

Keywords: buddy programmes, integration, social networks, Othering, power asymmetries

Introduction

This paper aims to delve deeper into the power relationships between volunteers (buddies) and newcomers within buddy programmes. Over the past decades, buddy programmes have increased enormously across Europe and are becoming part of welfare policies (Raithelhuber, 2023). The intervention has been used in various forms and for a variety of groups, such as youth, the elderly, and people with mental health problems, with the objective of reducing their social isolation and improving their quality of life (Behnia, 2007). In the wake of the 2015 European refugee crisis, these programmes gained popularity as a promising tool to meet the needs of an increasing number of asylum seekers (Mahieu & Van Caudenberg, 2020). Within the context of migrant integration, buddy programmes, commonly referred to as (social) mentoring programmes, essentially involve a person from the host society providing guidance and support to a newcomer, often for a limited time, to facilitate the latter's integration and social participation (De Cuyper & Crijns, 2023, p.23). Buddy programmes differ from other volunteer initiatives for newcomers by the personalised form of long-term informal social support between two individuals, often taking place within the private sphere (Stock, 2019). These buddies can provide newcomers with emotional, instrumental, and informational support. Research shows a beneficial impact on their well-being, language skills, and access to institutions and services (Behnia, 2007; Raithelhuber, 2021).

Despite buddy programmes for newcomers increasingly becoming institutionalised, research on the topic is still lacking for two reasons (De Cuyper & Crijns, 2023). First, there is a particular lack of research on buddy programmes for newcomers operating on the 'befriending' principle. In this type of buddy programme, a friendship-like relationship serves as a central source of support (whereas mentoring focuses on achieving pre-determined goals), and the defining elements of a buddy relationship and the informal social support it entails cannot be understood following a simple input/output logic. In the case of mentoring, the achievement or non-achievement of an objective can be evaluated more easily (Balaam, 2015; Behnia, 2007; Raithelhuber, 2021). Knowledge on buddy programmes, which incorporate befriending, is predominantly based on the literature on more established forms of mentoring, such as youth mentoring (Raithelhuber, 2021), mentoring to work (Neuwirth & Wahl, 2017), and academic mentoring (Harris & Ogbonna, 2023). Furthermore, buddy practices in Europe have to rely primarily on mentoring research from the U.S., that is heavily guided by quantitative measurements and a psychological approach (Raithelhuber, 2023). Second, studies on buddy programmes for newcomers have highlighted primarily the impact of the intervention on integration outcomes for newcomers (Raithelhuber, 2021; Stock, 2019; Vescan et al., 2023). However, there is limited research on how interpersonal relationships between buddies and newcomers are characterised in terms of power dynamics. Despite buddy programmes categorising newcomers as an out-group, implying intrinsic power imbalances and inequalities, insufficient attention has been devoted to the exacerbation of these dynamics due to differences in gender, class, and age between volunteers and newcomers (Raithelhuber, 2023; Stock, 2019; Vescan et al., 2023).

The current study seeks to fill the aforementioned literature gaps by highlighting the perspectives and lived experiences of volunteers and newcomers who have participated in buddy- and, more specifically, befriending programmes that focus on strengthening the social networks of newcomers. More specifically, we explore how these interpersonal relationships are characterized in terms of

power asymmetries and how these asymmetries are negotiated between the two involved individuals. Stock (2019) indicates that, rather than increasing newcomers' participation and autonomy in society, buddy programmes risk reinforcing hierarchical relationships of dependence, as the intervention is based on unequal power relations between 'helpers', i.e. buddies, and newcomers who are to be 'helped'. Consequently, these unequal power relationships may undermine the objective of the intervention, namely strengthening newcomers' position in society. For that reason, Raithelhuber (2023) suggests paying more attention to power imbalances and social inequalities in buddy programmes for individuals lacking social inclusion. Therefore, this study aims to adopt a critical perspective that extends beyond the typical focus in studies of buddy programmes on effects or outcomes and examines power dynamics in negotiation (Raithelhuber, 2023). The research question is thus twofold:

- Which power dynamics emerge in the interpersonal relationships between buddies and newcomers in buddy programmes?
- What strategies do these two individuals employ to negotiate these power asymmetries?

In order to answer these questions, the study presents arguments based on data drawn from 40 interviews with buddies and newcomers in Flanders, the northern region of Belgium. The structure of the article is as follows. The next section presents the theoretical framework (1), which discusses interpersonal relationships between buddies and newcomers, reciprocity and power asymmetries in buddy programmes, and (de-)Othering in migrant integration. Subsequently, I describe the methodology (2) adopted to conduct the research. Then, I present our case study, namely buddy programmes within the context of the Flemish Integration Decree. In section 3, I present the findings, which discuss how power is reflected in the dyadic relationship and the strategies employed by dyads to address these power asymmetries, drawing on (De-)Othering theory. The paper ends with concluding remarks on power in interpersonal relationships between volunteers and newcomers in buddy programmes and implications for future research.

1. Theoretical framework

This paper examines how power dynamics are reflected and negotiated in the relationship between buddies and newcomers.

1.1. Interpersonal relationships in buddy programmes

A buddy relationship is initially facilitated by a professional who introduces two individuals previously unknown to each other, in this case a volunteer assuming the role of buddy and a newcomer (Balaam, 2015, p. 29). Since this interpersonal relationship is considered the defining element of a buddy programme, it is worth discussing how this relationship is understood in literature (Raithelhuber, 2023).

Through goal-setting, the organisation of the buddy programme establishes agreements regarding the nature of the relationship between buddies and newcomers (Raithelhuber, 2023). In this paper, we scrutinize buddy programmes with the objective of broadening the newcomer's social network,

operating on the befriending principle. Here, the nature of the relationship is a one-to-one friend-like tie, which often unfolds over a longer period of time (Balaam, 2015). Nevertheless, it should be emphasised that, in this context, the relationship between the buddy and the newcomer differs from a friendship. First of all, unlike a friendship, the relationship is not a private affair, as it is initiated by an external organisation. In addition, a coordinator monitors the relationship by contacting the dyad regularly. Second, the organisation places limitations on the relationship, such as intended tasks of the buddy and contact frequency. Last, a third party (a coordinator) is responsible for matching the dyad. Buddies and newcomers did not choose each other spontaneously, as would typically occur in a friendship (Balaam, 2015).

This friend-like relationship in buddy programmes allows the dyad to develop an emotional connection and to emotionally support each other (Balaam, 2015). Previous research has suggested that a close interpersonal bond, characterized by relational processes of empathy, trust, and mutuality, between dyad members is decisive for the success of the intervention (Lester et al., 2019). In practice, however, participants find it unclear what is expected of them in the buddy programme. Activities are rarely clearly defined, leading buddies to adapt their roles to the newcomer's situation at hand, allowing the focus to shift from originally emotional to more instrumental forms of support, such as translations, assistance with housing and employment search, and instruction in the majority language (Stock, 2019; Vescan et al., 2023). Vescan et al. (2023) suggest that buddies primarily focus on providing newcomers with informational, practical, and material support upon their initial arrival in the host country, leaving little opportunity for the development of a deeper emotional connection. Moreover, previous research has demonstrated that only a small number of dyads progress into long-lasting friendships, with many interactions between buddies and newcomers remaining superficial (Mahieu & Van Caudenberg, 2020). Consequently, the assurance of developing deep personal relationships within buddy programmes based on the concept of befriending is not necessarily guaranteed. Furthermore, dyad members may perceive and interpret relationships differently. Therefore, it can be concluded that the social interactions within dyadic relationships in buddy programmes are inherently unpredictable (Vescan et al., 2023).

1.2. Reciprocity and (power) asymmetries in relationships between buddies and newcomers

Migrant integration is predominantly considered as a two-way process, since the host society does not remain unaffected (Penninx & Van Garcés-Masareñas, 2016). In buddy programmes, newcomers and established members of the host society have been matched, creating opportunities for mutual learning (Mahieu & Van Caudenberg, 2020). In this regard, a buddy relationship is typically defined as reciprocal in nature (De Cuyper et al., 2019). This means that the buddy programme can also be beneficial for volunteer buddies, by introducing them to foreign languages and cultures, reducing feelings of loneliness, and improving perceptions of self-confidence (Stock, 2019; Van Robaeys & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016). Moreover, in contrast to related concepts such as mentoring and coaching, the characteristics of interactions in befriending programmes involve a negotiation of power and agency in the dyadic relationship. These negotiations include the frequency of contact, the duration of the buddy programme, and the nature of the relationship (Balaam, 2015). However,

additional aspects of the relationship between buddies and newcomers could lead to substantial asymmetries between them in favour of the buddy (De Cuyper et al., 2019).

First, buddies are generally individuals with more power and resources due to their position or experience (Raithelhuber, 2023). More specifically, the intervention is built on the assumption that because of their established status of legal citizens, these volunteers have privileged access to relevant cultural, economic, or social capital required to accelerate the integration of migrants into society, implying intrinsic power imbalances and inequality in the buddy relationship (Stock, 2019, p.128, p.133). For instance, the cultural capital offered by newcomers in buddy programmes is often considered less valuable than that provided by volunteers teaching host society values and norms (Stock, 2019). Additionally, newcomers are often unable to return tangible and informational support received from their buddies, which profoundly unbalances the relationship (Vescan et al., 2023).

Second, while both parties can benefit from the relationship, the newcomer's needs are the main focus of the programme. Research has shown that buddies offer more support to newcomers than vice versa (Mahieu & Van Caudenberg, 2020). This asymmetrical dynamic distinguishes buddy programmes based on befriending, where one party seeks help and the other offers it, from friendships where both parties are more likely to be on equal footing (Balaam, 2015; Behnia, 2007). Consequently, they engage in a care logic, which risks reinforcing rather than removing power inequalities within the dyad (Stock, 2019). Following Steel, Lämsä and Jyrkinen (2019), a support paradox may arise in buddy programmes, where the newcomer risks assuming a passive position due to the direction of the buddy. This, in turn, emphasises the hierarchical relationship within the dyad, which may have a constraining effect on newcomers in the long term.

Last, the broader social context in which buddy programmes take place cannot be overlooked when discussing asymmetries in buddy relationships. The intervention frequently occurs against a backdrop of cuts in public spending and growing inequality (Raithelhuber, 2023). In addition, increasingly restrictive migration and asylum policies in Europe challenge ideas of who deserves to be included in society. This rather hostile environment prevents newcomers from occupying powerful social positions from which to claim more rights (Stock, 2019). Consequently, this political, social, and economic context may influence social dynamics within buddy programmes, as the reaction to newcomers of the host society is far more decisive for integration outcomes than newcomers themselves are (Penninx & Garcés-Mascreñas, 2016). Literature on academic mentoring of ethnic minorities, for example, attributes mentees' dissatisfaction with the mentoring programme to the unfavourable context of racial discrimination in which they find themselves (Harris & Ogbonna, 2023). Gaps in the integration system on the other hand, cause volunteer buddies to take over tasks from social workers, further reinforcing the newcomer's dependency (Vescan et al., 2023).

In sum, although reciprocity is considered an important condition of a quality supportive buddy relationship, whatever degree of reciprocity is to be found in buddy relations, it is seldom reflecting more or less equal positions. This is because the positions from which buddies and newcomers engage in the relationship are decisively unequal (De Cuyper et al., 2019; Vescan et al., 2023).

1.3. Buddy programmes as (De-)Othering practices

Buddy programmes for newcomers are based on an explicit as well as an implicit differentiation process between the in-group (“us, host society members”) and the out-group (“them, newcomers”) (Paré, 2022). Despite the good intentions of buddy programmes to facilitate the integration of newly arrived migrants, the relationships between buddies and newcomers mobilise this binary opposition. This may trigger processes of Othering of migrants and thus bring in elements of subordination and hierarchy in buddy relationships, in which buddies as an in-group are located above newcomers as an out-group (Kutsenko et al., 2020). This would be especially the case if stereotypes rooted in the European colonial past, orientalist narratives, and growing Islamophobia, as a result of the most recent refugee crisis, are mobilized in buddy relationships (Rashid & Cepeda-García, 2021). A cognitive and discursive process of Othering categorizes newcomers based on perceived differences in ethnicity, language, religion, nationality, and socio-economic background as the Other in relation to the majority population, here volunteer buddies (Paré, 2022). The us versus them categorisation thus risks being employed by the host society to maintain power and control over migrants who are to be helped (Rashid & Cepeda-García, 2021). Foucault (1980) conceptualizes power as a multifaceted, relational phenomenon, extending beyond traditional notions of domination to encompass a complex interplay of social relations, institutions, and discourses. This conceptualisation is particularly relevant in the context of migrant integration, where the distinction between in- and out-group members and their accompanying power dynamics are embedded in institutions, migrant integration policies, and discourses, resulting in the exclusion and devaluation of the out-group, such as subtle biases and discriminatory behaviour towards newcomers (Paré, 2022, p. 44).

Simultaneously, we argue that buddy programmes can serve as a “De-othering” practice by empowering newcomers and/or eliminating (partially or wholly) significant differences between them as an out-group and the host population as an in-group, for instance, by overcoming language barriers, promoting ethno-cultural diversification of social networks, and fostering intercultural exchange (Chimakonam, 2020). Essential characteristics of De-othering practices involve the deconstruction of the binary opposition in-group/out-group, the involvement of migrants into social life of the host country on equal terms, and the use of discourses of involvement of migrants in the receiving society (Kutsenko et al, 2020). Newcomers opting to engage in a buddy programme can be perceived as rejecting their status as the Other (Jensen, 2011, p.73). They attempt to change their status by integrating into the host society and by gaining social, economic, and cultural capital through their buddies (Kutsenko et al., 2020). The refusal of a negative categorization imposed by others demonstrates that Othering is not a straightforward process in which newcomers are subordinated. The agency of newcomers in buddy programmes is at play from which they claim normality (Jensen, 2011).

2. Data and Methodology

This qualitative study investigates relationships of power between volunteers and newcomers within buddy programmes.

2.1. Case selection

We employed purposive sampling to select participants from buddy programmes, aiming to gain deeper insights into their social interactions (Palinkas et al., 2015). Two participant groups were included: (a) volunteers who assumed the role of buddies (N=25), and (b) recently arrived newcomers (N=15) who participated in a buddy programme. Respondents participated in buddy programmes that predominantly focus on providing relational (e.g. strengthening the social networks of newcomers) rather than instrumental support. Buddy programmes that, for example, exclusively focus on finding housing or employment for newcomers were thus not included in our sample. The selected buddy programmes took place both in cities and smaller municipalities, although the newcomers interviewed tended to be mainly from cities.

On the one hand, interviews were conducted with volunteers (N=25) committed to taking on the role of buddy. Buddies are established members of the host community, meaning that they have been living in the host country for a long time and are proficient in the majority language. They commit to offering guidance to a newcomer for a certain period (e.g. six months). These volunteers were often female (N=16), retired (allowing them to have sufficient time), and active in various voluntary initiatives.

On the other hand, newcomer immigrants (N=15) who participated in a buddy programme were interviewed. This participant group was highly diverse with newcomers coming from Indonesia, Iran, Poland, Syria, Guinea, Morocco, Ukraine, Albania, Cameroon, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Turkey. The majority was male (N=9) and had resided in Belgium for an average of three years. Our sample included solely adult newcomers, the majority of whom were following the Flemish government's civic integration programme. Some were required to follow an integration programme including the participation in a buddy programme, while for others participation in the buddy programme was completely optional.

2.2. Data collection and analysis

In order to explore the interpersonal relationships between newcomers and buddies in terms of power dynamics, semi-structured in-depth interviews (N=40) were conducted between June 2022 and November 2023. The interviews lasted between 40 and 86 minutes. All interviews with the volunteers (N=25) were conducted in Dutch, while in the case of newcomers (N=15) the interviews were also conducted in English or French, depending on the respondent's preference. Nevertheless, the majority of newcomers preferred Dutch, as they perceived the interview as an opportunity to practise their language skills. In one case, a relative of the newcomer acted as a translator. The interviews took place in a location chosen by the respondent, this could be his or her home, but also a bar or the library. During the interviews, we used topic-lists to guide the conversations. The topic-lists included subjects such as motivations to participate in the buddy programme, the matching process, contact frequency, strength of ties, trust, equivalence, network expansion, types of support provided or received, and guidance from the organisation. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. In our analysis, we adopted an inductive approach to our research question, examining what kind of social relationships dyads participating in a buddy programme develop and what role power plays in them. In addition, we investigated the strategies employed by buddies and newcomers to negotiate these power asymmetries.

2.3. Ethical aspects

The study followed the ethical guidelines of the Ethics Committee for the Social Sciences and Humanities (EA SHW) of the University of Antwerp (SHW_21_150). All participants were informed about the voluntary character of the interviews, their right to withdraw from the study, the broader objectives of the research, and data governance. Volunteer buddies gave both their written and verbal consent for an audio-recorded interview. However, newcomers were solely requested to provide verbal consent, as the requirement of a written statement might dissuade them. In some cultures, asking for a signature may indicate a lack of trust (Cocanour, 2017). Moreover, written consent can be administratively burdensome for someone with a limited command of the majority language. In consideration of ethical concerns, the interviews with the newcomers did not include questions about their experiences in their home country and their journey to Belgium. To gain confidentiality, identifiable information of all participants (e.g. names and places) was anonymised in the data analysis process.

2.4. Case study: The Flemish Integration Decree

While emerging from civic initiatives, buddy programmes are becoming increasingly institutionalised in several European countries, as structures and schemes are being developed (De Cuyper & Crijns, 2023; Raithelhuber, 2023). This is also the case in the Northern region of Belgium, where the intervention recently became a formal and mandatory part of integration policies. Newly arrived migrants in Flanders, and more specifically third-country nationals including refugees, are required to adhere to the civic integration programme, consisting of a Dutch language course, a social orientation course, and the registration with the Public Employment Service of Flanders (VDAB). Since the 1st of January 2023, a 'participation programme' has been added to the civic integration programme with the objective of expanding newcomers' social networks in the receiving society. This participation programme allows newcomers to choose between a buddy programme, a work placement in an organization or company, volunteering, or an alternative. Newcomers, who are not working, studying, or not already voluntarily following the civic integration programme, must participate in a participation programme for at least 40 hours. Furthermore, they must demonstrate their efforts through documentation in order to receive an integration certificate (Vescan et al., 2023).

3. Findings

This paper focuses on power asymmetries and negotiations in dyadic relationships within buddy programmes for newcomers. First, we draw on Othering theory to elucidate the power asymmetries between buddies and newcomers. Next, we discuss the strategies employed by dyads to address these asymmetries.

3.1. Othering practices through emphasizing differences

Most respondents do acknowledge the presence of major differences in terms of ethnicity, language, legal status, and financial resources, which place the buddy in a stronger position. In this regard, one buddy claimed: "I am the rich Fleming and he is the poor Ukrainian, so then there is inevitably an

inequality.” In the following sections, we will discuss the asymmetries and Othering practices that proved most relevant to the relationship between buddies and newcomers.

3.1.1. Emotional detachment

Notwithstanding their intention to support newcomers, some buddies deliberately avoid to establish an intimate relationship with the newcomer. The most cited reasons are that they already have a social network of their own or that differences in age, language, and ethnic-cultural background are perceived to be too great to build an intimate relationship. This is illustrated by the following quote from a buddy who primarily focused on explaining career opportunities, not interested in deepening his relationship with the newcomer: “He has my children's age, even a bit younger. I have no desire to have some kind of very personal contact with him.” The newcomers interviewed seemed to have less of a problem with closeness in these interpersonal relationships. However, the withdrawn attitude of buddies does not escape the newcomers involved, as illustrated by the following quote from a newcomer who reported that the interactions with his buddy remained rather superficial, despite the fact that he was looking for a deeper connection.

For example, I don't even know her address. [...] It didn't go into depth. I was interested in a friendship and doing activities together. But there was a time of absence on her part. She was busy. She was on holiday. I couldn't see her for two or three months.

The aforementioned confirms that, while newcomers participating in buddy programmes are expected to be vulnerable by sharing personal information and discussing and tackling difficulties experienced in the host society, this expectation of emotional commitment does not exist for buddies. Volunteer buddies have discretion over the amount of time they allocate to the relationship. Furthermore, their privileged status as established citizens allows them to distance themselves from the newcomer's circumstances. About six buddies reported deliberately maintaining their distance by not sharing personal information about themselves. Other buddies guarded boundaries in their relationships with newcomers in order to protect themselves from emotional stress that may arise from the problems of the latter. The burden on the shoulders of the volunteer below, for example, led him to adopt a more detached position.

I have to admit: in the beginning, I really went to sleep with that family [of the newcomer] in my mind, with all their worries and all their questions. Now that's much less, but because you get into a caring relationship, you realise that you have to keep distance.

This exposes a significant power imbalance in the dyadic relationship as newcomers often do not have the choice to distance themselves from their (often pressing) issues, creating an unequal space in which buddies can ‘other’ newcomers with greater effects than the other way around. For many of these volunteers, this relationship appeared more of a balancing act between commitment and disengaging in the face of the newcomer's difficulties, revealing that detachment is not a linear process. Despite the befriending principle in the buddy programme, the demarcation between the migrant's world and his status as the 'Other' and the buddy's world sometimes hindered the development of an emotional connection in the dyad (Paré, 2022).

3.1.2. Financial differences

Financial differences between buddies and newcomers appeared to be a second important power asymmetry to affect social dynamics in the dyadic relationship.

First of all, the range of activities which the dyad can engage in together was considered limited. Buddies actively looked for cheaper alternatives and free activities to avoid burdening the newcomer or creating an uncomfortable situation. Three buddies indicated that they are hesitant to suggest activities, limiting meetings with the newcomer to walking or sitting outside on a bench, as the quote below illustrates:

We were not hanging out in bars or anything. We have never done that. I've never suggested that because they don't have much money. [...] I find that difficult. I don't want to impose any costs on him [the newcomer]... I think that he would be embarrassed if I always paid.

Despite the buddies' good intentions of addressing financial inequalities, this may have adverse effects on the newcomer's integration in the host society. Since the buddy does not do the activities that he normally would do, the relationship with the newcomer takes on a distinct character, potentially placing it outside mainstream social life. As a result, the social isolation of the newcomer may not be reduced. Moreover, the informational support provided by the buddy, such as information about the dentist or the bank, may be problematic, as the newcomer's financial resources to make effective use of these are often insufficient. For example, one buddy had to explain to the newcomer that he cannot borrow money to purchase a house. The buddy's informational role in combination with these financial constraints may further reinforce the migrant's experienced Otherness.

Second, the limited financial means of newcomers not only differentiate the dyadic relationship from other social interactions, but also exert pressure on the relationship. Some buddies expressed a sense of obligation to cover expenses for the newcomer due to their limited financial means, although one buddy explicitly refused to do so. Some buddies have even made significant financial contributions, such as assisting with the purchase of a car or a washing machine. One buddy asserts that a true friendship cannot exist because he constantly bears the financial burden for the newcomer. The following quote shows his frustration about the situation: "We do have a very good relationship but the financial difference makes it difficult sometimes. When we go for coffee, then it's me who pays, you know?" The financial contributions of the buddy can be understood as an Othering practice as it creates dependency on the side of the newcomer (Jensen, 2011). Consequently, the dominant position of buddies, because of their stronger economic capital, towards newcomers is further reinforced.

3.1.3. Social network gatekeeping

A key objective of buddy programmes as part of the fourth pillar of the civic integration programme is to expand the social networks of newcomers in the receiving society. These volunteers are typically presumed to facilitate interactions between newcomers and members of the host population. However, several buddies indicated that they consciously refrained from introducing the newcomer into their social networks. This decision stems partly from a desire, as suggested earlier in the section on emotional detachment, to maintain a clear boundary between their personal lives and their

involvement in the buddy programme. Additionally, some buddies cited the reluctance of their social circles to embrace migrants and ethnic-cultural diversity as a reason not to integrate the newcomers. One buddy states: "Those around me, my family, think I am crazy, that I would be better off doing other things with my time. So they are not open to meeting him [the newcomer]."

The perception of danger expressed within the buddy's social network additionally exacerbates the division between the in-group of host society members and the out-group of migrants (Rashid & Cepeda-García, 2021). While the buddy may serve as a vital intermediary between the newcomer and the host society, the decision to restrict the newcomer's interaction with members of the majority population may potentially deprive them of economic, social, and cultural capital necessary for integration into the host society. The segregation of social networks thus risks undermining the objectives of buddy programmes by excluding newcomers by the dominant group, in this case volunteer buddies (Paré, 2022). In other words, the us versus them categorisation as perceived by the buddy's social network may hinder achieving network expansion for newcomers through buddy programmes. One newcomer stated, although he was open to meeting other people: "My buddy never said: Come to my place for dinner. I don't know. [...] I didn't meet anyone else besides him."

3.2. Power negotiations and strategies

Most buddies indicated that some degree of equality in the relationship with the newcomer is of crucial importance to create a safe space. Specifically, we find that several buddies make a concerted effort to minimize any potential asymmetry in their relationship with the newcomer. In this regard, a buddy noted that: "If I positioned myself above the newcomer, that would not create trust. That doesn't work. I think that the newcomer would drop out very quickly." This aligns with prior research on befriending, which asserts that the negotiation of power is essential for fostering trust (Balaam, 2015, p. 29). Consequently, dyads employ strategies aiming to address or minimize power asymmetries. We distinguish between the following strategies: conceptualising the relationship as kinship or friendship (1), intercultural exchange (2), self-determination in informational support (3), and focusing on commonalities (4).

3.2.1. Conceptualising the relationship as kinship or friendship

Some newcomers and buddies strive to develop a family-like tie, with some dyads even keeping in touch for several years, beyond the official end of the buddy programme. Different buddies stated being like a 'grandmother' or 'parent' for the newcomer with whom they were matched, which may be also partly due to their often higher age. Several newcomers on the other hand, perceived their buddy as their 'brother' or 'sister', and in some cases, considered their buddy's family as their own. In this way, the binary opposition between host society members as an in-group and newcomers as an out-group may be blurred and partially dissolved in these established family-like relationships (Kutsenko et al., 2020). Moreover, perceiving the dyadic relationship as kinship may be a way to accept the care of the other and, in doing so, to deal with status inequalities, as illustrated by the following quotes (Stock, 2019): "Yes, we became good friends and this family [the family of the buddy] is like a second family to me, my Belgian family (Newcomer 7)." "You are a certain replacement for their own home, their own family. They [newcomers] try to compensate for the lack of family feeling that way (Buddy 5)." This contrasts with one buddy who claims that a parent-child

relationship can actually establish a hierarchy over the newcomer, leading him to distance himself from forging a kinship tie:

I have to be careful. I am not the father because I could be the father of the newcomer's family, you know? Because sometimes it feels like a father-son relationship. I talk to him [the newcomer] like I talk to my children.

However, when the newcomer is introduced into the buddy's social network, this can foster a sense of belonging which allows newcomers to break away from their status as 'the Other' in the host society: "Yeah, I also met his friends, so now I have some network here. I used to feel very much as a stranger, now I would say less because I know local people (Newcomer 4)." When conceptualizing the relationship as friendship or kinship, some dyads call each other, and not only the volunteer, 'buddy' as a way of emphasising equivalence between them. Multiple respondents on the other hand, who considered each other as family or friends, stopped referring to each other as 'buddies'. The stronger the interpersonal bond between buddies and newcomers, the more inclined they were to detach their relationship from the organisational and official context of the buddy programme. One buddy expressed this sentiment: "We have known each other for a long time, and now, there is a point where I can no longer perceive him [the newcomer] as a buddy, but as a friend." Consequently, buddies tended to perceive this relationship as part of their private sphere, which can be interpreted as a way of justifying this unconventional relationship and, more importantly, as the abandonment of practices of social distancing toward migrants (Kutsenko et al., 2020).

3.2.2. Intercultural exchange

Another frequently mentioned strategy for addressing power imbalances is to demonstrate genuine interest in newcomers and their ethnic-cultural backgrounds. While the primary focus of the buddy programme is to acquaint newcomers with the customs, norms, and values of the host society, buddies can also ask newcomers questions about the culture of their country of origin, considering these ideas, values, and beliefs as equal to their own. Cultural exchange can, to some extent, compensate for power inequalities stemming from the devaluation of newcomers' cultural capital within buddy programmes, where integration is still often perceived as assimilation (Stock, 2019). In this regard, a buddy noted that:

The buddy programme already starts from the idea that someone has to be integrated. So the newcomer becomes subordinate and I actually try to minimize that to some extent, because I am also interested in the trajectory of the newcomer, the cultural elements, where the newcomer comes from, et cetera. That's incredibly fascinating to me. So in that way, I think I do take steps to achieve equality.

Food sharing, for instance, is found to be an important reciprocal act that can serve as a way to better comprehend one another and discuss cultural practices (Vescan et al., 2023):

The buddy can learn about our culture, learn a new culture. I've invited him to our house, and then we cooked and enjoyed a traditional dish together. Maybe it was good for him, at least it was something different. (Newcomer 14)

Intercultural exchange, as a De-othering practice, builds upon Jensen's (2011) concept of 'capitalization' as a form of agency, wherein newcomers can allow their otherness to be valued. While buddies and newcomers do not outright reject Othering discourses, they selectively appropriate certain elements to assign them symbolic value. In addition, through sharing cultural aspects with a non-judgemental stance, the majority of buddies reported substantial learning from their interactions with newcomers. One buddy mentioned adjusting his views on integration, religion, and politics due to conversations with the newcomer. More specifically, some buddies gained deeper insights into the world of newcomers, including their cultural backgrounds and the barriers they face in the host society. Several buddies found the experience of learning about the newcomer's culture enriching, as illustrated by the following quote: "Actually, a world opens up to you of what it means to be a refugee."

To obtain this kind of information on migrant integration and different cultures, buddies predominantly depend on newcomers, causing power inequalities to shift in favour of the latter. Consequently, the outcomes of the relationship are not one-sided, but participation in the buddy programme can benefit both dyad members. This way, newcomers can feel they are making a valuable contribution to the relationship. Nevertheless, the strategy of intercultural exchange risks equating newcomers with their cultural backgrounds, thus as members of a homogeneous out-group (Rashid & Cepeda-García, 2021). Moreover, it is argued that capitalization has a dimension of reproduction as it draws on stereotypical images (Jensen, 2011, p.66).

3.2.3. Self-determination in informational support

Buddies indicated that they inform newcomers about various services and institutions that may be useful in a new place of residence, such as mutual insurance companies, hobbies, and schools. Moreover, norms, values, and customs of Belgian society are discussed. In this regard, informational support can be an important lever to include newcomers in the host society (Stock, 2019). Although newcomers are not able to return this type of informational support due to their position as newly arrived migrants and consequently their limited knowledge of the host society, buddies can negotiate this asymmetry by allowing newcomers to take the lead (Vescan et al., 2023). Buddies offer advice, suggestions, and potential solutions to newcomers' inquiries. However, they refrain from assuming an authoritarian role and instead empower newcomers to make the final decisions, rejecting any possibility of elevation at the expense of newcomers (Kutsenko et al., 2020). This strategy is illustrated by the following quotes: "Ultimately, it's their decision. I'm never going to say: 'You have to do this or that.' You can possibly say: 'Look at it in this or that way. Maybe you can do this or that' (Buddy 15)." "I hate paternalism. What that they can do themselves, they should do themselves (Buddy 16)."

This De-othering practice is thus twofold. On the one hand, informational support seeks to counter the exclusion of newcomers in society; on the other hand, buddies reject a possible hierarchy inherent in this type of support by emphasising the self-determination of newcomers (Kutsenko et al., 2020). In this way, buddies aim to empower newcomers to take the initiative themselves. Additionally, several buddies expressed the hope that the relationship would transition from a hierarchical dynamic, characterised by the provision of guidance and advice, to one in which the newcomer's self-reliance takes precedence, overcoming their subordinate position in the receiving society. However, one buddy acknowledged a tendency to intervene promptly when a newcomer encounters difficulties, thereby

denying them the opportunity to seek solutions independently. This observation suggests that implementing this strategy may pose challenges, particularly when altruistic motivations dominate (Vescan et al., 2023).

3.2.4. Focusing on commonalities

Another possible strategy to negotiate power asymmetries is to emphasise commonalities in the dyadic relationship. This is in line with the common in-group identity model, where a common identity is developed through the interaction between the in-group and the out-group, allowing the newcomer's status to shift from "the Other" to "we" (Rashid & Cepeda-García, 2021). Focusing on shared interests has proven to be an effective strategy for several dyads in minimizing (cultural) differences and consequently status inequalities, thereby overcoming negative identity constructions. Furthermore, highlighting similarities may eliminate the idea of the hierarchisation of identities, as buddies and newcomers are reduced to the same identity formation (Chimakonam, 2020, p.63). This is exemplified by the following quote from a buddy who shared a common interest in photography with the newcomer:

That common interest was more than enough to overcome that gigantic difference between us in culture, in background, in age, in gender. Everything was different except for that. That was more than enough. That was incredibly helpful. Absolutely, that's the strength of a simple, mutual interest.

Conversely, focusing on similarities can establish the newcomer as an individual with unique interests and preferences, regardless of their migration background. This concept contrasts with 'the migrant Other' as a representative of an imagined collective (Rashid & Cepeda-García, 2021). The significance of commonalities is supported by previous studies demonstrating that deep-level similarities (interests, attitudes, beliefs, values, and other personal characteristics) among dyad members are related to more emotional support and the development of a strong relational bond (Neuwirth & Wahl, 2017). While an emotional connection is not guaranteed, shared hobbies and interests have the potential to foster a positive relationship beyond a care logic (Stock, 2019). Unsurprisingly, shared interests facilitated dyads in identifying activities to engage in together, possibly enhancing their interpersonal communication. The following quote illustrates that commonalities in De-othering as a conversational strategy can reject the newcomer's subordinate position (Chimakonam, 2020):

It's not like every time I meet him [the buddy], I talk about my personal issues. No, we can go to the cinema and we don't talk about it. We talk about the film. We go out and say: "Hey! This film is good. This film is not good. This screenplay is better. This director is worse et cetera". (Newcomer 6)

4. Discussion and conclusion

Although buddy programmes are aimed at facilitating the integration of newcomers into the host society, they implicitly and explicitly categorise newcomers as an out-group. This categorisation may lead to suboptimal integration outcomes and the further exclusion of migrants (Rashid & Cepeda-

García, 2021). Moreover, care logics might reinforce power hierarchies between buddies and newcomers (Stock, 2019). Drawing on (De-)Othering theory, this paper examines power dynamics and negotiations within buddy programmes for newly arrived migrants. With this study, we contribute to the literature on buddy-, and more specifically befriending programmes for newcomers by (a) highlighting power asymmetries experienced by both newcomers and volunteers who took on the role of buddy to support the newcomer and (b) discussing strategies employed by dyad members to negotiate these asymmetries.

The concept of Othering appeared well suited for understanding power structures (Jensen, 2011). Despite good intentions, the us versus them categorisation proved inevitable in the minds of some buddies and provided a basis for practicing 'Othering', introducing elements of hierarchy and exclusion in the relationship. We find that power asymmetries are reflected in Othering practices of emotional detachment, financial differences, and social network gatekeeping by buddies towards newcomers. Consequently, the newcomer is othered in relation to the majority population, which potentially undermines the objective of integration within the befriending intervention (Rashid & Cepeda-García, 2021). However, it should be noted that previous research suggested that asymmetries in buddy relationships are not necessarily perceived negatively by the newcomers involved (Vescan et al., 2023). In addition, four De-othering strategies to subvert these inequalities employed by both dyad members were identified: conceptualising the relationship as kinship or friendship, intercultural exchange, self-determination in informational support, and focusing on commonalities. These efforts to mitigate differences to some extent suggest buddies' awareness of unequal power dynamics and their belief in the necessity of (partially) subverting hierarchy to foster a positive relationship with newcomers, aiming for integration outcomes such as a sense of belonging and self-reliance. Furthermore, De-othering practices in buddy programmes underscore the significance of newcomers' agency, as these strategies may signify both a rejection of assuming a subordinate social position and an effort to fully integrate into the host society (Kutsenko et al., 2020). Contrary to what is often assumed, Othered newcomers emerge as active agents. In this context, the concept of Othering, with its inherently binary thinking, may pose challenges in acknowledging agency as it fails to see the in-between (Jensen, 2011).

These results allow us to conclude that both Othering and De-othering practices coexist within buddy programmes for newcomers. The simultaneous presence of these contrasting tendencies may explain the mixed results of buddy programmes based on the befriending principle on networking outcomes for newcomers. Consistent with previous research, this study demonstrated that the relationships between buddies and newcomers varied considerably. Some dyads formed friendship or kinship bonds, resulting in the newcomer's social network expansion beyond the dyad, while others maintained superficial and formal relationships, limited to one-to-one interactions (Brinker, 2021; Mahieu & Van Caudenberg, 2020). This has significant implications for buddy programmes within the Flemish civic integration context, as the 'official' objective of network expansion for newcomers may not be realised.

Limitations of our exploratory study need to be acknowledged, particularly that our examination of power asymmetries and strategies to negotiate power differences is not exhaustive. Moreover, socially desirable responses by volunteer buddies cannot be completely ruled out. Othering discourse

can be latent, hiding behind a rhetoric of tolerance and understanding (Kutsenko et al., 2020). However, these findings open avenues for future research. Recent literature stresses the important role intermediaries are able to play in compensating for power imbalances in the relationship between host society members and newcomers in homestay programmes (Brinker, 2021). Future research could therefore address the role of coordinators of buddy programmes, responsible for matching dyad and monitoring the dyadic relationship, in negotiating power asymmetries within an organisational context. Furthermore, future studies could adopt longitudinal research protocols to gain insights into the development of relational dynamics over time (Vescan et al., 2023). It would be interesting to examine how power asymmetries and negotiations evolve, and whether or not buddy programmes could detach newcomers from their Otherness.

Statements and declarations

- **Acknowledgements**

We thank all respondents for participating in this research. We also thank the Hannah Arendt Institute for making this research possible.

- **Compliance with Ethical Standards**

The Ethics Committee for Social Sciences and Humanities of the University of Antwerp granted permission (SHW_21_150). All participants provided verbal and/or written informed consent.

- **Funding**

This work was supported by the Hannah Arendt Institute for Citizenship, Urbanity, and Diversity. [Grant number 36197].

- **Conflict of interests**

The authors have no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

PART III

Discussion and conclusions

The aim of this dissertation was to study buddy programmes for newly arrived migrants, and more specifically to scrutinize what makes buddy programmes effective in fostering the integration process of newcomers into the host society, in particular in expanding their social network. In this concluding chapter, I will first discuss how buddy programmes relate to their institutional framework within the context of Flemish migrant integration policy and its objective of social network expansion. Further, I will discuss the agency of dyad members in buddy programmes and their impact on the outcomes of buddy programmes, and address how power hierarchies are (de)constructed within dyadic relationships in buddy programmes. I will also discuss the complex relationships between policy and practice. Lastly, I will revisit the overarching research question of this dissertation and discuss avenues for future research.

1. Formalising buddy programmes: Empirical findings on social networking

This dissertation focused on buddy programmes within a Flemish context. The intervention is not a novel concept, as citizen volunteers have long adopted this approach to support newcomers in navigating their new place of residence. However, the institutionalisation of buddy programmes in Flemish integration policy, where they become a formal part of migrant integration policies as an element of the fourth pillar of the civic integration programme, formed the starting point of this doctoral research (Reidsma & De Cuyper, 2021). In this policy context, several expectations regarding the intervention are formulated, such as providing an informal point of contact for newly arrived migrants, facilitating relationships of trust between host society members and newcomers, and promoting a positive attitude towards ethnic-cultural diversity (Vlaamse Regering, 2020, p.10). Special attention is dedicated to expanding the social networks of newcomers through buddy programmes. In this respect, a certain level of transitivity¹³ is assumed, where newcomers are expected to establish social connections with the social circles of their buddies (Holland & Leinhardt, 1971). It is thus suggested that the more social contacts the newcomer has, the easier it gets to engage in new social relationships (Cox, 2000; Ryan et al., 2008). Nevertheless, it is left unspecified why, under which conditions, and for whom buddy programmes work in the context of migrant integration, and especially for their social integration (Dalkin et al., 2015; White, 2009).

Chapters one and two aimed to address this gap by providing insights into the organisational (e.g. matching, volunteer training, professional follow-up) and relational (e.g. reciprocity, dynamism, and basis attitudes) conditions that contribute to the effectiveness of buddy programmes. The objective of chapter one was therefore a broad exploration of the scholarly literature on buddy programmes. Based on interviews with individual policymakers in chapter two, in which they reflect on the aims and assumptions of the inclusion of buddy programmes in Flemish integration policies, I was able to identify four mechanisms that policymakers presume to generate integration outcomes for newcomers, namely informality, equivalence, reciprocity, and one-to-one contact. These mechanisms are in turn expected to give rise to results such as social network expansion, language acquisition, and increased knowledge of institutions and services, thus explaining how and why buddy

¹³ In social network research, transitivity refers to a triad. If the newcomer (A) is tied to a buddy (B) and the buddy (B) is tied to another contact (C), then is A expected to also direct a tie to C (Block, 2015).

programmes can facilitate the integration process of newcomers (Hermans, 2014). For example, the one-to-one setting is perceived as an effective means of building trust and fostering intimate relationships between dyad members, potentially enhancing newcomers' social networks. Simultaneously, this setting provides newcomers with an opportunity for in-depth language practice. Interestingly, in light of the institutional framework of buddy programmes resulting from this novel policy change, where participation has become mandatory for a specific group of newcomers, policymakers stress the importance of the informal nature and the voluntary engagement in buddy programmes as underlying entities for generating outcomes (Astbury & Leeuw, 2010). This contradiction can be understood along the lines of the ambiguous character of Flemish integration policy; which is interventionist both in assimilative and multicultural directions (Adam et al., 2018). Interventionist, in the sense that newcomers are required to provide documentation demonstrating sufficient efforts made to complete a buddy programme within the context of the fourth pillar. Multiculturalist, in the sense that the equivalence mentioned by policymakers suggests a positive stance towards cultural differences in the intercultural exchange between dyad members. Assimilationist, in the sense that buddy projects must meet the criterion¹⁴ of an exclusive Dutch-language context to be eligible for the Participation and Networking Trajectory, despite indications from some interviewed dyads that the use of another language could enhance interaction.

Next, chapters three and four strongly suggest that the policy objective of the PNT, i.e. an expansion of the social networks of newcomers with host society members, an objective also envisaged by the policymakers interviewed, is not necessarily realised in buddy programmes. Nevertheless, participation in a buddy programme (temporarily) expands the network of non-family ties of newcomers by at least one member of the host population (Jaschke et al., 2022). Interviews with coordinators, volunteer buddies, and newcomers showed great variation in the strength of the ties built through buddy programmes and accordingly in network expansion. Whereas in some cases dyads approach their relationship as friendship or kinship, indicating the desire to create deep and sustainable relationships, in other cases buddies maintain more distance and consciously operate as gatekeepers shielding their private life and social network from the newcomers they are matched with. Consequently, some dyadic relationships are restricted to temporary one-to-one interactions, limited to the timing prescribed by the buddy programme, while other newcomers experienced their social network broadened through and beyond the relationship with their buddy. This variation is in line with previous research on organized intercultural encounters, which demonstrates a mixed impact on strengthening newcomers' social networks (Mahieu & Van Caudenberg, 2020; Stock, 2019; Vescan et al., 2023). Therefore, this dissertation argues that the policy assumption of transitivity, in which newcomers are assumed to engage with their buddies' social networks, is sometimes realized but certainly not automatically present in buddy programmes for newcomers (Block, 2015; Holland & Leinhardt, 1971, Vlaamse Regering, 2020).

These mixed results of buddy programmes on networking outcomes for newcomers are provided with two explanations in empirical chapters three and four. First, in chapter three, I found great variation

¹⁴ Initiatives within the context of the fourth pillar of the civic integration programme must meet two criteria as defined in the Flemish Government Decree: the activity should promote the social participation of newcomers (1) and should take place in a Dutch-speaking context (2).

in brokerage behaviour of buddies adopting a conduit broker, *tertius iungens*, or *tertius gaudens* role. In turn, these varying strategic orientations towards brokerage determine the extent to which the emphasis is placed on networking, informational, or instrumental support (Ryan et al., 2008). For example, when assuming the role of a *tertius gaudens* broker, unfamiliarity between the newcomer and the buddy's social network is maintained (Obstfeld et al, 2014; Simmel, 1950). Second, in chapter four, I demonstrated that contrasting practices of Othering and De-othering occur simultaneously in the relationships between buddies and newcomers, suggesting diverse and sometimes opposing outcomes for network expansion. For instance, whereas focussing on similarities fosters the development of a common identity among dyad members, Othering practices arising from financial differences risk isolating the dyadic relationship from mainstream social life (Rashid & Cepeda-García, 2021).

In sum, the assumption that matching newly arrived migrants with members of the majority population (buddies) in buddy programmes by definition results in greater social networks for newcomers is nuanced in this doctoral research. As a result, it suggests an overestimation of the effects of the intervention by official policy documents. The interviewed policymakers provided several indications to support this claim. One of the policymakers stated that it cannot be expected from these volunteers to introduce newcomers into their social circles. Other policymakers emphasised the autonomy of those involved in forming their social networks, contradicting the official discourse aimed at ethno-cultural diversification. The contrast between the policy objective of social networking and the actual practice of buddy programmes is further supported by the finding that coordinators of buddy programmes often prioritise other goals, such as improving the language skills of newcomers or acquainting them with the city or municipality. As the majority of the coordinators are employed by buddy programmes organised by local governments, it can be claimed that they tend to address local concerns related to migrant integration (possibly characterised by a more pragmatic approach) rather than adhering strictly to symbolically inspired national policies (Flamant, 2020; Poppelaars & Scholten, 2008; Scholten & Penninx, 2016). Furthermore, buddies were often found to prioritise responding to the urgent needs of newcomers over the objective of social networking, suggesting that they fill in their roles according to their perception of the most pressing demands (Vescan et al., 2023). In line with the previous argument, newcomers may prefer receiving informational or instrumental support to cope with challenges related to navigating in a new place of residence, rather than focusing solely on networking with host society members. Consequently, the creation of deep social relationships varies greatly depending on the circumstances.

This allows me to conclude that merely bringing two parties together is deemed insufficient to strengthen newcomers' social networks. Coordinators can benefit from raising awareness among buddies of their brokerage role (as described in chapter three) and from further facilitating this newly established relationship. It was found that buddies were not always aware of the objective of networking expansion, limiting *tertius iungens* behaviour (Obstfeld et al., 2014). Earlier research indicates that to take full advantage of the potential to expand the newcomer's social network, the buddy should engage in explicit connecting behaviours (Austin et al., 2020; Keller & Blakeslee, 2014). However, this does not preclude the possibility that the agency of dyad members can still influence the shaping of the relationship based on the support needs of the newcomer. In this regard, I argue that the focus should shift from the traditional brokerage approach to buddy programmes, which

primarily focuses on connecting two otherwise disconnected individuals through a third party, to a greater emphasis on behaviours that influence, manage, or facilitate interactions among and beyond dyad members (Marsden, 1982; Obstfeld et al., 2014).

2. Neglection of agency of newcomers and buddies

One of the primary findings of this doctoral research is that newcomers participating in buddy programmes do not necessarily expand their social networks. However, this finding cannot be considered independently of the need to recognize the agency of dyad members in the design of integration policies. I argue that the policy goals outlined for the fourth pillar of the civic integration programme take too little account of agency, which encompasses the processes of individual action and decision making within the target group of the intervention (Taselli & Kilduff, 2021, p.3). One could argue that the Flemish government operates under the assumption that participants in buddy programmes share identical social needs in terms of networking (Somers, 2019). Consequently, this oversight may lead to mixed networking outcomes. In this chapter, I firstly shed light on the perspectives of newcomers participating in buddy programmes. Then, I further elaborate on the individual characteristics of volunteer buddies.

In chapter three, which focuses on social network brokerage, it is found that some newcomers do not desire to interact with other members of the majority population to expand their social network beyond their buddy in the host society. An important explanation for the absence of a will or ambition for further networking is that some of them already possess an established network in Flanders or Belgium. In addition, rather than relying solely on their buddies, newcomers may draw on transnational sources of social and emotional support (Ryan et al., 2008). In chapter four, on the other hand, I identified De-othering practices employed by newcomers, where they seek to renegotiate their status as migrant 'Other' in order to establish a fruitful relationship with their buddy and fully engage in society. These findings underscore the importance of considering the agency of newcomers when scrutinizing buddy programmes aimed at social network expansion, as it significantly influences the achievement of this objective. Moreover, it shows that newcomers are resourceful and proactive in the process of resettlement, and far from passive dependents in the host country (Lamba & Krahn, 2003). Furthermore, it suggests heterogeneity in the characteristics of newcomers, as they cannot be solely perceived as individuals lacking adequate support systems (Behnia, 2007).

Similar to the newcomers in this doctoral study, the interviewed buddies are not a homogeneous group. I found diversity in the profile of these volunteers, which strongly influences which orientation towards brokerage they tend to adopt. This, in turn, impacts the expansion of newcomers' social networks in the host society. For instance, during the interviews, some buddies, though a minority, indicate that they themselves feel lonely and therefore engage as volunteers in the programme to meet new people. Consequently, their relative social isolation limited their ability to take on the role of a *tertius iungens* broker, thus hindering their capacity to connect newcomers with third parties, such as family, friends, and acquaintances. Additionally, despite their good intentions, some buddies 'othered' newcomers by maintaining emotional distance, either by preventing an intimate relationship with the newcomer to develop and/or by gatekeeping their own social network. This contradicts the unspoken, yet underlying policy assumption that buddies are volunteers with an established social

network and an open attitude towards welcoming newcomers into their social networks. Therefore, the findings of this doctoral research imply that the receiving society is only partially receptive to including newly arrived migrants in its social fabric.

I conclude that the agency of dyad members is overlooked in policy designs for buddy programmes. Consequently, these designs fail to acknowledge the variety of characteristics of volunteer buddies and newcomers. The formalisation of buddy programmes within Flemish integration policy tends to adhere to an input/output framework, presupposing that these dyadic relationships automatically result in networking for newly arrived migrants, rather than taking into account the specific contributions of buddies and the particular needs of newcomers (Raithelhuber, 2023).

3. Lurking around the corner: Power hierarchies

Buddy programmes clearly distinguish between the in-group of host society members (buddies) and the out-group of newcomers, wherein the former supports the integration process of the latter. Although buddy programmes aim to facilitate the integration process of newcomers by reducing their differences in terms of language skills and knowledge about the host society, it is suggested that the categorisation of newcomers as an out-group may lead to suboptimal integration outcomes and the further exclusion of migrants (Rashid & Cepeda-García, 2021). Moreover, the (perceived) privileged access of these volunteers to relevant cultural, economic, or social capital implies power imbalances in the dyad in favour of buddies (Stock, 2019). In other words, buddies are considered to be the gateway for newcomers to the host society in terms of social, linguistic, informational, and instrumental support, placing them in a position of power, including the decision of whether or not to pursue social network expansion for newcomers (Crijns & De Cuyper, 2022; Ryan et al., 2008). As a result, realising integration outcomes seems strongly dependent on these volunteers' goodwill. Furthermore, it can be argued that the ambiguous character of Flemish integration policies, which simultaneously promote and reduce differences of ethno-cultural minorities through a combination of multiculturalist and assimilationist stances, complicates achieving equivalence between newcomers and host society members (Adam, 2013). Despite this context of inequality, most respondents throughout the doctoral research, including policymakers, coordinators, volunteers, and newcomers, acknowledge that a certain degree of equivalence in the dyadic relationship is necessary to foster migrant integration. In this section, I will discuss this ambiguity, revealing opportunities to subvert power asymmetries associated with this in-/out-group distinction, but also pointing out risks of hierarchisation of identities within buddy programmes. I therefore conclude that power hierarchies are inherent in the intervention; however, this assertion warrants nuanced consideration.

In chapter four, I emphasised De-othering practices employed by dyad members aiming to deconstruct the binary opposition between them (Kutsenko et al., 2020). Remarkably, I conclude that practices compensating for power differentials in buddy programmes include both emphasising commonalities and acknowledging differences between dyad members. On the one hand, the majority of the respondents believed that focussing on commonalities between volunteers and newcomers in buddy programmes, regardless of their divergent backgrounds, whether concerning similar interests or hobbies as often reflected in the matching process, or concerning more basic aspirations and needs such as human connection and interaction, is a powerful tool to soften this unequal relationship. Focussing on these similarities could blur the distinction between newcomers and buddies, elevating

the newcomers' social position to that of the volunteers. This, in turn, may stimulate common identity formation among dyad members (Chimakonam, 2020; Rashid & Cepeda-García, 2021). On the other hand, the potential of intercultural exchange in the dyadic relationship was highlighted. Here, newcomers' ethnic-cultural differences are not softened in the interaction with their buddies but rather emphasised as valuable sources of information, enabling power asymmetries to shift in favour of the newcomer. Striving for relatively equal positions may be understood as an attempt to mimic a friendship-like relationship, a key characteristic of befriending interventions, in the sense that a friendship typically entails a relationship between individuals of equal status (Balaam, 2015; Behnia, 2007; Hagard & Blickem, 1987). The emphasis on both commonalities and differences to address hierarchies indicates the creative agency of dyad members, as they strive to achieve equivalence in various ways. The focus on intercultural exchange highlights the potential for newcomers to leverage their Otherness and contribute meaningfully to the dyadic relationship. Simultaneously, the pursuit of commonalities aims to establish a degree of equivalence between buddies and newcomers, regardless of any existing disparities in societal positions (Jensen, 2011).

Despite these practices to approach equivalence between dyad members, the findings of this study also indicate *modi operandi* in which power asymmetries are further reinforced. This is partly due to challenges in overcoming differences within the dyad, such as financial inequalities and prejudices within the buddy's social network towards migrants. These Othering-practices, which position buddies above newcomers, were described in depth in chapter four of this dissertation. Moreover, I argue that power imbalances are reflected in the ethno-cultural diversification of social networks as envisioned by integration policies. In practice, this diversification tends to predominantly affect the networks of newcomers, in the sense that they meet more host society members than the other way around. Conversely, buddies were observed to have limited interactions with individuals from a migration background other than the newcomer they were matched with. This is in line with previous research suggesting that the demographic composition of buddies' social circles did not change significantly through their participation in the buddy programme (Mahieu et al., 2019). In this way, the responsibility for countering societal segregation, one of the motivations behind implementing the PNT in the civic integration programme, risks falling on the shoulders of newly arrived migrants, as they are expected to reach out to members of the host population (Somers, 2019). This is further supported by the fact that participation in the PNT is compulsory for newcomers (so-called third-country nationals including refugees), but optional for host society members, for whom merely falling back on one's own ethnic-cultural group is perceived as unproblematic. In this respect, migrant integration is perceived as one-way rather than a two-way process (Penninx & Garcés-Mascareñas, 2016). Consequently, I conclude that the (homogenous) social networks of newcomers, which often (but not necessarily) consist of members of a shared ethnic-cultural background, are not considered equally valuable in terms of social capital as those of buddies. More specifically, it appears that the buddy programmes under study, which aim to strengthen newcomers' social networks through diversification, tend to overlook their existing connections in the host society, as they are not given equal weight. Therefore, I suggest that starting with the mapping of newcomers' existing social networks in the receiving society—a commonly used method of strengthening networks—could reveal a valuable opportunity for buddy practices (Kostet, Nys, Verhaegen, & Puyenbroeck, 2018).

4. Complex relationships between policy and practice

Buddy programmes for newcomers were initially driven by civil society initiatives as a useful tool to move towards longer-term support for migrants' successful integration into society (Stock, 2019). However, as a result of increased government involvement, the intervention is increasingly integrated into the policy-making process (Crijns & De Cuyper, 2022). Drawing on our empirical analysis, I conclude that the changed context in which buddy programmes operate offers both opportunities and challenges with respect to the relationships between policy and practice.

Implementing buddy programmes in the Flemish government's civic integration programme boosted the intervention in both its substantive and organisational capacity. As mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation, in preparation for implementing the fourth pillar, AMIF deployed 26 pilot projects with 55 local governments, stimulating the building of expertise among practitioners as rules, scripts, and reports were developed (Alonso et al., 2023; Crijns & De Cuyper, 2023; Raithelhuber, 2023). Moreover, the pre-existing fragmentation of the buddy programmes has been overcome by the development of a central registration system¹⁵, designed by the Flemish government and the Agency for Integration and Civic Integration, where potential buddies can apply, simultaneously increasing the visibility of existing initiatives in search of volunteers. Furthermore, by formally institutionalising buddy programmes, the support newcomers are already provided with in the professional circuit (e.g., labour market mediation) can be supplemented by more personalised forms of social support (Decraene, 2022; Stock, 2019). In chapter one of this doctoral research, the complementarity between the support offered by buddies and regular professional assistance is suggested (Dekker et al., 2013; Raithelhuber, 2018; Uytterlinde et al., 2009; van Bochove et al., 2018). For instance, these volunteers may transfer informal knowledge to newcomers, such as specific cultural and behavioural norms of the host society, which is perceived as a need not catered to by existing initiatives (Mahieu et al., 2019; Oberoi, 2016). In this respect, it is claimed that buddies, as 'ordinary' people from civil society, turn parts of their 'personal life' and their own 'small worlds' (families, households, etc.) and related cultures into remedies for social problem-solving (Raithelhuber, 2023). In chapter two, several policymakers argue that buddies are able to operate on a more personal, small-scale, and demand-oriented basis in contrast to professionals bound by organisational constraints. Their informal approach may foster a sense of safety for newcomers, facilitating discussions about difficulties and inquiries with these volunteers.

Although the findings of this study endorse the added value of the personalised support provided by buddy programmes, such as an increased sense of belonging of newcomers when being introduced into the buddies' social network, I conclude that the duties of these volunteers have the tendency to extend beyond this informal, non-institutionalized support (Stock, 2019; Vescan et al., 2023). In chapter three, I found that buddies adopting a conduit brokerage role undertake responsibilities that exceed the actual task description of the buddy programme, such as providing assistance in the search of housing and employment. This is in line with previous research which demonstrates that volunteers supporting newly arrived migrants often receive questions intended for professional social workers (D'Eer et al., 2019). During the interviews, I encountered a buddy who offered shelter to a newcomer

¹⁵ <https://www.mijnbuddy.be/mijn-buddy/>

in her own home due to a lack of alternatives. In chapter four, some buddies mentioned that they provided financial support to newcomers by lending money for essential purchases, such as a car or washing machine. All of these practices surpass the determined goals of buddy programmes operating on the befriending principle, and go beyond the objective of social networking of the fourth pillar of the civic integration programme. As a result, buddies supporting newcomers seem to fill in the gaps that newcomers face in the integration system (Vandevoordt, 2019; Vescan et al., 2023). This allows me to conclude that the ideal of complementarity between the roles of these volunteers, on the one hand, and professionals, on the other, as suggested in previous research, is not systemically reflected in practice (Decraene, 2022; Dekker et al., 2013; Van Robaeys & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2018). Consequently, the finding that these volunteer buddies tend to do more than they supposed to, has some important implications for the relationships between policy and practice.

First, the findings in chapter three suggest that volunteer buddies tend to act as informal carers when the accompanying coordinator assumes a more detached role (*brief iungens*), implying a limited intervention regarding the dyadic relationship (D'Eer et al., 2019; Obstfeld et al., 2014). Monitoring a buddy programme is rarely a full-time occupation of these professionals; rather, it constitutes only a fraction of their overall duties. Furthermore, the vague conceptualisation of activities within buddy programmes facilitates volunteers providing far-reaching instrumental support, allowing the dyad to shift away from the original objectives of the intervention (Stock, 2019). These findings suggest that buddies lack organisational support to fulfil their role as befrienders, with the social relationship being a central source of well-being for newcomers (Balaam, 2015; McGowan et al., 2009; Van der Tier & Potting, 2015). Therefore, Flemish integration policies should consider allocating additional resources to coordinators to enhance the monitoring of the intervention (Crijns & De Cuyper, 2022). This could help avoid the conflation between the roles of volunteer buddies and social workers. More importantly, it would enable buddy programmes based on befriending to focus on strengthening the social network of newcomers, as envisaged in the fourth pillar of the civic integration programme.

Second, the involvement of some buddies in providing professional assistance suggests that government intervention has clear limitations with regard to pursuing migrant integration. This raises concerns about the adequacy and accessibility of existing integration measures and related social services for newcomers, as they often tend to rely on the help of volunteer buddies to address challenges, such as a lack of housing and suitable employment. As suggested earlier, these gaps in the integration system, such as an acute housing crisis unevenly affecting newly arrived migrants, may permeate practices within buddy programmes (Harris & Ogbonna, 2023; Vescan et al., 2023). This is evident in research on housing buddies for refugees in Flanders, where their involvement often collided with the structural housing crisis in many cities and municipalities. Consequently, the primary support needed for both refugees and the volunteers assisting them is an increase in the availability of affordable housing. Such a policy demand surpasses the capabilities of volunteers and buddy initiatives (D'Eer et al., 2019). In addition, the emphasis of Flemish integration policies on promoting socially mixed networks through buddy programmes implies structural barriers in society that hinder engagement in intercultural encounters. In doing so, it places stronger emphasis on individual responsibilities for incorporating newcomers into society, as often found in neoliberal reforms of Flemish integration policies, and thus for overcoming social and structural barriers (Decraene, 2022; Joppke, 2007; Van De Pol et al., 2013; Vandevoordt, 2019). Therefore, I conclude that obstacles to

the successful integration of newly arrived migrants stem more from structural constraints, such as housing shortages, rather than from individual newcomers' failure to network with host society members. This aligns with previous research suggesting that buddy programmes are often developed within a context of crisis management, rather than characterised by a preoccupation with migrants' rights (Hess & Kasperek, 2017; Stock, 2019).

Third, the observation that buddies undertake tasks exceeding their designated responsibilities allows me to conclude that the actual practice of buddy programmes contrasts with official policy objectives of the fourth pillar of the civic integration programme. More specifically, it suggests that the actual needs of newcomers may conflict with the objectives outlined by integration policies. Additionally, the discrepancy between policy and practice underscores the difference in implementing integration policies through the utilisation of volunteers compared to professionals; the former implies greater heterogeneity than the latter. It is more difficult to standardize the profile and behaviour of volunteer buddies in contrast with policies implemented through paid employees. The mixed networking outcomes can thus be partially attributed to the private realm in which buddy programme practices primarily take place, making it challenging to align them with predetermined objectives (Raithelhuber, 2023). As a consequence, it shows that the local implementation of buddy programmes may diverge from integration policies designed at the Flemish level. It is this local translation that warrants consideration if we seek to gain deeper insights into the impact of buddy programmes on integration outcomes (Zapata-Barrero et al., 2017).

These three implications highlight that networking for newcomers cannot be enforced through volunteers. Policymakers will need to adjust their expectations regarding buddy programmes within the context of the civic integration programme, framing networking as a welcome and desirable side-effect rather than a guaranteed outcome in itself. I conclude that these dyadic relationships are not isolated, but are deeply affected by contextual factors. As a consequence, social inequalities may undermine the effectiveness of buddy projects, casting uncertainty on their lasting positive effects (Mahieu et al., 2019). Therefore, policy makers should explicitly consider buddy programmes in relation to other considerable challenges faced by newcomers and implement appropriate measures to remedy these. While it is beneficial that institutionalising buddy programmes entails a call for host society members to take responsibility in fostering the integration process of newly arrived migrants, the socialisation of care should not absolve the government of its responsibility to ensure newcomers' fundamental rights (Van Robaeys & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016).

5. Buddy programmes and migrant integration: What's next?

Following the main conclusions of the study, I would like to revisit the overarching research question of this dissertation, as well as elaborate on some avenues for future research.

What makes buddy programmes effective in facilitating the integration process of newcomers in the host society?

This dissertation has demonstrated that to understand buddy programmes in the light of migrant integration different stakeholders need to be heard. By adopting a multi-stakeholder perspective, I aimed to refine policy expectations of buddy programmes outlined in the fourth pillar of the civic

integration programme and offer deeper insights into the lived experiences of all participants, and, by doing so, uncovering the black box of the intervention. In my dissertation, I not only showed how practices within buddy programmes may diverge from official objectives and discourse, but also analysed the dynamics of agency and power within these dyadic relationships. With this, I contribute to the literature on befriending interventions from a broad view of evidence-based practice. To answer the research question posed earlier, I would like to conclude by emphasising one crucial element in buddy programmes for newcomers: trust. The significance of trust is exemplified by the following quote from a buddy, simultaneously implying a subtle reference to government interventions bearing ultimate responsibility for integration:

Trust to me is something fundamental but very difficult to explain, namely that you both mean well with each other, that you tell the truth, and that you don't create the illusion that the relationship goes much broader and further than what was intended, but that it is limited to the task, to what that 'buddyship' means.

Trust is identified as a foundational precondition necessary for advancing integration objectives, rather than merely an outcome of the programme itself as suggested in policy documents (Vlaamse Regering, 2020, p.10). In this context, trust may be conceptualised as "the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control the other party" (Leck & Orser, 2013; Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995, p.712). I contend that trust includes mechanisms such as informality, equivalence, reciprocity, and one-to-one contact (as discussed earlier in chapter 2), all aimed at fostering a sense of security among the newcomers involved in buddy programmes to generate integration outcomes. Chapter three illustrates the necessity of trust from both sides of the dyad to be introduced into the buddy's social network. In this regard, I conclude that trust between dyad members can be perceived as a prerequisite for transitivity (Holland & Leinhardt, 1971). In chapter four, De-othering practices seeking equivalence were considered crucial to develop a bond of trust between dyad members (Balaam, 2015). In turn, integration outcomes, such as a sense of belonging and self-reliance, might be achieved.

This allows me to conclude that fostering and nurturing trustful relationships between newcomers and host society members in buddy programmes is a key component in realising integration outcomes. Previous research demonstrates that migrants who express trust in the host population, also express greater confidence in political institutions and report a higher quality of life (Bilodeau & White, 2016). Importantly, post-migration experiences play a crucial role in the levels of trust of newcomers in host society members. It is found that when newcomers feel mistreated by the government of their new place of residence, they are less likely than other migrants to express trust in their fellow citizens. Consequently, trust of newcomers in host society members is rooted in their contextual experiences (Bilodeau & White, 2016). Therefore, I argue that institution-based trust, particularly from newly arrived migrants, is vital for improving the effectiveness of buddy programmes in facilitating migrant integration. This necessitates structural responses to their needs, and thus the creation of opportunities to help them cope with the unique social and economic challenges they encounter in the host country. In other words, only when newcomers feel safety about their situation in the receiving society because of guarantees, safety nets, or structures, trust in host society members can

be fostered, enabling integration outcomes through buddy programmes to be achieved (McKnight, Cummings, & Chervany, 1998). Simultaneously, the presence of institution-based trust of newcomers allows volunteer buddies to supplement, rather than substitute, regular professional assistance for newcomers, thereby maximizing their potential as an informal source of support.

The findings of this dissertation open avenues for future research. As discussed earlier, the buddies interviewed consisted of mainly women at the age of retirement, engaged in different civil society initiatives. This volunteer profile corresponds to the 'typical' embodiment of buddies supporting newcomers in recent literature (Stock, 2019; Van Robaey & Lyssens-Danneboom, 2016; Vescan et al., 2023). Additionally, it should be noted that all these respondents were white, native Dutch speakers, who were born and raised in Flanders. Despite their ability to support newly arrived migrants due to their privileged access to the relevant cultural, economic, or social capital, studies indicate that sharing migration narratives in a peer support setting fosters empowering processes among newly arrived migrants and may enhance their sense of belonging (Hung, 2012; Povlsen, 2012). Moreover, it is suggested that power asymmetries in these peer relationships, where dyad members share the same characteristics, are lessened (Van der Tier & Potting, 2015). Nevertheless, the peer mentoring format- where ex-newcomers themselves act as buddies and agents of change- remains largely unexplored (Paloma et al., 2020). One possible explanation is that newcomers are generally perceived as recipients of help rather than as service providers (Handy & Greenspan, 2009). It would be interesting to examine how these buddies, who were once newcomers themselves and may have participated in buddy programmes, take on their role in facilitating the integration process and strengthening the social networks of newly arrived migrants into the host society. This research could explore whether they emphasise different aspects of support provision compared to other buddies, potentially inspiring enhancements in existing buddy practices. Future research could also address how power is played out in peer support, whether these 'role models' are a valuable alternative for the categorisation between in- and out-group members in traditional buddy programmes or whether power imbalances continue to be reproduced through logics of caring (Oberoi, 2016; Paré, 2022; Stock, 2019). Last, while our research raises an important question about how buddy programmes contribute to the social network expansion of newcomers, future research could benefit from longitudinal protocols. In chapter one, it is argued that the dyadic relationship within buddy programmes is dynamic and evolves over time (Raithelhuber, 2021). Repeated observations over extended periods might be useful to capture the processual nature of integration from the perspectives of both buddies and newcomers. Importantly, far from being static, social networks are often fluid, changing as newcomers' needs and circumstances alter over time (Morgan, 1990; Ryan et al., 2008). In other words, shedding light on distinct stages of the buddy programme could provide further insights into the process of becoming an accepted part of society (Penninx & Garcés-Masareñas, 2016).

References

- Abell, J., Locke, A., Condor, S., Gibson, S., & Stevenson, C. (2006). Trying similarity, doing difference: the role of interviewer self-disclosure in interview talk with young people. *Qualitative Research*, 6(2), 221-244. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794106062711>
- Adam, I. (2010). *Au-delà des modèles nationaux d'intégration ? Analyse des politiques d'intégration des personnes issues de l'intégration des entités fédérées belges*. Doctoral thesis. Brussels: Université Libre de Bruxelles, Département de science politique.
- Adam, I. (2013). Immigrant Integration Policies of the Belgian Regions: Sub-state Nationalism and Policy Divergence after Devolution. *Regional & Federal Studies*, 23(5), 547-569. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13597566.2013.789024>
- Adam, I., Martiniello, M., & Rea, A. (2018). Regional divergence in the integration policy in Belgium. One country, three integration programs, one citizenship law. In A. Rea, E. Bribosia, I. Rorive & S. Djordje (Eds.), *Governing diversity. Migrant integration and multiculturalism in North America and Europe* (pp. 235-255). Brussel: Institut d'Etudes Europeennes.
- Agentschap Integratie & Inburgering (s.d.). *De Belgische migratiegeschiedenis*. https://www.integratie-inburgering.be/sites/default/files/2021-11/Tijdslijn_migratiegeschiedenis.pdf
- Ahmad-Yar, A.W., & Laurentsyeva, N. (2020). *Migrant integration policies at the local level in Belgium*. Brussels: Mercator Dialogue on Asylum and Migration (MEDAM).
- Alexander, M. (2003). Local policies toward migrants as an expression of Host-Stranger relations: A proposed typology. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 29(3), 411-430. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691830305610>
- Allen, R. (2009). Benefit or Burden? Social Capital, Gender, and the Economic Adaptation of Refugees. *International Migration Review*, 43(2), 332-365. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2009.00767.x>
- Allport, G. W. (1954). *The nature of prejudice*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books.
- Alonso, E.B., Van Ongevalle, J., & De Cuyper, P. (2023). *Het sociaal netwerk en participatietraject: Lessen uit 26 proeftuinen*. Leuven: HIVA KULeuven.
- Amin, A. (2002). Ethnicity and the Multicultural City: Living with Diversity. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 34(6), 959-980. <https://doi.org/10.1068/a3537>
- Arpino, B., & de Valk, H. (2018). Comparing Life Satisfaction of Immigrants and Natives Across Europe: The Role of Social Contacts. *Social Indicators Research*, 137(3), 1163-1184. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-017-1629-x>
- Askins, K. (2016). Emotional citizenry: everyday geographies of befriending, belonging and intercultural encounter. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 41(4), 515-527. <https://doi.org/10.1111/tran.12135>

- Astbury, B., & Leeuw, F. (2010). Unpacking Black Boxes: Mechanisms and Theory Building in Evaluation. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 31(3), 363-381. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098214010371972>
- Austin, L., Parnes, M., Jarjoura, R., Keller, T., Herrera, C., Tanyu, M., & Schwartz, S. (2020). Connecting Youth: The Role of Mentoring Approach. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*. 49, 2409–2428. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-020-01320-z>
- Awujo, N. (2016). Diversity challenges facing expatriate and immigrant mothers and how group mentoring can influence them: A case study of a mentoring scheme within a Christian organisation in the United Kingdom. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 10, 158-171.
- Bachkirova, T., Cox, E., & Clutterbuck, D. (2018). Introduction. In E. Cox, T. Bachkirova & D. Clutterbuck (Eds.), *The complete handbook of coaching* (xxiv-xlviii). London: SAGE publications Ltd.
- Bailey, P.H., & Tilley, S. (2002). Storytelling and the interpretation of meaning in qualitative research. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 38(6), 574-583. <https://doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-2648.2000.02224.x>
- Balaam, M. -C. (2015). A concept analysis of befriending. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*. 71(1), 24-34. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.12553>
- Banks, K. H. (2010). A qualitative investigation of mentor experiences in a service learning course. *Educational Horizons*, 155A, 68–79.
- Bhaskar, R. (1978). *A realist theory of science*. Hassocks: Harvester Press.
- Beck, U. (1997). *The reinvention of politics: rethinking modernity in the global social order*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Behnia, B. (2007). An Exploratory Study of Befriending Programs with Refugees: The Perspective of Volunteer Organizations. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, 5(3), 1-19. https://doi.org/10.1300/J500v05n03_01
- Bell-Martin, R., & Marston, J. (2021). Confronting Selection Bias: The Normative and Empirical Risks of Data Collection in Violent Contexts. *Geopolitics*, 26(1), 159-192. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2019.1659780>
- Bernard, H. R. (2002). *Research methods in anthropology: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (3rd ed.). Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press.
- Berry, J.W. (2005). Acculturation: Living successfully in two cultures. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 29, 697-712. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2005.07.013>
- Bilodeau, A., & White, S. (2016). Trust among recent immigrants in Canada: levels, roots and implications for immigrant integration. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 42(8), 1317-1333. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2015.1093411>
- Blecha, D. (2012). *Best Practices for a Coordinated Approach to Assist Unaccompanied Minor Asylum Seekers and Former UAMs in EUMS (CAUAM)*. Vienna: International Organization for Migration.

- Block, P. (2015). Reciprocity, transitivity, and the mysterious three-cycle. *Social networks*, 40, 163-173. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.socnet.2014.10.005>
- Blom, B., & Morén, S. (2010). Explaining social work practice—The CAIMeR theory. *Journal of Social Work*, 10(1), 98-119. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468017309350661>
- Blommaert, J., & Martens, A. (1999). *Van Blok tot Bouwsteen: Een visie voor een nieuw lokaal migrantenbeleid*. Berchem: Epo.
- Boehm, S. A., Dwertmann, D. J., Kunze, F., Michaelis, B., Parks, K. M., & McDonald, D. P. (2014). Expanding insights on the diversity climate–Performance link: The role of workgroup discrimination and group size. *Human Resource Management*, 53, 379–402. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.21589>
- Boost, D., Blom, B., & Raeymaeckers, P. (2022). A Detective, Physicist, and Historian Walk into a Bar Abduction, Retroduction, and Retrodiction in Critical Realist Evaluations. In A. Maisuria & G. Banfield (Eds.), *Working with Critical Realism Stories of Methodological Encounters* (pp.14-28). London: Routledge.
- Boost, D., Cools, P., & Raeymaeckers, P. (2017). Handvatten voor de ontwikkeling en evaluatie van lokaal sociaal beleid: het CAIMeR-model. In P. Raeymaeckers, C. Noël, D. Boost, C. Vermeiren, J. Coene & S. Van Dam (Eds.), *Tijd voor sociaal beleid: Armoedebestrijding op lokaal niveau. Armoede en sociale uitsluiting. Jaarboek 2017* (pp. 153-168). Leuven/Den Haag: Acco.
- Boost, D., Raeymaeckers, P., Hermans, K., & Elloukmani, S. (2020). Overcoming non-take-up of rights: A realist evaluation of Integrated Rights-Practices. *Journal of Social Work*, 21(4), 831-852. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468017320948332>
- Bozeman, B., & Feeney, M. (2008). Mentor Matching: A “Goodness of Fit” Model. *Administration & Society*, 40(5), 465-482. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095399708320184>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, B. (2021). One size fits all? What counts as quality practice in (reflexive) thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 18(3), 328–352. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2020.1769238>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, B. (2012). Thematic Analysis. In H. Cooper (Ed.), *APA handbook of research methods in psychology, Vol 2: Research designs: Quantitative, qualitative, neuropsychological, and biological* (pp. 57-71). Washington: American Psychological Association.
- Brinker, L. D. (2021). Security Net and Ambassadors for Social Inclusion? The Role of Intermediaries in Host–Refugee Relationships in Homestay Programs. *Social Inclusion*, 9(4), 232-242. <https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v9i4.4511>
- Brudney, J., & Meijs, L. (2009). It Ain't Natural: Toward a New (Natural) Resource Conceptualization for Volunteer Management. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 38(4), 564-581. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764009333828>
- Burrage, J., & Demi, A. (2003). Buddy Programs for People Infected With HIV. *Journal of the Association of Nurses in AIDS care*, 14(1), 52-62. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1055329002239190>

- Burt, R. (2004). Structural Holes and Good Ideas. *American Journal of Sociology*, 110(2), 349-399.
- Campbell, S., Greenwood, M., Prior, S., Shearer, T., Walkem, K., Young, S., & Bywaters, D. (2020). Purposive sampling: complex or simple? Research case examples. *Journal of Research in Nursing*, 25(8), 652–661. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1744987120927206>
- Caponio, T., Scholten, P., & Zapata-Barrero, R. (2017). Theorizing the 'local turn' in a multi-level governance framework of analysis: a case study in immigrant policies. *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 83(2), 241-246. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002085231668842>
- Castles, S. (1995). How nation states respond to immigration and ethnic diversity. *New Community*, 21, 293–308. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.1995.9976493>
- Chambon A., McGrath, S., Shapiro, B., Abai, M.D., Dremetsikas, T., & Didziak, S. (2001). From interpersonal links to webs of relations: creating befriending relationships with survivors of torture and war. *Journal of Social Work Research and Evaluation*, 2(2), 157–171.
- Chen, H.T. (2005). *Practical Program Evaluation. Assessing and Improving Planning, Implementation, and Effectiveness*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Chen, H.T. (2012). Theory-driven evaluation: Conceptual framework, application and advancement. In R. Strobl, O. Lobermeier & W. Heitmeyer (Eds.), *Evaluation von Programmen und Projekten für eine demokratische Kultur* (pp. 17-40). Wiesbaden: Springer.
- Chimakonam, J. O. (2020). Othering, Re-othering and De-othering. Interrogating the Skolombo's Fight-Back Strategy. In Imafidon, E. (Ed.) *Handbook of African Philosophy of Difference. Handbooks in Philosophy* (pp. 433-488). Champ: Springer.
- Choquet, S. (2017). *Models of Integration in Europe*. Fondation Robert Schuman. <https://www.robert-schuman.eu/en/european-issues/0449-models-of-integration-in-europe>
- Chrobot-Mason, D., & Aramovich, N. P. (2013). The psychological benefits of creating an affirming climate for workplace diversity. *Group & Organization Management*, 38, 659–689. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1059601113509835>
- Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2017). Thematic analysis. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 12(3), 297–298. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2016.1262613>
- Cnaan, R., Handy, F., & Wadsworth, M. (1996). Defining Who Is a Volunteer: Conceptual and Empirical Considerations. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 25(3), 364-383. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764096253006>
- Cocanour, C. (2017). Informed consent—It's more than a signature on a piece of paper. *The American Journal of Surgery*, 214(6), 993-997. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amjsurg.2017.09.015>
- Commissie Diversiteit (2021). *Advies: Wijzigingsdecreet Vlaams integratie- en inburgeringsbeleid*. Brussel: SERV.
- Council of the EU (2004) . *Common basic principles on immigrants integration*. 2618th Meeting of the Justice and Home Affairs Council, 14615/04, 19 November. Brussels: Council of the European Union.

- Cox, E. (2000). Diversity and Community: Conflict and Trust?. In E. Vasta (Ed.), *Citizenship, Community and Democracy* (pp. 71–90). Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Cresswell, T. (1996). *In place/out of place: Geography, ideology and transgression*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Cresswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed method research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Crijns, M., & De Cuyper, P. (2022). *Towards effective social mentoring practices for migrant newcomer: A research-informed and practitioner-approved good practice guide*. Leuven: HIVA-KU Leuven.
- Crul, M. (2001). *Succes maakt succesvol*. Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis.
- Crul, M., & Schneider, J. (2010). Comparative integration context theory: participation and belonging in new diverse European cities. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 33(7), 1249–1268. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419871003624068>
- Cullen, S. (2006). *Mentoring and befriending for young homeless people. A good practice guide*. London: Shelter.
- Dalkin, S. M., Greenhalgh, J., Jones, D., Cunningham, B., & Lhussier, M. (2015). What's in a mechanism? Development of a key concept in realist evaluation. *Implementation Science*, 10(1), 49. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13012-015-0237-x>
- Dart, J., & Davies, R. (2003). A Dialogical, Story-Based Evaluation Tool: The Most Significant Change Technique. *The American Journal of Evaluation*, 24(2), 137-155. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1098-2140\(03\)00024-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1098-2140(03)00024-9).
- De Clerck, H., & Devillé, A. (2011). Irreguliere migratie. Hoe België voorbij gaat aan deze migratierealiteit. In C. Timmerman, I. Lodewyckx, E. Vanderwaeren & D. Vanheule (Eds.), *MInteGRATIE. Over nieuwe vormen van migratie en integratie* (pp.191-210). Antwerpen: UPA.
- De Cuyper, P., & Crijns, M. (2023). Matching mentors and recent immigrants: matching criteria in social mentoring programmes for newcomers. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 21(2), 21-34. <https://doi.org/10.24384/pyhr-y727>
- De Cuyper, P., Havermans, N., & Bircan, T. (2019). *Een evaluatiekader voor het Vlaamse integratiebeleid. Deel 4: Conceptualisering 'sociale cohesie'*. Leuven: HIVA.
- De Cuyper, P., Lambrechts, M., Pauwels, F., & Vets, C. (2010). *Evaluatieonderzoek inburgering. Deel 1: Inburgering in Vlaanderen*. Leuven: HIVA.
- De Cuyper, P., & Vandermeerschen, H. (2018). *Mentoring naar werk voor hooggeschoolde anderstalige nieuwkomers. Een analyse van knelpunten, successen en opportuniteiten*. Leuven: HIVA-KU Leuven.

De Cuyper, P., & Vandermeerschen, H. (2018). Nieuwkomers op de arbeidsmarkt: Helpt mentoring naar werk om de toegang van anderstalige nieuwkomers tot de arbeidsmarkt te verbeteren? Analyse van een innovatief beleidsinstrument. *Over.Werk*, 2, 64-70.

De Cuyper, P., Vandermeerschen, H., & Purkayastha, D. (2019). Migrant mentoring to work: defining an old-but-innovative instrument. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 17(2), 108-121. <https://doi.org/10.24384/cy2r-jd97>

D'Eer, L., Robeyns, L., & Geldof, D. (2019). *Capteren en ontsluiten van inspirerende praktijken inzake werken met vrijwilligers bij woonondersteuning van vluchtelingen*. Onderzoeksrapport. Brussel: Odisee Kenniscentrum voor Gezinswetenschappen.

Decraene, V. (2022). *Buddywerkingen voor nieuwkomers. Samen een weg banen?*. Oud-Turnhout: Gompel & Svacina.

De Cuyper, P., & Crijns, M. (2023). Matching mentors and recent immigrants: matching criteria in social mentoring programmes for newcomers. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 21(2), 21-34. <https://doi.org/10.24384/PYHR-Y727>

Dekker, F., van Straaten, R., & el Kaddouri, I. (2013). *Maatjes Gezocht De impact van maatjeswerk en de campagne van het Oranje Fonds*. Utrecht: Verwey-Jonker Instituut.

Dempsey, L., Dowling, M., Larkin, P., & Murphy, K. (2016). Sensitive Interviewing in Qualitative Research. *Research in Nursing & Health*, 39(6), 480-490. <https://doi.org/10.1002/nur.21743>

De Waele, E., & Hustinx, L. (2019). Governing Through Volunteering: The Discursive Field of Government-Initiated Volunteering in the Form of Workfare Volunteering. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 48(2S), 72S-102S. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764018783094>

D'Hondt, P. (1989). *Integratie(beleid): een werk van lange adem*. Commissariaat voor het migrantenbeleid.

Dillahunt, T.R., Lu, A.X., Israni, A., Lodha, R., Brewer, S., Robinson, T.S., Wilson, A.B., & Wheeler, E. (2022). The Village: Infrastructuring Community-based Mentoring to Support Adults Experiencing Poverty. *CHI '22: CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, 574, 1-7. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3491102.3501949>

Doomernik, J., & Bruquetas-Callejo, M. (2016). National Immigration and Integration Policies in Europe Since 1973. In R. Penninx & B. Garcés-Masareñas (Eds.), *Integration Processes and Policies in Europe* (pp. 57-76). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

Drew, A., Keller, T., Spencer, R., & Herrera, C. (2020). Investigating mentor commitment in youth mentoring relationships: The role of perceived program practices. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 48(7), 2264-2276. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22409>

DuBois, D., Holloway, B., Valentine, J., & Cooper, H. (2002). Effectiveness of Mentoring Programs for Youth: A Meta-Analytic Review. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 30(2), 157-197. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1014628810714>

- Dutton, H., Deane, K., & Bullen, P. (2018). Distal and experiential perspectives of relationship quality from mentors, mentees, and program staff in a school-based youth mentoring program. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *85*, 53-62. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2017.12.008>
- Ebrahim, A. (2019). *Measuring social change: Performance and accountability in a complex world*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Eby, L.T., Allen, T., Evans, S., Ng, T., & DuBois, D. (2008). Does mentoring matter? A multidisciplinary meta-analysis comparing mentored and non-mentored individuals. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, *72*(2), 254-267. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2007.04.005>
- Eby, L. T. (2012). Organizational mentoring: Past, present, and future. In S. Kozlowski (Ed.), *Oxford handbook of industrial and organizational psychology* (pp. 615–642). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Eby, L. T., Allen, T., Hoffman, B., Baranik, L., Sauer, J., Baldwin, S., Morrison, A., Kinkade, K., Maher, C., Curtis, S., & Evans, S. (2013). An interdisciplinary meta-analysis of the potential antecedents, correlates, and consequences of protégé perceptions of mentoring. *Psychological Bulletin*, *139*(2), 441-476. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/a0029279>
- Ellison, R., Cory, M., Horwath, J., Barnett, A., & Huppert, E. (2019). Can mentor organizations impact mentor outcomes? Assessing organizational norms on mentor intent to stay and willingness to “go the extra mile”. *Journal of Community Psychology*, *48*(7), 2208–2220. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22391>
- Esterhuizen, L. & Murphy, T. (2007). *Changing Lives: A longitudinal study into the impact of Time Together Mentoring on Refugee Integration*. Time Bank: United Kingdom.
- Etikan, I. (2016). Comparison of Convenience Sampling and Purposive Sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, *5*(1), 1-4. <https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ajtas.20160501.11>
- European Council (1999). Tampere European Council 15 and 16 October 1999: Presidency conclusions. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/summits/tam_en.htm
- European Parliament (2023). *The EU response to migration and asylum*.
- Fakoya, O.A., McCorry, N.K., & Donnelly, M. (2021). How do befriending interventions alleviate loneliness and social isolation among older people? A realist evaluation study. *PLOS ONE*, *16*(9), 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0256900>
- Feeney, M.K., & Bozeman, B. (2008). Mentoring and network ties. *Human Relations*, *61*(12), 1651-1676. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0018726708098081>
- Flamant, A. (2020) The local turn in integration policies: why French cities differ. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, *43*(11), 1981-2000. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.2020.1738522>
- Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*. New York: Pantheon Books.

- Funnel, S.C., & Rogers, P.J. (2011). *Purposeful Program Theory: Effective Use of Theories of Change and Logic Models*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Galandini, S., Mulvey, G., & Lessard-Phillips, L. (2019). Stuck Between Mainstreaming and Localism: Views on the Practice of Migrant Integration in a Devolved Policy Framework. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 20(3), 685-702. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-018-0626-5>
- Gawlewicz, A. (2016). Beyond openness and prejudice: The consequences of migrant encounters with difference. *Environment and Planning A*, 48, 256–272. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X15605836>
- Gay, B., & Stephenson, J. (1998). The mentoring dilemma: guidance and/or direction?, *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 6(1-2), 43-54. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0968465980060104>
- Goeman, H., & Van Puymbroeck, N. (2011). De bestuurlijke complexiteit van het migrantenbeleid: een conceptuele, institutionele en operationele schets. In C. Timmerman, I. Lodewyckx, E. Vanderwaren & D. Vanheule (Eds.), *MInteGRATIE, over nieuwe vormen van migratie en integratie* (pp.47-85). Antwerpen: UPA.
- Goodkind, J. (2005). Effectiveness of a Community-Based Advocacy and Learning Program for Hmong Refugees. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 36(3-4), 387-408. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10464-005-8633-z>
- Gowdy, G., Miller, D., & Spencer, R. (2020). Expanding and deepening our understanding of which young people are most likely to have an informal mentor. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 108, 104490. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2019.104490>
- Gower, S., Jeemi, Z., Forbes, D., Kebble, P., & Dantas, J.A.R. (2022). Peer Mentoring Programs for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Refugee and Migrant Women: An Integrative Review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(19), 12845. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph191912845>
- Granovetter, M. (1973). The Strength of Weak Ties. *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(6), 1360-1380.
- Griffiths, M., Sawrikar, P., & Muir, K. (2009). Culturally appropriate mentoring for Horn of African young people in Australia. *Youth Studies Australia*, 28(2), 32-40.
- Groeninck, M., Meurs, P., & Geldof, D. (2019). *Veerkracht in beweging. Dynamieken van vluchtelinggezinnen versterken*. Antwerp: Garant.
- Haddock, S., Weiler, L., Lee, H., Henry, K., Lucas-Thompson, R., Zimmerman, T., Krafchick, J., Fredrickson, G., Yetz, N., & Youngblade, L. (2020). Does Organizing Mentor-Mentee Matches into Small Groups Enhance Treatment Effects in a Site-Based Mentoring Program for Adolescents? Results of a Randomized Controlled Trial. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 49(9), 1864–1882. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-020-01267-1>
- Hagard, M., & V. Blickem (1987). *Befriending. A sociological case-history*. Cambridge: The Oleander Press Ltd.

- Haggard, D., Dougherty, T., Turban, D., & Wilbanks, J. (2011). Who Is a Mentor? A Review of Evolving Definitions and Implications for Research. *Journal of Management*, 37(1), 280-304. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206310386227>
- Hamburg, M.E., Finkenauer, C., & Schuengel, C. (2014). Food for love: the role of food offering in empathic emotion regulation. *Frontiers in psychology*, 5(32), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00032>
- Handy, F. & Greenspan, I. (2009). Immigrant Volunteering: A Stepping Stone to Integration?. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, 38(6), 956-982. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764008324455>
- Harding, S. (1986). *The Science Question in Feminism*. New York: Cornell University Press.
- Harraway, D. (1988). Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. *Feminist Studies*, 14(3), 575-99.
- Harris, L.C., & Ogbonna, E. (2023). Equal opportunities but unequal mentoring? The perceptions of mentoring by Black and minority ethnic academics in the UK university sector. *Human Resource Management Journal*, 33(4), 940-956. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1748-8583.12492>
- Haski-Leventhal, D., Meijs, L. C. P. M., & Hustinx, L. (2010). The third-party model: Enhancing volunteering through governments, corporations and educational institutes. *Journal of Social Policy*, 39, 139-158. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0047279409990377>
- Heite, C. (2012). Setting and crossing boundaries: professionalization of social work and social work professionalism. *Social Work and Society*, 10(2), 1-14.
- Hendrix, H. (1997). *Bouwen Aan Netwerken. Leer- en werkboek voor het bevorderen van sociale steun in de hulpverlening*. Boom: Lemma.
- Hermans, K. (2014). Methodiekontwikkeling, evaluatieonderzoek en de body of knowledge van het sociaal werk. *Journal of Social Intervention: Theory and Practice*, 23(1), 33-52. <https://doi.org/10.18352/jsi.394>
- Herrera, C., DuBois, D. L., & Grossman, J. B. (2013). *The role of risk: Mentoring experiences and outcomes for youth with varying risk profiles*. New York, NY: A Public/Private Ventures project distributed by MDRC.
- Hess, S., & Kasperek, B. (2017). Under control? Or border (as) conflict: Reflections on the European border regime. *Social Inclusion*, 5(3), 58-68. <https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v5i3.1004>
- Hinton, P. (2014). 'Situated Knowledges' and New Materialism(s): Rethinking a Politics of Location. *Women: A Cultural Review*, 25(1), 99-113. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09574042.2014.901104>
- Hoens, S., Smetcoren, A.-S., Switsers, L., & De Donder, L. (2021). Community health workers and culturally competent home care in Belgium: A realist evaluation. *Health & Social Care in the Community*, 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hsc.13630>

- Holland, P., & Leinhardt, S. (1971). Transitivity in Structural Models of Small Groups. *Comparative Group Studies*, 2(2), 107-124. <https://doi.org/10.1177/104649647100200201>
- Holmes, A.G.D. (2020). Researcher Positionality - A Consideration of Its Influence and Place in Qualitative Research - A New Researcher Guide. *International Journal of Education*, 8(4), 1-10.
- Horner, K. (2009). Language, citizenship and Europeanization: Unpacking the discourse of integration. In G. Hogan-Brun, C. Mar-Molinero & P. Stevenson (Eds.), *Discourses on Language and Integration: Critical perspectives on language testing regimes in Europe* (pp.109-128). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Huizinga, R., & Van Hoven, B. (2018). Everyday geographies of belonging: Syrian refugee experiences in the Northern Netherlands. *Geoforum*, 96, 309-317. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2018.09.002>
- Hung, S. L. (2012). Empowerment groups for women migrating from China to Hong Kong. *Social Work with Groups*, 35(1), 4-17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01609513.2011.580265>
- Hurley, R. (2006). The decision to trust. *Harvard Business Review*, 84(9), 55-62.
- Hustinx, L., Cnaan, R., & Handy, F. (2010). Navigating Theories of Volunteering: A Hybrid Map for a Complex Phenomenon. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 40(4), 410-434. <http://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-5914.2010.00439.x>
- Hustinx, L., & Godemont, J. (2012). Vrijwilligerswerk in een veranderende welvaartmix. In A. Declerq, K. Hermans & D. Van den Bosch (Eds.), *Zorg voor welzijn: oude vragen en nieuwe antwoorden* (pp. 159-172), Leuven: Acco.
- Jacobs, D. (2004), Alive and Kicking? Multiculturalism in Flanders. *International Journal on Multicultural Societies*, 6(2), 280-299.
- Jaschke, P., Löbel, L.-M., Krieger, M., Legewie, N., Kroh, M., Jacobsen, J., & Schacht, D. (2022). Mentoring as a grassroots effort for integrating refugees – evidence from a randomised field experiment. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 48(17), 4085-4105. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2022.2058918>
- Jensen, S. Q. (2011). Othering, identity formation and agency. *Qualitative Studies*, 2(2), 63-78. <https://doi.org/10.7146/qs.v2i2.5510>
- Joppke, C. (2007). Beyond national models: Civic integration policies for immigrants in Western Europe. *West European Politics*, 30(1), 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402380601019613>
- Karcher, M. J., & Hansen, K. (2014). Mentoring activities and interactions. In D. L. DuBois & M. J. Karcher (Eds.), *Handbook of youth mentoring* (pp. 63-72). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Kazepov, Y. (2008). THE SUBSIDIARIZATION OF SOCIAL POLICIES: ACTORS, PROCESSES AND IMPACTS: Some reflections on the Italian case from a European perspective. *European Societies*, 10(2), 247-273. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616690701835337>

- Kazepov, Y., & Barberis, E. (2013). Social Assistance Governance in Europe: Towards a Multilevel Perspective. In I. Marx, K. Nelson & E. Barberis (Eds.), *Minimum Income Protection in Flux* (pp. 217-248). London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Keller, T. E., & Blakeslee, J. E. (2014). Social networks and mentoring. In D. L. Dubois, & M. K. Karcher (Eds.), *Handbook of youth mentoring* (pp. 63-82). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Keller, T., & DuBois, D. (2019). Influence of program staff on quality of relationships in a community-based youth mentoring program. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nyas.14289>
- Kern, L., Harrison, J., Custer, B., & Metha, P. (2019). Factors That Enhance the Quality of Relationships Between Mentors and Mentees During Check & Connect. *Behavioral Disorders*, 44(3), 148-161. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0198742918779791>
- Keller, T., Perry, M., & Spencer, R. (2020). Reducing Social Isolation Through Formal Youth Mentoring: Opportunities and Potential Pitfalls. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 48(1), 35-45. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10615-019-00727-x>
- Khvorostianov, N., & Remennick, L. (2017). 'By Helping Others, We Helped Ourselves:' Volunteering and Social Integration of Ex-Soviet Immigrants in Israel. *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations*, 28(1), 335-357. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-016-9745-9>
- Kostet, I., Nys, K., Verhaegen, I., & Van Puyenbroeck, J. (2018). *Persoonlijke netwerkversterking bij mensen in armoede: Een overzicht van werkmodellen en een sterkte-zwakteanalyse door ervarings- en praktijkdeskundigen*. Brussels: Odisee.
- Kroll, J. (2016). What Is Meant By The Term Group Mentoring? *Mentoring & Tutoring: Partnership in Learning*, 24(1), 44-58. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13611267.2016.1165488>
- Kuperminc, G., & N., Deutsch. (2021). *Group Mentoring*. Boston: National Mentoring Resource Center.
- Kupersmidt, J. B., Stump, K. N., Stelter, R. L., & Rhodes, J. E. (2017). Predictors of premature match closure in youth mentoring relationship. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 59, 25-35. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12124>
- Kutsenko, O., Bataeva, E., & Babenko, S. (2020). De-Othering politics and practices of forced migrants in modern society. *Ideology and Politics Journal*, 2(16), 62-82. <https://doi.org/10.36169/2227-6068.2020.01.00013>
- Kwekkeboom, R. (2004). *De waarde van vermaatschappelijking*. Breda: Avans.
- Kymlicka, W. (2015). Solidarity in diverse societies: beyond neoliberal multiculturalism and welfare chauvinism. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 3(1), 17. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-015-0017-4>

- Lahav, G. (1998). Immigration and the state: The devolution and privatisation of immigration control in the EU. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 24(4), 675-694. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.1998.9976660>
- Lai, D.W.L., Shankar, J., & Khalema, E. (2017). Unspoken Skills and Tactics: Essentials for Immigrant Professionals in Integration to Workplace Culture. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 18(3), 937-959. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-017-0513-5>
- Lamba, N.K., & Krahn, H. (2003). Social capital and refugee resettlement: The social networks of refugees in Canada. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 4(3), 335-360. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-003-1025-z>
- Laoukili, F., Oosterlynck, S., Swerts, T., Wouters, R., & Cools, P. (2019). *Omgaan met etnisch-culturele diversiteit in het middenveld: een overzicht van de paradigma's*. Antwerpen: CRESC.
- Laurier, E., & Philo, C. (2006). Possible geographies : A passing encounter in a café. *Area*, 38, 353-363. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-4762.2006.00712.x>
- Leck, J., & Orser, B. (2013). Fostering trust in mentoring relationships: an exploratory study. *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion*, 32(4), 410-425. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EDI-01-2010-0007>
- Lester, A., Goodloe, C., Johnson, H., & Deutsch, N. (2019). Understanding mutuality: Unpacking relational processes in youth mentoring relationships. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 47(1), 147-162. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22106>
- Lester M., Mead N., Graham C.C, Gask L., & Reilly, S. (2012). An exploration of the value and mechanisms of befriending for older adults in England. *Aging and Society*, 32, 307-328. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0144686X11000353>
- Liao, L., & Sánchez, B. (2015). A exploratory study of the role of mentoring in the acculturation of latino/a youth: Mentoring and Acculturation of Latino/a Youth. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 43(7), 868-877. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.21717>
- Lo, L., & Teixeira, C. (2015). Immigrants doing business in a mid-sized Canadian city: Challenges, opportunities, and local strategies in Kelowna. British Columbia. *Growth and Change*, 46(4), 631-653. <https://doi.org/10.1111/grow.12103>
- MacDonald, K., & Greggans, A. (2010) Cool friends: an evaluation of community befriending with young people with Cystic Fibrosis. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 117(8), 2406-14. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2702.2010.03294.x>
- Mahieu, R., Van Raemdonck, L., & Clycq, N. (2019). *Cohousing and case management for unaccompanied young adult refugees in Antwerp (CURANT)*. Antwerp: CeMIS.
- Mahieu, R., & Van Caudenberg, R. (2020). Young refugees and locals living under the same roof: intercultural communal living as a catalyst for refugees' integration in European urban communities? *Comparative Migration Studies*, 8(12), 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-019-0168-9>

- Malmusi, D. (2015). Immigrants' health and health inequality by type of integration policies in European countries. *European Journal of Public Health*, 25(2), 293-299. <https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/cku156>
- Mandin, J. (2014). *An overview of integration policies in Belgium*. Liege: Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies.
- Manzano, A. (2016). The craft of interviewing in realist evaluation. *Evaluation*, 22(3), 342-360. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1356389016638615>
- Marchal, B., Dedzo, M., & Kegels, G. (2010). A realist evaluation of the management of a well-performing regional hospital in Ghana. *BMC Health Services Research*, 10(24). <https://doi.org/10.1186/1472-6963-10-24>
- Marsden, P. V. (1982). Brokerage behavior in restricted exchange networks. In P. V. Marsden & N. Lin (Eds.), *Social structure and network analysis* (pp. 201-218). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Martin, S., & Sifers, S. (2012). An evaluation of factors leading to mentor satisfaction with the mentoring relationship. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 34(5), 940-945. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2012.01.025>
- Mathys, E., & Raeymaeckers, P. (2019). 'De STEK, een sterke zet voor sociale bescherming': een evaluatieonderzoek naar werkzame principes. Antwerpen: CRESC.
- Mayer, R., Davis, J. H., & Schoorman, F. D. (1995). An Integrative Model of Organizational Trust. *The Academy of Management Review*, 20(3), 709-734. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1995.9508080335>
- McGowan B., & Jowett C. (2003). Promoting positive mental health through befriending. *International Journal of Mental Health Promotion*, 59(2), 12-24. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623730.2003.9721902>
- McGowan, B., Saintas, P., & Gill, K. (2009). On mentoring, social mentoring and befriending. *AI & SOCIETY*, 23(4), 613-630. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00146-008-0184-z>
- McKnight, D.H., Cummings, L.L., & Chervany, N.L. (1998). Initial trust formation in new organizational relationships. *Academy of Management Review*, 23(3), 473-490. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.1998.926622>
- Menges, C. (2016). Toward improving the effectiveness of formal mentoring programs: matching by personality matters. *Group & Organization Management*, 41(1), 98-129. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1059601115579567>
- Minderhedenforum (2021). *Beleidsaanbevelingen Uitrol Vierde Pijler Integratie- en Inburgeringsdecreet*. <https://www.minderhedenforum.be/download/media/800/aanbeveling-4depijler.pdf>
- Mitchell G., & Pistrang N. (2011). Befriending for mental health problems: process of helping. *Psychology & Psychotherapy: Theory, Research & Practise*, 84, 151-169. <https://doi.org/10.1348/147608310X508566>

- Morgan, D.L. (1990). Combining the Strengths of Social Networks, Social Support and Personal relationships. In S. Duck & R. Cohen Silver (Eds.), *Personal Relationships and Social Support* (pp. 190–215). London: SAGE.
- Muijres, M., & Aarts, N. (2011). *Welkom in Rotterdam! Een studie naar interculturele ontmoetingen tussen 'oude' en 'nieuwe' Rotterdammers*. Wageningen: University & Research centre.
- Mulvihill, J. (2011). The unique and valuable support provided by mentoring and befriending. *Working with Older People*, 15(1), 34-37. <https://doi.org/10.5042/wwop.2011.0118>
- Naidoo, S., Gathiram, P., & Schlebusch, L. (2014). Effectiveness of a Buddy intervention support programme for suicidal behaviour in a primary care setting. *South African Family Practice*, 56(5), 263-270. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20786190.2014.980159>
- Neuwirth, E., & Wahl, I. (2017). Effects of the similarity between mentees and mentors on the evaluation of the 'Mentoring for Migrants Program'. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 15(2), 140-154.
- Noppe, J., Vanweddigen, M., Doyen, G., Stuyck, K., Feys, Y., & Buyschaert, P. (2018). *Vlaamse Migratie- en Integratiemonitor 2018*. Brussel: Agentschap Binnenlands Bestuur.
- Oberoi, K. (2016). *Mentoring for first-generation immigrant and refugee youth*. Miami: National Mentoring Resource Center.
- Obstfeld, D. (2005). Social networks, the tertius iungens orientation, and involvement in innovation. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 50, 100-130. <https://doi.org/10.2189/asqu.2005.50.1.100>
- Obstfeld, D., Borgatti, S. P., & Davis, J. (2014). Brokerage as a Process: Decoupling Third Party Action from Social Network Structure. In D. Brass, G. Labianca, A. Mehra & S.P. Borgatti (Eds.), *Research in the Sociology of Organizations* (pp. 135-159). Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.
- Palinkas, L., Horwitz, S., Green, C., Wisdom, J., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful Sampling for Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis in Mixed Method Implementation Research. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, 42(5), 533-544. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y>
- Paloma, V., Morena, I., Sladkova, J., & Lopez-Torres, C. (2020). A peer support and peer mentoring approach to enhancing resilience and empowerment among refugees settled in southern Spain. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 48(5), 1438-1451. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22338>
- Paré, C. (2022). "Selective Solidarity? Racialized Othering in European Migration Politics." *Amsterdam Review of European Affairs*, 1(1), 42-61.
- Parton, N., & Kirk, S. (2009). The nature and purposes of social work research. In I. Shaw (Ed.), *The Sage handbook of social work research* (pp. 23–36). London: Sage.
- Pascouau, Y. (2018). Integration Requirements in EU Member States. In A. Rea, E. Bribosia, I. Rorive & D. Sredanovic (Eds.), *Governing Diversity Migrant Integration and Multiculturalism in North America and Europe* (pp.161-178). Brussels: Institut d'Etudes Europeenes.

- Pasetti, F. (2019). Configurations of Immigrant Integration Policies in Europe: An Exploratory Appraisal. *World Affairs*, 182(1), 35-60. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0043820019825935>
- Pauly, R., Hitchins, T., Verschuere, B., & De Rynck, F. (2020). *Lokale netwerken voor opvang en begeleiding van asielzoekers en vluchtelingen tijdens de 'opvangcrisis': CSI Flanders case studie rapport*. Brussel: CSI Flanders.
- Pawson, R., & Tilley, N. (1997). *Realist Evaluation*. Londen: SAGE.
- Peifer, J., Lawrence, E., Williams, J., & Leyton-Armakan, J. (2016). The culture of mentoring: Ethnocultural empathy and ethnic identity in mentoring for minority girls. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 22(3), 440-446. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/cdp0000078>
- Penninx, R., & B. Garcés-Mascareñas (2016). The concept of integration as an analytical tool and as a policy concept. In B. Garcés-Mascareñas & R. Penninx (Eds.), *Integration Processes and Policies in Europe. Context, Levels and Actors, IMISCOE research series* (pp. 11–30). London: Springer Open.
- Penninx, R., & Garcés-Mascareñas, B. (2016). Analysis and Conclusions. In R. Penninx & B. Garcés-Mascareñas (Eds.), *Integration Processes and Policies in Europe* (pp. 189-202). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Pettigrew, T., & Tropp, L. (2005). Allport's Intergroup Contact Hypothesis: Its history and influence. In J.F. Dovidio, P. Glick & L.A. Rudman (Eds.), *On the Nature of Prejudice: Fifty Years after Allport* (pp.262-277). Hoboken: Blackwell Publishing.
- Pettigrew, T., & Tropp, L. (2008). How does intergroup contact reduce prejudice? Meta-analytic tests of three mediators. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 38, 922-934. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.504>
- Philip, K., & Spratt, J. (2007). *A synthesis of published research on mentoring and befriending*. Manchester: The Mentoring and Befriending Foundation.
- Poppelaars, C., & Scholten, P. (2008). Two Worlds Apart: The Divergence of National and Local Immigrant Integration Policies in the Netherlands. *Administration & Society*, 40(4), 335-357. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095399708317172>
- Povlsen, L. (2012). Immigrant women's clubs in a health-promotion perspective. *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health*, 40(4), 355–359. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1403494812449522>
- Pulinx, R. (2016). *Sociale netwerken en inburgering: Een explorerend onderzoek naar het zichtbaar maken van de sociale netwerken van nieuwkomers*. Antwerpen: Steunpunt Inburgering en Integratie.
- Pulinx, R., & Van Avermaet, P. (2015). Integration in Flanders (Belgium): citizenship as achievement: how intertwined are 'citizenship' and 'integration' in Flemish language policies?, *Journal of Language and Politics*, 14(3), 335-358. <https://doi.org/10.1075/jlp.14.3.02pul>
- Putnam, R.D. (2000). *Bowling Alone : The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

- Putnam, R.D. (2007). E Pluribus Unum: Diversity and Community in the Twenty-first Century. The 2006 Johan Skytte Prize Lecture. *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 30(2), 137-174. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9477.2007.00176.x>
- Ragins, B. R. (1997). Diversified mentoring relationships in organizations: A power perspective. *Academy of Management Review*, 22, 482– 521. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5465/AMR.1997.9707154067>
- Raithelhuber, E. (2018). How “godparents” are made for “unaccompanied refugee minors”: an ethnographic view into the training of future youth mentors. *Child & Youth Services*, 39(4), 250-283. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0145935X.2018.1498330>
- Raithelhuber, E. (2021). ‘If we want, they help us in any way’: how ‘unaccompanied refugee minors’ experience mentoring relationships. *European Journal of Social Work*, 24(2), 251-266. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2019.1606787>
- Raithelhuber, E. (2023). Mentoring for social inclusion: a call for social work to engage with an emerging model of social intervention. *European Journal of Social Work*, 1-2. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691457.2023.2236319>
- Rashid, L., & Cepeda-García, S. (2021). Self-Categorising and Othering in Migrant Integration: The Case of Entrepreneurs in Berlin. *Sustainability*, 13(4), 2145. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13042145>
- Rasoal, C., Eklund, J., & Hansen, E. (2011). Toward a conceptualization of ethnocultural empathy. *Journal of Social, Evolutionary, and Cultural Psychology*, 5(1), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0099278>
- Reeves, R. (2017). Inter-cultural mentoring for newcomer immigrants: Mentor perspectives and better practices. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 15(1), 186-207.
- Reidsma, M., & De Cuyper, P. (2020). Buddyprogramma’s voor anderstalige nieuwkomers: Inspiratie uit de organisatie van buddyprogramma’s in drie landen. Leuven: HIVA-KU Leuven.
- Reidsma, M., & De Cuyper, P. (2023). *An evaluation of the Orient8 social mentoring program*. Leuven: HIVA-KU LEUVEN.
- Rhodes, J. E. (2002). *Stand by me: The risks and rewards of mentoring today’s youth*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Rhodes, J. E., Spencer, R., Keller, T. E., Liang, B., & Noam, G. (2006). A model for the influence of mentoring relationships on youth development. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 34(6), 691–707. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.20124>.
- Rich, A. (1986). *Blood, Bread and Poetry: Selected Prose 1979–1985*. New York: Norton.
- Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., & Elam, G. (2003). Designing and selecting samples. In J. Ritchie & J. Lewis (Eds.), *Qualitative research practice: a guide for social science students and researchers* (pp. 77–108). London: Sage.
- Rutledge, P. B., & Hogg, J. L. C. (2020). In-depth interviews. In J. Bulck (Ed.), *The International Encyclopedia of Media Psychology* (pp.1-7). Hoboken: Wiley.

- Ryan, L., Sales, R., Tilki, M., & Siara, B. (2008). Social Networks, Social Support and Social Capital: The Experiences of Recent Polish Migrants in London. *Sociology*, 42(4), 672-690. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0038038508091622>
- Sánchez-Aragón, A., Belzunegui-Eraso, A., & Prieto-Flores, O. (2020). Results of Mentoring in the Psychosocial Well-Being of Young Immigrants and Refugees in Spain. *Healthcare*, 9(1), 13. <https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare9010013>
- Scaletta, A., Tissinié, V., Nasrdine, N., & Kerr, A. (2022). Voluntary Returns: National Strategy or EU Common Strategy?, *Amsterdam Review of European Affairs*, 1(1) 25-41.
- Scholten, P., Collett, E., & Petrovic, M. (2017). Mainstreaming migrant integration? A critical analysis of a new trend in integration governance. *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 83(2), 283-302. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020852315612902>
- Scholten, P., & Penninx, R. (2016). The Multilevel Governance of Migration and Integration. In R. Penninx & B. Garcés-Mascreñas (Eds.), *Integration Processes and Policies in Europe* (pp. 91-108). Cham: Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-21674-4_6
- Simmel, G. (1950). *The sociology of Georg Simmel* (K.H. Wolff, Trans.). Glencoe, IL: Free Press.
- Smith, K., Ní Raghallaigh, M., & Scholtz, J. (2021). 'I hope like they talk with us like how they talk with Irish': 'difference', discrimination and affective inequality in the lives of young Syrian refugees resettled in Ireland. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 24(8), 1117-1134. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2020.1801993>
- Sobolewska, M., Galandini, S., & Lessard-Phillips, L. (2017). The public view of immigrant integration: multidimensional and consensual. Evidence from survey experiments in the UK and the Netherlands. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 43(1), 58-79. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2016.1248377>
- Somers, B. (2019). *Beleidsnota 2019-2024. Gelijke Kansen, Integratie en Inburgering*. <https://publicaties.vlaanderen.be/view-file/32225>
- Spencer, R., Gowdy, G., Drew, A., McCormack, M., & Keller, T. (2019). It Takes a Village to Break Up a Match: A Systemic Analysis of Formal Youth Mentoring Relationship Endings. *Child & Youth Care Forum*, 49(1), 97-120. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10566-019-09520-w>
- Spencer, R., Pryce, J., Barry, J., Walsh, J., & Basualdo-Delmonico, A. (2020). Deconstructing empathy: A qualitative examination of mentor perspective-taking and adaptability in youth mentoring relationships. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 114, 105043. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2020.105043>
- Spiekermann, L., Lyons, M., & Lawrence, E. (2020). The ups and downs of mentoring relationship formation: What to expect. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 118, 105413. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2020.105413>

- Spijkers, F.E., & Loopmans, M. (2020). Meaningful intercultural contact: how different places pave the way for learning to live together in diversity. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 21(8), 1146-1167. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2018.1541246>
- Statbel (2023). *International migration balance of 116,544 persons in 2022*. <https://statbel.fgov.be/en/themes/population/population-movement/migration#news>
- Steel, T., Lämsä, A.-M., & Jyrkinen, M. (2019). Paradoxes of Mentoring : An Ethnographic Study of a Mentoring Programme for Highly-educated Women with Migrant Backgrounds. *Culture Unbound: Journal of Current Cultural Research*, 11(2), 275-297. <https://doi.org/10.3384/cu.2000.1525.19112297>
- Stock, I. (2019). Buddy Schemes between Refugees and Volunteers in Germany: Transformative Potential in an Unequal Relationship?. *Social Inclusion*, 7(2), 128-138. <https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v7i2.2041>
- Stokes, P., Fatien Diochon, P., & Otter, K. (2021). "Two sides of the same coin?" Coaching and mentoring and the agentic role of context. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1483(1), 142-152. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nyas.14316>
- Tasselli, S., & Kilduff, M. (2021). Network Agency. *Academy of Management Annals*, 15(1), 68-110. <https://doi.org/10.5465/annals.2019.0037>
- Thys, R. (2003). Bruggen over woelig water. Een kwalitatief onderzoek over opwaartse sociale mobiliteit uit een generatiearme context. In J. Vrancken (Ed.), *Armoede en Sociale Uitsluiting. Jaarboek 2003* (pp. 263-282). Leuven: Acco.
- Tonkens, E. (2009). *Tussen onderschatten en overvragen. Actief burgerschap en activerende organisaties in de wijk*. Amsterdam: SUN Trancity.
- Tonkens, E. (2014). Herover de participatiesamenleving. *S&D*, 71(1), 85-95.
- Tropp, L. R., & Pettigrew, T. F. (2005). Relationships between intergroup contact and prejudice among minority and majority status groups. *Psychological Science*, 16, 651-653. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9280.2005.01643.x>
- Uyterlinde, M., Lub, V., de Groot, N., & Sprinkhuizen, A. (2009). *Meer dan een steuntje in de rug: Succesfactoren van coaching en mentoring onderzocht*. Utrecht: Movisie.
- Valentine, G. (2008). Living with difference: reflections on geographies of encounter. *Progress in Human Geography*, 32(2), 323-337. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309133308089372>
- Valentine, G., & Waite, L. (2012). Negotiating Difference through Everyday Encounters: The Case of Sexual Orientation and Religion and Belief. *Antipode*, 44(2), 474-492. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2010.00866.x>
- Van Bochove M., Tonkens, E., & Verplanke, L. (2014). *Kunnen we dat (niet) aan vrijwilligers overlaten? Nieuwe verhoudingen tussen vrijwilligers en professionals in zorg en welzijn*. Amsterdam: Platform31.

- Van Bochove, M., Tonkens, E., Verplanke, L., & Roggeveen, S. (2018). Reconstructing the professional domain: Boundary work of professionals and volunteers in the context of social service reform. *Current Sociology*, 66(3), 392-411. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392116677300>
- Van Bochove, M., & Verhoeven, M. (2014). Extra, evenknie of eigenaar: Samenwerkingspatronen tussen vrijwilligers en professionals. In M. van Bochove, E. Tonkens & L. Verplanke (Eds.), *Kunnen we dat (niet) aan vrijwilligers overlaten? Nieuwe verhoudingen tussen vrijwilligers en professionals in zorg en welzijn* (pp. 17-39). Den Haag; Amsterdam: Platform31; Universiteit van Amsterdam.
- Van Dam, S., & Raeymaeckers, P. (2017). *Brug Binnen Buiten. Inzetten op ondersteuningsnoden van ex-gedetineerden door vrijwilligers*. Brussel: OASeS.
- Van De Pol, S., Michielsens, J., & De Cuyper, P. (2013). *Integratiebeleid in Vlaanderen*. Antwerpen: Steunpunt Inburgering & Integratie.
- Van der Tier, M., & Potting, M. (2015). Een maatje voor iedereen? Een wetenschappelijke basis onder de methode maatjesproject. Utrecht: Movisie.
- Vandevoordt, R. (2016). *De ervaringen van Syrische vluchtelingen in België: drempels, noden en aspiraties*. Antwerpen: OASeS/CeMIS.
- Vandevoordt, R. (2019). Eroding Rights, Crafting Solidarity? Shifting Dynamics in the State–Civil Society Nexus in Flanders and Brussels. *Social Inclusion*, 7(2), 106-117. <https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v7i2.2010>
- Vandevoordt, R. (2020). Resisting Bare Life: Civil Solidarity and the Hunt for Illegalized Migrants. *International Migration*, 59(3), 47-62. <https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12715>.
- Van Mol, C., & de Valk, H. (2016). Migration and Immigrants in Europe: A Historical and Demographic Perspective. In R. Penninx & B. Garcés-Masareñas (Eds.), *Integration Processes and Policies in Europe* (pp. 31-55). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Van Puymbroeck, N., & Saeys, A. (2014). Nationalisme in de integratiesector: Een proces van verstatelijking en centralisering. In G. Verschraegen, C. de Olde, S. Oosterlynck & F. Vandermoere (Eds.), *Over gevestigden en buitenstaanders. Armoede, diversiteit en stedelijkheid* (pp. 187–206). Leuven: Acco.
- Van Regenmortel, T. (2009). Empowerment als uitdagend kader voor sociale inclusie en moderne zorg. *Journal of Social Intervention: Theory and Practice*, 18(4), 22-42. <https://doi.org/10.18352/jsi.186>
- Van Robaey, B., & Lyssens-Danneboom, V. (2016). *Duo-werkingen in Vlaanderen: Eerste tussentijds onderzoeksverslag*. Antwerpen: Expertisecentrum Krachtgericht Sociaal Werk.
- Van Robaey, B., & Lyssens-Danneboom, V. (2018). *Kwetsbaar verbonden: De duomethodiek in Vlaanderen*. Leuven: Lannoo Campus.
- Van 't Hoog, M., Van Egten, C., De Hoog, S., & Vos, M. (2012). *Mentorprojecten en migrantenjeugd: effecten en werkzame factoren*. Groningen: Instituut voor Integratie en Sociale Weerbaarheid.

- Verhoeven, I., & Van Bochove, M. (2018). Moving Away, Toward, and Against: How Front-line Workers Cope with Substitution by Volunteers in Dutch Care and Welfare Services. *Journal of Social Policy*, 47(4), 783-801. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279418000119>
- Vescan, I.A., Van Keer, R.-L., Politi, E., Roblain, A., & Phalet, K. (2023). Dyadic relations between refugees and volunteers: Support exchange and reciprocity experienced in buddy projects in Flanders, Belgium. *Current Research in Ecological and Social Psychology*, 5, 100132. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cresp.2023.100132>
- Virkkunen, J., Koikkalainen, S., & Piipponen, M. (2023). Migration Strategies at the Time of a Crisis: Asylum Applicants in Finland. In M.-L. Jakobson, R. King, L. Moroşanu & Vetik. R. (Eds.), *Anxieties of Migration and Integration in Turbulent Times* (pp. 41-55). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Vlaamse Regering (2013). *Decreet betreffende het Vlaamse integratie- en inburgeringsbeleid*. <https://codex.vlaanderen.be/portals/codex/documenten/1023121.html>
- Vlaamse Regering (2019). *Regeerakkoord van de Vlaamse Regering 2019-2024*. <https://publicaties.vlaanderen.be/view-file/31741>
- Vlaamse Regering (2020). *Nota aan de Vlaamse Regering betreft hertekening inburgeringstraject*. <https://publicaties.vlaanderen.be/view-file/39387>
- Vlaamse Regering (2021). *Decreet tot wijziging van het decreet van 7 juni 2013 betreffende het Vlaamse integratie- en inburgeringsbeleid*. https://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/cgi/article_body.pl?language=nl&caller=summary&pub_date=2021-08-11&numac=2021032190%0D%0A
- Voicu, B., & Voicu, M. (2009). Volunteers and volunteering in Central and Eastern Europe. *Slovak Journal of Sociology*, 41, 539-563.
- Walseth, K., & Fasting, K. (2004). Sport as a Means of Integrating Minority Women. *Sport in Society*, 7(1), 109-129. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1461098042000220218>
- Wang, Y.-W., Bleier, J., Davidson, M., Savoy, H., Tan, J., & Yakushko, O. (2003). The scale of ethnocultural empathy. Development, validation, and reliability. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 2, 221-234. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0022-0167.50.2.221>
- Weick, K. E. (1979). *The social psychology of organizing* (2nd ed.). Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Weiss, A., & Tulin, M. (2019). As Iron Sharpens Iron: A mentoring approach to labour market integration for humanitarian migrants. *International Journal of Evidence Based Coaching and Mentoring*, 17(2), 122-137. <https://doi.org/10.24384/3d5c-w176>
- Wester, F., & Peters, V. (2009). *Kwalitatieve analyse: uitgangspunten en procedures*. Bussum: Coutinho.
- Westerveen, L., & Adam, I. (2019). Monitoring the impact of doing nothing: New trends in immigrant integration policy. *Ethnicities*, 19(1), 20-43. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468796818785658>

- White, H. (2009). Theory-based impact evaluation: principles and practice. *Journal of development effectiveness*, 1(3), 271-284. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19439340903114628>
- Wilson, H.F. (2017). On geography and encounter: Bodies, borders, and difference. *Progress in Human Geography*, 41(4), 451-471. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0309132516645958>
- Zapata-Barrero, R. (2016). Exploring the foundations of the intercultural policy paradigm: A comprehensive approach. *Identities*, 23(2), 155-173. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1070289X.2015.1006523>.
- Zapata-Barrero, R., Caponio, T., & Scholten, P. (2017). Theorizing the 'local turn' in a multi-level governance framework of analysis: a case study in immigrant policies. *International Review of International Review of Administrative Sciences*, 83(2), 241-246. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0020852316688426>
- Zschomler, S. (2019). 'Language Is Your Dignity': Migration, Linguistic Capital, and the Experience of Re/De-Valuation. *Languages*, 4(3), 64. <https://doi.org/10.3390/languages4030064>

Appendix I: Valorisation projects Hannah Arendt Institute

Buddyprojecten voor nieuwkomers

Interactieve lezing

Buddyprojecten komen steeds meer op de voorgrond als een instrument om de integratie van nieuwkomers te versnellen. In een buddyproject brengt een professional een nieuwkomer en een vrijwilliger samen. Deze vrijwilliger – of buddy – biedt taal oefenkansen en kan de nieuwkomer wegwijs maken in de stad of gemeente. Het vernieuwde inburgeringsdecreet speelt in op deze tendens en hoopt via een buddy het sociaal netwerk van de nieuwkomer te versterken.

Deze sessie zoomt in op het sociale netwerk aspect en bestaat uit drie onderdelen.

- Ten eerste bekijken we op basis van onderzoek van de Universiteit Antwerpen hoe coördinatoren en buddy's hun rol kunnen invullen.
- Daarna presenteren **FMDO** (Federatie voor Mondiale en Democratische Organisaties) en **VGC** (Vlaamse Gemeenschapscommissie) een impactmeting die het effect van een buddy op het sociaal netwerk van de nieuwkomer onderzoekt.
- Tenslotte vertelt een nieuwkomer over haar ervaringen met een buddyproject van **Samen Inburgeren Turnhout**.



Gaëlle Mortier

Gaëlle Mortier is doctoraatsonderzoeker aan de Universiteit van Antwerpen. Ze doet onderzoek naar de sociale netwerkfunctie van buddyprojecten.



Fatima Altunbas

Fatima Altunbas is projectmedewerker bij het buddyproject **GoNnect** in Brussel en stafmedewerker bij de **Federatie van Mondiale & Democratische Organisaties (FMDO)**.



Samen Inburgeren Turnhout

Een nieuwkomer getuigt over haar ervaringen met een buddyproject van **Samen Inburgeren Turnhout**.

Eos Blogs Psyché & Brein

Buddy's als mirakeloplossing voor inburgering?



Vanaf 2022 zullen zogenaamde buddy's nieuwkomers wegwijs maken in onze samenleving. Kunnen we zo echt de uitdagingen rond integratie overwinnen of blijven we ter plaatse trappelen?

Wie de aangrijpende docureeks 'Jij jaar hier' zag, herinnert zich misschien Ahmed nog, de schrijver uit Aleppo die op de vlucht sloeg voor het oorlogsveld. Eenmaal in België ontmoette hij Sandy, een leerkracht lager onderwijs die al scrabbelend Nederlands met hem oefende en hem introduceerde in de cultuur van zijn gastland. Ondertussen is Ahmed getrouwd en werkt hij bij een bedrijf dat interieurs ontwerpt.



Gaëlle Mortier
Meer artikels van deze auteur

Meer over de volgende onderwerpen:

Psyché & Brein
Eos Blogs
integratie

migratie

Dit is een artikel van:

Eos Blogs



Rapport

Sociale netwerking- en participatietrajecten met nieuwkomers als vierde pijler van het nieuwe inburgerings-decreet

Gaëlle Mortier
Stijn Oosterlynck
Peter Raeymaekers

Centre for Research on Environmental and Social Change (CRESC), Departement Sociologie, Universiteit Antwerpen en Hannah Arendt Instituut.

Een sociaal netwerk: een toegangsticket tot de samenleving?

De Vlaamse regering wil in de toekomst initiatieven als buddyprojecten, bedrijfsstages of introductie in het vrijwilligerswerk gebruiken om de integratie van nieuwkomers te vergemakkelijken. Het zal de vierde pijler van het inburgeringsdecreet worden. Het Hannah Arendt Instituut onderzoekt hoe die pijler van sociale netwerken en participatie zou kunnen werken. Gaëlle Mortier en Stijn Oosterlynck zetten de inzichten uit de bestaande literatuur op een rij.



De Vlaamse regering kondigde het al aan. Naast de drie bestaande pijlers, (Nederlands, maatschappelijke oriëntatie en trajectbegeleiding) zal in het nieuwe inburgeringsdecreet een vierde pijler worden toegevoegd: sociale netwerken en participatie.

Met die vierde pijler wil het de nieuwkomers een traject op maat aanbieden in de vorm van bv. een buddyproject, introductie in het vrijwilligerswerk, een taalstage, deelname aan het verenigingsleven of een kennismakingsstage bij een bedrijf, organisatie of lokaal bestuur. Deze trajecten zouden de integratie en participatie van nieuwkomers in de samenleving verbeteren en ervoor zorgen dat ze een sociaal netwerk kunnen uitbouwen in de ontvangende samenleving.

Het opstarten en uitrollen van deze pijler is voor de toekomst. Gaëlle Mortier en Stijn Oosterlynck bekeken het reeds bestaande onderzoek over hoe deze sociale netwerken en participatie kunnen ingezet worden. Op basis van die eerste literatuurstudie zetten ze enkele bevindingen op een rij, die kunnen dienen als inspiratie voor de verdere uitwerking.

Waarom zijn sociale netwerken zo belangrijk voor nieuwkomers?

*We stellen vast dat inburgeraars wel degelijk hun sociale contacten willen uitbreiden, maar dat ze dit



Gaëlle Mortier

Onderzoekster Hannah Arendt Instituut

Rapport: wat zegt de wetenschap over buddywerkingen en integratie?



Het huidige inburgeringstraject in Vlaanderen bestaat uit drie pijlers: lessen Nederlands, trajectbegeleiding en maatschappelijke oriëntatie. Het nieuwe inburgeringsdecreet voegt hier een vierde pijler aan toe: het versterken van het sociaal netwerk van de inburgeraar en het verhogen van zijn participatie aan de ontvangende samenleving. Het Hannah Arendt Instituut maakte zopas een literatuurstudie/rapport over de wetenschappelijke inzichten die bestaan over de manier waarop sociale netwerken en buddywerkingen kunnen helpen om de integratie van nieuwkomers te vergemakkelijken.



Appendix II: Questionnaire for policymakers

Inleiding

- Voorstelling van mezelf en het onderzoek
- Het doel van mijn onderzoek is om inzicht te verwerven in de impact van buddywerkingen op het integratieproces van nieuwkomers.
- Het interview wordt opgenomen om analyse achteraf te vergemakkelijken (intern gebruik)
- Duur van het gesprek: 60 minuten

Voorstelling

- Kan u uzelf, uw functie en de organisatie waarvoor u werkt kort beschrijven?
- Op welke manier bent u betrokken bij de uitrol of het vormgeven van buddywerkingen voor nieuwkomers?

1. Beschrijving van de interventie: buddywerkingen

- Hoe zou u een buddywerking (voor nieuwkomers) in uw eigen woorden omschrijven?
 - Wat zijn voor u de typische kenmerken van een buddyproject?
 - U heeft buddywerkingen op de volgende manier omschreven. Kan u nu eens een goed voorbeeld geven van een buddywerking?
 - Waarom ervaart u dat voorbeeld als een goede praktijk?
 - Kan u een minder goed voorbeeld geven van een buddyproject?
 - Waarom ervaart u dat voorbeeld als een minder goede praktijk?
 - Wie/wat is voor u een goede buddy?
 - Kan iedereen een buddy zijn of moet je beschikken over bepaalde capaciteiten/vaardigheden?
- Wat is de meerwaarde van een buddywerking in het inburgeringstraject voor nieuwkomers?
 - Kan u een voorbeeld geven van de mogelijke opbrengsten van buddytrajecten voor nieuwkomers?

2. Resultaten en mechanismen van de interventie

I. Algemene doelstellingen (visie respondent)

- Wat zijn volgens u de doelstellingen van een buddyproject met nieuwkomers?
 - Wat moet een buddywerking volgens u bereiken? (kennis van de Vlaamse waarden en samenleving, psychologische opbrengsten, maatschappelijke, economische zelfredzaamheid...)
 - Wat is het belangrijkste resultaat dat een buddywerking volgens u moet bereiken?
 - Waarom?
- U zei dat buddywerkingen de volgende doelstellingen kunnen bereiken... Heeft u kennis over wat deze buddywerkingen daadwerkelijk realiseren?
 - Waarom denkt u dat buddyprojecten tot dergelijke resultaten zullen leiden?
 - Hoe zullen ze tot deze resultaten komen?

- Kan u een voorbeeld geven van een concreet resultaat van een buddywerking?

II. Integratie

In het voorontwerp van het vernieuwde inburgeringsdecreet kunnen we lezen dat het inburgeringstraject zal worden aangevuld met een vierde pijler, een participatie- en netwerktraject. Het doel is om onder andere te zorgen voor betere **integratie** van inburgeraars.

- Hoe zou u integratie in uw eigen woorden omschrijven?
 - Wanneer is een nieuwkomer volgens u (succesvol) geïntegreerd in de Vlaamse samenleving? (bv: arbeidsmarktintegratie, onderwijsparticipatie, huisvesting,...)
 - Waarom is dat volgens u 'goed' integreren?
 - Wat maakt dat integratie soms moeilijk verloopt?
 - Hoe kunnen buddywerkingen op uitdagingen rond integratie een antwoord bieden?
 - Waarom denkt u dat?
 - Kan u een voorbeeld geven?
- Wat zijn volgens u de integratie-uitkomsten van de deelname aan een buddywerking voor de nieuwkomer? (kennis van de Nederlandse taal, vertrouwd met Belgische/Vlaamse gewoonten, kennis van instellingen en diensten...)
 - Kan u een voorbeeld geven van een buddywerking die tot dergelijke integratie-uitkomsten leidt?
 - U heeft zo juist integratie omschreven als... Hoe kan een buddywerking nu bijdragen tot dat integratieproces en deze integratie-uitkomsten?
 - Waarom denkt u dat?
 - Kan u een voorbeeld geven van hoe ze dat doen?

III. Sociale netwerken en participatie

Het voorontwerp van het nieuwe inburgeringsdecreet stelt dat het creëren van een **sociaal netwerk** en zorgen voor een betere **participatie** van nieuwkomers een doel is van buddywerkingen (in het kader van de vierde pijler van het vernieuwde inburgeringsdecreet).

- Waarom is het 'hebben van een netwerk' (sociale contacten buiten de directe leefomgeving) zo belangrijk voor nieuwkomers?
- Hoe kunnen buddyprojecten het sociaal netwerk van nieuwkomers versterken/verbreden?
 - Waarom denkt u dat?
 - Kan u een voorbeeld geven van hoe ze dat doen?
- Waarom is het belangrijk dat dit netwerk zich niet beperkt tot de eigen (etnisch-culturele) groep? Zoals neergeschreven in de Beleidsnota Gelijke Kansen, Integratie en Inburgering 2019-2024.
 - Hoe kan een buddy(werking) ervoor zorgen dat het netwerk van de nieuwkomer zich uitbreidt voorbij de eigen (etnisch-culturele) groep?
 - Waarom denkt u dat?
 - Kan u een voorbeeld geven van een buddywerking die zorgt voor een dergelijke etnisch-culturele diversifiëring van het sociaal netwerk van de nieuwkomer?

- Is een hogere participatie van nieuwkomers een doel op zich of staat het in functie van een betere integratie in de samenleving?

Het voorontwerp van het wijzigingsdecreet stelt dat een buddywerking de inburgeraar de mogelijkheid geeft om sociale contacten te leggen buiten zijn/haar directe omgeving en zo komt tot **vertrouwensrelaties**.

- Waarom is een vertrouwensrelatie tussen nieuwkomers en de gevestigde bevolking belangrijk?
- Hoe wordt die vertrouwensrelatie tussen buddy en nieuwkomer gerealiseerd?
 - Waarom denkt u dat?
 - Kan u een voorbeeld geven van een buddywerking waarbinnen een dergelijke vertrouwensrelatie tot stand komt?

IV. Informeel aanspreekpunt

Buddywerkingen zouden er (volgens de conceptnota van de hertekening van het inburgeringstraject) voor zorgen dat de inburgeraar een **informeel aanspreekpunt** heeft en dat **mensen, zowel de inburgeraar als de omgeving, inzicht verkrijgen in de leefwereld van anderen** en **diversiteit leren omarmen**.

- Waarom is het belangrijk dat de inburgeraar/nieuwkomer een informeel aanspreekpunt heeft?
- Hoe kan een buddy als informeel aanspreekpunt voor de nieuwkomer fungeren?
 - Waarom denkt u dat?
 - Kan u hiervan een voorbeeld geven?
- Waarom is inzicht verwerven de in leefwereld van anderen belangrijk?
- Hoe kunnen buddywerkingen er precies voor zorgen dat mensen meer inzicht verwerven in elkaars leefwereld?
 - Waarom denkt u dat?
 - Kan u een voorbeeld geven van een buddywerking waarin buddy's en nieuwkomers kennis maken met elkaars leefwereld?
- Wat wordt er volgens u precies bedoeld met het 'omarmen van diversiteit'?
- Hoe kunnen buddywerkingen ervoor zorgen dat mensen 'diversiteit leren omarmen'?
 - Waarom denkt u dat?
 - Kan u een voorbeeld geven van een buddywerking waarin deelnemers 'diversiteit hebben leren omarmen'?

V. Verhouding professional-vrijwilliger:

Buddyprojecten voor nieuwkomers, zoals opgenomen in de vierde pijler, zullen in grote mate beroep doen op de inzet van vrijwilligers.

- Wat is volgens u de meerwaarde van het werken met vrijwilligers in het kader buddywerkingen?
- Waarom is de ondersteuning op een informele manier/ in een informele sfeer belangrijk voor het integratieproces van nieuwkomers?

- Hoe kan een buddy de nieuwkomer op een informele manier ondersteunen?
- Waarom denkt u dat?
- Kan u een voorbeeld geven?
- Hoe dienen vrijwilligers in buddywerkingen worden ingezet?
 - Waarom denkt u dat?
 - Kan u hiervan een voorbeeld geven?
- Welke ondersteuning dient de buddy volgens u te bieden aan de nieuwkomer? (relationeel, instrumenteel)
 - Waarom denkt u dat?
 - Kan u van die ondersteuning een voorbeeld geven?
- Hoe dienen professionals in buddywerkingen worden ingezet?
 - Waarom denkt u dat?
 - Kan u hiervan een voorbeeld geven?
- Welke ondersteuning dient de professional volgens u te bieden aan de nieuwkomer? (relationeel, instrumenteel)?
 - Waarom?
 - Kan u van die ondersteuning een voorbeeld geven?

Slot

Wat vormt u volgens u de grootste uitdaging in het opzetten van buddywerkingen voor nieuwkomers?

- Waarom?
- Kan u een voorbeeld geven?
- Tot slot, zijn er nog personen binnen de Vlaamse overheid die u zou aanduiden voor een gesprek over buddywerkingen met nieuwkomers? (snowball sampling)

Appendix III: Questionnaire for coordinators

Voorstelling

Voorstelling van mezelf en het onderzoek: Het doel van mijn onderzoek is om inzicht te verwerven in de impact van buddywerkingen op de netwerkverbreding van nieuwkomers. Enerzijds wil ik met dit gesprek jullie organisatie beter leren kennen. Anderzijds tracht dit interview onderliggende structuren en processen (werkzame principes) in de buddypraktijken bloot te leggen die aanleiding geven tot bepaalde resultaten. Ik focus hierbij vooral op de relatie tussen het duo en de sociale relaties van de nieuwkomer die hier verder uit voortkomen.

Informed consent: Uitleggen dat je niet altijd antwoord hoeft te geven. En dat je altijd mag stoppen met deelname zonder een reden te hoeven aangeven. Vragen akkoord te gaan met dit onderzoek door het informed consent formulier te ondertekenen.

Toestemming vragen voor opname: Vragen of ik het interview mag opnemen en dat de opname alleen voor dit onderzoek gebruikt zal worden en dat het niet met anderen gedeeld zal worden. Het interview wordt opgenomen om analyse achteraf te vergemakkelijken (intern gebruik)

Duur van het interview: 90 minuten

Vragen/opmerkingen: De respondent vragen of hij/zij vragen of opmerkingen heeft voordat ik start met het interview.

Fase 1: Inleidende vragen

- Kan u uzelf en uw functie binnen de buddywerking kort beschrijven?
- Kan u de buddywerking omschrijven?
- Welke doelgroep (van nieuwkomers) trachten jullie te bereiken met de buddywerking? wat zijn de kenmerken van deze doelgroep? Waarom deze doelgroep?
- Met welke noden/problemen wordt deze doelgroep geconfronteerd?
- Wie zijn de buddy's? Wat is het profiel van een buddy? Wat moet een buddy doen?
- Wat zijn de belangrijkste uitkomsten van het buddyproject voor de nieuwkomer/buddy's?
 - Kan u hiervan een voorbeeld geven?
- Wat trachten buddywerkingen voor u te verwezenlijken?

Fase 2: Doelstelling van netwerkverbreding

- Wat kunnen buddywerkingen nu betekenen voor het netwerk van een nieuwkomer?
- Kan u uitleggen waarom het hebben van een netwerk belangrijk is voor nieuwkomers?
- Wat betekent 'netwerkverbreding' voor u?
- Hoe staat deze doelstelling in verhouding tot andere doelstellingen van het buddytraject?
- Hoe wordt de doelstelling van netwerkverbreding binnen de buddywerking gerealiseerd?
- Wat gebeurt er dan precies volgens u waardoor het netwerk zich uitbreidt?

- Waarom denkt u dat?
- Kan u hiervan een voorbeeld geven?
- In welke mate slagen jullie erin om de doelstelling van netwerkverbreding te realiseren?
 - Waarom denkt u dat?
 - Hoe stellen jullie vast dat netwerkverbreding voor de nieuwkomer is gerealiseerd?
 - Zien jullie verschillen in de doelgroep m.b.t. het behalen van deze doelstelling? Bij wie lukt het? Bij wie lukt het niet?
 - Hoe zou u deze verschillen verklaren?
 - Wordt het netwerk van de buddy ook breder? Hoe dan? Waarom wel/niet?
- Waarom denkt u dat nu juist buddy's (al dan niet) geschikt zijn om het sociaal netwerk van de nieuwkomer te verbreden? In wat verschilt de buddy van andere personen in het leven van de nieuwkomer?
- Ziet u verschillen tussen nieuwkomers die enerzijds wel en anderzijds niet gekoppeld aan een buddy zijn (geweest) in de uitbouw van hun sociaal netwerk?
- In welke mate denkt u dat de buddy kan bijdragen tot de etnisch-culturele diversifiëring van het sociaal netwerk van de nieuwkomer?
 - Waarom is dat al dan niet belangrijk?
 - Hoe kan een buddy(werking) ervoor zorgen dat het netwerk van de nieuwkomer zich uitbreidt voorbij de eigen (etnisch-culturele) groep?
 - Waarom denkt u dat?
 - Kan u hiervan een voorbeeld geven?
 - Zijn er ook nadelen verbonden aan deze etnisch-culturele diversifiëring?
 - In welke mate wordt niet alleen het netwerk van de nieuwkomer, maar ook die van de Vlaamse buddy diverser?
 - Hoe gebeurt dat dan precies? Kan u hiervan een voorbeeld? Waarom denkt u dat?
- Zijn er volgens u ook nadelen/beperkingen verbonden aan de focus op netwerkverbreding in buddywerkingen? Zo ja: Welke?
 - Waarom denkt u dat?
 - Kan u dit verduidelijken met een voorbeeld?
- In welke mate trachten jullie de netwerkverbredende impact van de buddywerking na afloop van het project te waarborgen? Hoe gebeurt dat dan? Kan u hiervan een voorbeeld geven?

Fase 3: Systematiek van de case

- Kan u het verloop van het buddytraject omschrijven? Wat zijn de verschillende stappen doorheen het traject?
- Geef eens een voorbeeld van een buddytraject dat succesvol verlopen is?
 - Hoe is de buddywerking erin geslaagd om het netwerk van de nieuwkomer te verbreden?
 - Wat gebeurt er dan?
 - Wat is er juist zo goed aan?
- Geef eens een voorbeeld van een buddytraject dat minder goed verlopen is?

- Hoe trachten jullie nieuwkomers te werven?
 - Welke voorwaarden stellen jullie tot deelname aan het buddyproject?
- Hoe trachten jullie buddy's te werven?
 - Welke voorwaarden stellen jullie tot deelname aan het buddyproject?
- Waarom is het belangrijk om te selecteren? Waarom een bepaalde groep wel/niet?
- Hoe kijkt u naar het principe van vrijwilligheid in buddywerkingen?
 - Wat is voor u 'vrijwilligheid'? Hoe wordt dit bereikt?
 - Waarom is dat wel/niet belangrijk?
 - Kan u dit illustreren met een voorbeeld?
 - Wat betekent die vrijwilligheid voor het netwerk van de nieuwkomer?
- Hoe verlopen de kennismakingsgesprekken met de deelnemers?
 - Hoe gebeuren deze gesprekken?
 - Aandachtspunten? Randvoorwaarden?
 - Kan u dit toelichten met een voorbeeld?
 - Wordt hier al aandacht besteed aan het netwerk van de nieuwkomer?
- Hoe verloopt het matchingsproces? Op basis van welke criteria matchen jullie de duo's?
- Waarom hebben jullie gekozen voor deze matchingstrategie- en criteria?
 - Kan u een voorbeeld geven van een matchingproces dat minder/goed verlopen is?
 - In welke mate zetten jullie in op het vinden van gemeenschappelijkheden tussen het duo? Waarom wel/niet?
 - Hoe kunnen duo's die erg van elkaar verschillen komen tot verbondenheid?
 - Waarom denkt u dat?
 - Kan u dit toelichten met een voorbeeld?
 - Hoe draagt een "goede match" bij tot netwerkverbreding?
- In welke mate is de keuze voor een buddyproject in de vorm van een een-op-een-relatie al dan niet bewust? Ziet u grote verschillen met buddywerkingen die in groepsverband aan de slag gaan?
 - Wat zijn de voor- en nadelen van dit een-op-een-contact?
 - Hoe dragen een-op-een buddywerkingen bij tot het verbreden van het netwerk?
 - Wat kunnen groepswerkingen betekenen voor het netwerk van de nieuwkomer?
- Wat betekent het informele karakter van een buddywerking voor u? Kan u dat omschrijven?
 - Hoe krijgt dat informele karakter gestalte in de buddypraktijk?
 - Waarom is dat informele karakter (al dan niet) belangrijk?
 - Hoe trachten jullie dit informele karakter te waarborgen, gezien de professionele omkadering van het buddyproject (intakegesprekken, intervisies,...)?
 - Hoe draagt deze "informaliteit" bij tot netwerkverbreding?
- Wat betekent vertrouwen in een buddyrelatie volgens u?
 - Waarom is vertrouwen tussen het duo al dan niet belangrijk voor een geslaagd buddyproject?
 - Kan u dit toelichten met een voorbeeld?
 - Wanneer lukt het/lukt het niet om vertrouwen tot stand te brengen?

- Hoe denkt u dat een vertrouwensrelatie tussen buddy en nieuwkomer kan worden gerealiseerd? Wat is er belangrijk?
 - Waarom denkt u dat? Kan u dit toelichten met een voorbeeld?
 - Waarom is deze vertrouwensrelatie belangrijk in het kader van netwerkverbreding? Geef eens een voorbeeld?
- Klopt het volgens u dat de vertrouwensrelatie tussen buddy en nieuwkomer vertrouwen kan geven om een breder netwerk te realiseren?
 - Hoe denkt u dat vertrouwen tussen het duo zich kan vertalen in een groter sociaal vertrouwen? Hoe gebeurt dit dan juist?
 - Waarom denkt u dat?
 - Kan u dit toelichten met een voorbeeld?
- In welke mate voorzien jullie intervisiemomenten voor het duo? Wat houden deze precies in?
 - Gebeuren intervisies steeds samen of zijn er ook afzonderlijke momenten voorzien?
 - Waarom opteren jullie voor deze aanpak?
 - Hoe trachten jullie een positieve relatie tussen het duo te stimuleren? Voorbeelden?
- Hoe verlopen volgens u de gesprekken tussen buddy en nieuwkomer?
 - Wat is er specifiek aan het gesprek tussen buddy en nieuwkomer?
 - Welke veranderingen kunnen deze gesprekken met zich mee brengen?
 - Hoe gebeurt dat dan precies?
 - Waarom denkt u dat? Kan u hiervan een voorbeeld geven?
 - Zijn er ook nadelen die deze gesprekken met zich mee kunnen brengen?
- Hoe verloopt het einde van een buddytraject?
 - Wat zijn de afspraken/verwachtingen rond het einde van een buddytraject?
 - Spreken de duo's na afloop van het buddytraject nog met elkaar af?
 - Wat moet er gerealiseerd zijn op het niveau van het netwerk om tot een einde te komen in het buddytraject? Waarom?
 - Hoe doet de buddywerking dat dan precies met de nieuwkomer?
 - Waarom denkt u dat?
 - Kan u dit toelichten met een voorbeeld?
- In welke mate bieden jullie vormingen voor deelnemers aan?
 - Waarom wel/niet? Waarom wel/niet belangrijk?
 - Wat houden deze in?
 - Hoe dragen deze vormingen bij tot de uitkomsten (netwerkverbreding) van het buddyproject?
- Tot slot. Wat zijn zaken die in de praktijk goed lopen? Voorbeelden?
- Wat loopt er minder goed? Beperkingen? Uitdagingen?
 - Kan u dit toelichten met een voorbeeld?

Fase 4: Slot

- Ik heb genoteerd dat u de volgende elementen belangrijk vindt om een buddywerking succesvol te laten verlopen. Klopt dat? Zijn er nog andere elementen?

- Als u iets zou kunnen veranderen aan de buddypraktijk om het effectiever te laten werken, wat zou u dan veranderen? Waarom?
- Is er nog iets dat u zou willen toevoegen om mij beter te doen begrijpen hoe het buddyprogramma hier bijdraagt tot netwerkverbreding?

Appendix IV : Questionnaire for buddies

Voorstelling

Voorstelling van mezelf en het onderzoek: Het doel van mijn onderzoek is om inzicht te verwerven in de impact van buddywerkingen op de netwerkverbreding van nieuwkomers. Met netwerkverbreding bedoel ik de verbreding van het sociaal netwerk. Enerzijds wil ik met dit gesprek peilen naar uw ervaring als buddy. Anderzijds tracht dit interview mechanismen in het buddyproject bloot te leggen die aanleiding geven tot het verbreden van het sociaal netwerk van de nieuwkomer. Ik focus hierbij vooral op de relatie tussen u en de nieuwkomer en mogelijke andere sociale relaties van de nieuwkomer die hier verder uit voortkomen.

Informed consent: Uitleggen dat je niet altijd antwoord hoeft te geven. En dat je altijd mag stoppen met deelname zonder een reden te hoeven aangeven. Vragen akkoord te gaan met dit onderzoek door het informed consent formulier te ondertekenen.

Toestemming vragen voor opname: Vragen of ik het interview mag opnemen en dat de opname alleen voor dit onderzoek gebruikt zal worden en dat het niet met anderen gedeeld zal worden. Het interview wordt opgenomen om analyse achteraf te vergemakkelijken (intern gebruik)

Duur van het interview: 60-90 minuten

Vragen/opmerkingen: De respondent vragen of hij/zij vragen of opmerkingen heeft voordat ik start met het interview.

Fase 1: Inleidende vragen

Werving & matching

- Kan u eens vertellen hoe u bij de buddywerking bent terecht gekomen?
- Waarom/ met welke motivatie heeft u besloten om buddy te worden?
- Hoe zou u uw taakomschrijving als buddy omschrijven?
- Welke taken zag u zitten? Welke eerder niet?
- Wat waren de vereisten om als buddy aan de slag te mogen gaan?
- Wat verwachtte u van het buddieschap?
 - Wat waren uw verwachtingen van de nieuwkomer waaraan u werd gekoppeld?
 - Wat waren de verwachtingen van de begeleiding?
- Heeft u een bepaalde voorkeur opgegeven voor de persoon aan wie u gematched ging worden? Waarom wel/niet?
- Hoe is het matchingproces precies verlopen? Wat vond u er goed/minder goed aan?
- Wat betekent voor u 'een goede match'? Kan u hiervan een voorbeeld geven? Is het bijvoorbeeld belangrijk dat er bepaalde overeenkomsten/gemeenschappelijkheden met de nieuwkomer zijn of eerder niet?

- Vaak wordt er verwezen naar 'het hebben van een klik'. Wat betekent dit nu precies voor u? Kan u hier dieper op ingaan?
- Wat moet het buddyproject voor u bereiken? Wat zijn voor u de belangrijkste uitkomsten?
 - Voor de nieuwkomer? Voor uzelf? Eventueel voor de bredere maatschappij?
 - Waarom denkt u dat?
 - Kan u hiervan voorbeelden geven?

Kenmerken van het buddyproject

- In welke mate is de keuze voor een buddyproject in de vorm van een een-op-een-relatie/groepsverband al dan niet bewust? Ziet u grote verschillen met buddywerkingen die in groepsverband/ met een-op-een contacten aan de slag gaan?
 - Wat zijn volgens u de voor- en nadelen van dit groepsverband/ een-op-een-contact?
 - Hoe dragen een-op-een buddywerkingen/ groepswerkingen bij tot het verbreden van het netwerk?
- In welke mate is het al dan niet belangrijk voor u dat het buddyproject afgebakend is in de tijd?
 - Waarom wel/niet?
 - Wat zijn de voordelen/nadelen hiervan? Kan u dat toelichten met een voorbeeld?
 - Brengt deze beperkte tijdsperiode de doelstelling van het versterken van het sociaal netwerk niet in gedrang? Hoe kan men tot een zekere duurzaamheid in relaties komen?
- Wat betekent het informele karakter van een buddywerking voor u? Kan u dat omschrijven?
 - Hoe krijgt dat informele karakter gestalte in de buddypraktijk?
 - Waarom is dat informele karakter (al dan niet) belangrijk?
 - Hoe tracht u dit informele karakter te waarborgen, gezien de professionele omkadering van het buddyproject?
 - Hoe draagt deze "informaliteit" bij tot de netwerkverbreding van de nieuwkomer?
- In welke mate vindt u de vrijwillige deelname aan het buddyproject belangrijk?
 - Waarom wel/niet?
 - Hoe draagt deze vrijwilligheid bij tot het versterken van het sociaal netwerk van de nieuwkomer?
 - Kan u hiervan een voorbeeld geven?

Fase 2: Doelstelling van netwerkverbreding

Een van de doelstellingen van het buddyproject waaraan u deelneemt is het verbreden van het sociaal netwerk van de nieuwkomer.

- Wat betekent het 'hebben van een sociaal netwerk' volgens u?
- Waarom is dit zo belangrijk voor de nieuwkomer?
- Waarom is volgens u nu juist een buddy geschikt om aan dat netwerk te werken?

- In welke mate tracht u als buddy bij te dragen aan de netwerkverbreding van de nieuwkomer? Waarom doet u dat (niet)?
 - Hoe tracht u dit doen?
 - Kan u hiervan een voorbeeld geven?
- Zou u uw relatie met de nieuwkomer omschrijven als er een van nabijheid of bewaart u toch een zekere afstand?
 - Waarom wel/niet?
- In welke mate tracht u de nieuwkomer in contact te brengen met andere mensen (voorbij de een-op-een relatie)? Wie zijn dat dan precies?
 - Hoe doet u dat? Waarom doet u dat wel/niet?
 - Kan u hiervan een voorbeeld geven?
- In welke mate tracht u uw eigen sociaal netwerk voor de nieuwkomer open te stellen?
 - Hoe doet u dat? Waarom wel/niet?
 - Hoe gaat dat dan precies? Kan u hiervan een voorbeeld geven?
- In welke mate tracht u de nieuwkomer kennis te laten maken met instellingen/diensten?
 - Waarom wel/niet? Hoe doet u dat?
 - Hoe kan dit bijdragen tot netwerkverbreding? Kan u hiervan een voorbeeld geven?
- Zijn er nog andere manieren waarop u het netwerk van de nieuwkomer probeert te versterken?
- Welke manier werkt volgens u het best om dat netwerk te gaan versterken? Waarom denkt u dat?
- Hoe ziet u uw relatie met de nieuwkomer op het einde van een buddytraject?
 - In welke mate wenst u, na afloop van het project, nog in contact te blijven met de nieuwkomer?
 - Wat moet er voor u bereikt zijn op het niveau van het sociaal netwerk van de nieuwkomer?
 - Hoe tracht u na afloop van het traject de netwerkversterkende impact van de buddywerking al dan niet te waarborgen?
- Kan u nog eens aanhalen wat de belangrijkste uitkomsten zijn van de buddywerking voor het netwerk van de nieuwkomer?
- Ziet u ook beperkingen/uitdagingen wanneer het aankomt op de doelstelling van netwerkverbreding?

Fase 3: Mechanismen

Dialogoog

- Hoe verliepen de eerste gesprekken met de nieuwkomer?
 - Hoe heeft u dat aangepakt? Wat heeft u gedaan om het ijs te breken?
 - Waarom heeft u dat zo aangepakt?
 - Hoe gaan de gesprekken nu? Over wat praten jullie zoal?
 - Vertelt u ook zaken over uzelf? Waarom wel/niet?

- Is er ruimte om gevoelige onderwerpen te bespreken of blijft het contact eerder oppervlakkig? Wanneer wel/niet?
- Kunnen deze gesprekken een bepaald veranderingsproces met zich meebrengen? Hebben deze bijvoorbeeld een bepaalde impact op het netwerk van de nieuwkomer?

Gelijkwaardigheid/wederkerigheid

- Hoe verloopt de communicatie met de nieuwkomer?
- Wie neemt er meestal het initiatief?
- Wat vindt u goed/minder goed aan deze communicatie?
 - Kan u hiervan een voorbeeld geven?
- Wat zijn zo wat de activiteiten die u samen met de nieuwkomer onderneemt?
 - Waarom kiest u voor deze activiteiten?
 - Wie beslist wat jullie gaan doen?
 - Waarom pakt u dat zo aan?
 - Hoe dragen deze activiteiten bij tot de versterking van het sociaal netwerk van de nieuwkomer?

Vaak wordt er aangehaald dat een buddyrelatie er idealiter één is van gelijkwaardigheid en wederkerigheid. Hoe kijkt u hiernaar? Is dit haalbaar volgens u?

- Hoe gaat u om met verschillen/het onevenwicht tussen u en de nieuwkomer?
- Hebben deze verschillen een grote impact op jullie verhouding? Wat doet dit met de nieuwkomer?
- Hoe zou u zowel uw positie en als die van de nieuwkomer omschrijven?
- Hoe tracht u een paternalistische houding/hiërarchische relatie te vermijden?

Vertrouwen

- Wat betekent vertrouwen in een buddyrelatie volgens u?
 - Waarom is het vertrouwen van de nieuwkomer al dan niet belangrijk voor een geslaagd buddyproject? Wat doet dit met de nieuwkomer?
 - Kan u dit toelichten met een voorbeeld?
 - Wanneer lukt het/lukt het niet om vertrouwen tot stand te brengen? Wat is er belangrijk om vertrouwen bij de nieuwkomer te doen groeien? Of vindt u dat niet belangrijk?
 - Hoe heeft u een vertrouwensrelatie met nieuwkomer gerealiseerd? Wat is er belangrijk? Zijn er bepaalde aandachtspunten/randvoorwaarden? Hoe heeft u dat aangepakt?
 - Waarom denkt u dat? Kan u dit toelichten met een voorbeeld?
 - Wat is de rol van de coördinator(s)/de begeleiding in het genereren van vertrouwen tussen u en de nieuwkomer?
 - Waarom is deze vertrouwensrelatie belangrijk in het kader van netwerkverbreding? Hoe draagt dit ertoe bij? Geef eens een voorbeeld?

Algemeen

- Tot slot. Wat zijn zaken die in de praktijk goed lopen? Voorbeelden?
- Wat loopt er minder goed? Beperkingen? Uitdagingen?
 - Zijn er bepaalde verwachtingen niet ingevuld geraakt?
 - Zijn er zaken die u graag op voorhand had geweten voor u als buddy begon?
 - Kan u dit toelichten met een voorbeeld?

Fase 4: Slot

- Ik heb genoteerd dat u de volgende elementen belangrijk vindt om als buddy succesvol aan de slag te gaan. Klopt dat? Zijn er nog andere elementen?
- Als u iets zou kunnen veranderen aan de buddypraktijk om het effectiever te laten werken, wat zou u dan veranderen? Waarom?
- Is er nog iets dat u zou willen toevoegen om mij beter te doen begrijpen hoe u via het buddyproject heeft bijgedragen tot de netwerkverbreding van de nieuwkomer?

Vriendelijk bedankt om tijd te maken voor dit interview.

Appendix V : Questionnaire for newcomers

Voorstelling van mezelf & het onderzoek

Intro

- Je mag starten met jezelf eens voor te stellen.
You may start by introducing yourself.
- Hoe ben je bij de buddywerking terecht gekomen?
How did you join the buddy program? How did you know about the buddy programme?
- Waarom wou je deelnemen aan de buddywerking? Wat was je motivatie?
Why did you want to participate in the buddy programme? What was your motivation?
- Wat verwachtte je van je buddy?
What did you expect from your buddy?
- Waren er bepaalde voorwaarden om te mogen deelnemen aan het buddyprogramma?
Were there certain requirements to participate in the buddy programme?
- Kan je met je eigen woorden omschrijven wat een buddyprogramma voor jou betekent of inhoudt?
Can you describe in your own words what a buddy programme means or entails for you?

Midden

- Hoe is het matchingsproces verlopen? Heb je bepaalde voorkeuren opgegeven en waarom?
How did the matching process go? Did you specify any particular preferences and why?
- Wat betekent voor jou een 'goede match'? *What does a 'good match' mean to you?* (click)
- Hoe verliep het contact met jouw buddy? Welke activiteiten deden jullie samen? Waarom deze activiteiten?
How did the contact with your buddy go? What activities did you do together? Why did you choose for these activities?
- Hoe vaak zagen jullie elkaar? Was dit voldoende voor jou of te veel/te weinig?
How often did you see each other? Was this for enough or too much/too little?
- Wie nam meestal het initiatief? *Who usually took the initiative?*
- Hoe zou je je relatie met jouw buddy omschrijven? Is er sprake van een vriendschap?
How would you describe your relationship with your buddy? Is it a friendship?

- Zou je zeggen dat je je buddy vertrouwt? Waarom wel/niet?
Would you say you trust your buddy? Why or why not?
- Wat betekent vertrouwen in de buddy voor jou?
What does trust in the buddy mean to you?
- Heb je via de buddy(werking) nieuwe mensen leren kennen? Voorbeelden?
Have you met new people through buddy program? Examples?
- Heeft jouw buddy ook jouw vrienden of familie leren kennen? Waarom wel/niet?
Did your buddy also get to know your family or friends? Why/why not?
- Heb je via de buddywerking nieuwe plaatsen leren kennen? Voorbeelden?
Have you learned about new places through your buddy? Examples?
- Heeft jouw buddy jou bepaalde informatie kunnen geven? Voorbeelden?
Was your buddy able to give you certain information? Examples?
- Heb je het gevoel een groter sociaal netwerk te hebben door jouw buddy/ meer mensen te kennen?
Do you feel you have a larger social network because of your buddy? Do you know more people?
- Wat betekent integratie voor jou? *What does integration mean to you?*
- Op welke manier heeft jouw buddy jou kunnen helpen bij jouw integratie? Voorbeelden?
In what ways has your buddy been able to help you integrate into Flemish society? Examples?
- Op welke andere manieren heeft jouw buddy jou kunnen helpen?
In what other ways has your buddy been able to help you?
- Is er iets waarbij jouw buddy niet heeft kunnen helpen?
Is there anything where your buddy has not been able to help?
- Heb je jouw buddy ook iets kunnen leren? Voorbeelden? *Were you able to teach your buddy anything? Examples?*
- Wat vond je van de begeleiding vanuit de organisatie? Voorbeelden?
What did you think of the guidance from the organisation? Examples?

Slot

- Wat vond je goed aan de buddywerking? Wat vond je minder goed of moeilijk?

What did you like about the buddy programme? What didn't you like? What was hard?

- Wat is voor jou het belangrijkste resultaat van de buddywerking of de belangrijkste verandering voor jou? Waarom?
What is the most important outcome or change for you as a result of buddy working? Why?
- Welk moment of welke herinnering aan je buddy ga je nooit vergeten? *What moment or memory of your buddy will you never forget?*
- Heeft de buddywerking jou verwachtingen ingelost? Waarom wel/niet? *Did the buddy operation meet your expectations? Why/why not?*
- Is er iets wat je zou veranderen aan de buddywerking?
Is there anything you would change about the buddy program?
- Heb je nog contact met jouw buddy? Waarom wel/niet? *Are you still in touch with your buddy? Why/why not?*
- Zou je de buddywerking aanraden aan iemand die nieuw is in België? Waarom wel/niet?
Would you recommend the buddy programme to someone new to Belgium? Why/ why not?
- Is er nog iets wat je zou willen toevoegen of wil vertellen over jouw ervaring met het buddyproject?
Is there anything else you would like to add or tell us about your experience with the buddy programme?

Appendix VI: Example of codebook

Name	Memo Link	Files	References	Created on	Created by	Modified on	Modified by
Algemeen		0	0	27/03/2023 16:06	GM	28/03/2023 14:42	GM
Verwachtingen buddy	Yes	15	37	27/03/2023 14:17	GM	12/06/2023 13:23	GM
Profiel buddy	Yes	24	129	27/03/2023 14:12	GM	20/06/2023 13:48	GM
Motivatie		25	86	3/04/2023 13:32	GM	20/06/2023 13:49	GM
Taken buddy		16	45	28/03/2023 14:47	GM	14/06/2023 14:25	GM
Werk of opleiding		18	61	3/04/2023 9:47	GM	16/06/2023 11:51	GM
Administratie		17	51	3/04/2023 9:41	GM	20/06/2023 9:42	GM
Conduit		3	6	28/03/2023 15:58	GM	31/05/2023 9:31	GM
Morele steun		16	48	4/04/2023 10:52	GM	15/06/2023 13:30	GM
Praktisch		12	58	30/05/2023 14:58	GM	20/06/2023 17:38	GM
Taal		13	22	30/05/2023 15:10	GM	20/06/2023 11:54	GM
Vrijetijd		11	38	1/06/2023 10:48	GM	20/06/2023 13:18	GM
Woning		14	44	3/04/2023 9:47	GM	20/06/2023 12:46	GM
Vereisten		5	8	5/04/2023 15:24	GM	12/06/2023 13:10	GM
Profiel Nieuwkomer		25	146	27/03/2023 16:18	GM	20/06/2023 13:26	GM
Noden-of-wensen		17	42	28/03/2023 14:41	GM	20/06/2023 17:57	GM
Uitkomsten		1	1	28/03/2023 14:43	GM	28/03/2023 14:43	GM
Voor de buddy		21	72	29/03/2023 11:06	GM	20/06/2023 17:36	GM
Zelfredzaamheid		18	59	29/03/2023 10:43	GM	19/06/2023 15:01	GM
Taal		17	64	29/03/2023 10:43	GM	15/06/2023 15:53	GM
Mentaal welzijn		7	20	17/04/2023 11:10	GM	9/06/2023 13:56	GM
Ongeschreven regels		6	13	29/03/2023 11:35	GM	20/06/2023 9:43	GM
Samenleving		6	15	29/03/2023 16:52	GM	20/06/2023 12:46	GM
Stad of gemeente leren kennen		14	22	3/04/2023 11:20	GM	20/06/2023 11:48	GM
Proces		0	0	27/03/2023 16:15	GM	27/03/2023 16:15	GM
Rekrutering buddy's		24	47	27/03/2023 13:57	GM	20/06/2023 9:35	GM

Duur		25	137	29/03/2023 10:52	GM	20/06/2023 11:40	GM
Contactfrequentie		23	50	28/03/2023 15:06	GM	20/06/2023 14:16	GM
Evaluatie		2	2	31/05/2023 13:14	GM	14/06/2023 14:45	GM
Intervisie	Yes	25	162	27/03/2023 16:49	GM	20/06/2023 17:51	GM
Introductie of intake	Yes	20	50	27/03/2023 16:15	GM	20/06/2023 11:35	GM
Matching	Yes	25	79	27/03/2023 16:30	GM	20/06/2023 9:48	GM
Klik	Yes	25	90	27/03/2023 16:02	GM	20/06/2023 13:18	GM
Vormingen		6	12	28/03/2023 15:14	GM	20/06/2023 17:51	GM
Uitdagingen		4	12	27/03/2023 16:47	GM	18/04/2023 14:44	GM
(Mentale) gezondheid nieuwkomer		15	81	30/03/2023 15:07	GM	15/06/2023 14:02	GM
Begeleiding		1	1	29/03/2023 14:05	GM	29/03/2023 14:05	GM
Communicatie		15	41	29/03/2023 13:51	GM	20/06/2023 14:12	GM
Culturele verschillen		9	34	1/06/2023 10:23	GM	20/06/2023 14:48	GM
Discriminatie		5	8	2/06/2023 10:30	GM	9/06/2023 13:56	GM
Familiaal		4	9	31/05/2023 15:19	GM	20/06/2023 9:54	GM
Financieel		16	43	28/03/2023 16:02	GM	15/06/2023 15:55	GM
Frustraties buddy's		13	58	29/03/2023 13:56	GM	19/06/2023 15:31	GM
Klik		2	4	7/06/2023 13:58	GM	20/06/2023 9:50	GM
Ontoegankelijkheid		2	5	5/06/2023 13:30	GM	16/06/2023 11:38	GM
Segregatie		14	51	28/03/2023 16:06	GM	20/06/2023 13:26	GM
Taal		15	50	30/03/2023 16:23	GM	19/06/2023 10:34	GM
Tijd		17	38	28/03/2023 16:26	GM	20/06/2023 11:47	GM
Relatie B-N	Yes	24	126	28/03/2023 15:08	GM	20/06/2023 14:52	GM
Gesprek		23	100	29/03/2023 10:36	GM	20/06/2023 17:55	GM
Sociaal netwerk		24	75	28/03/2023 15:44	GM	20/06/2023 17:57	GM
Agency	Yes	24	116	29/03/2023 10:40	GM	20/06/2023 13:48	GM
Conduit	Yes	20	90	29/03/2023 11:03	GM	20/06/2023 12:55	GM
Diensten		20	58	29/03/2023 11:30	GM	19/06/2023 13:39	GM

lungens		19	47	29/03/2023 10:40	GM	20/06/2023 13:14	GM
intro netwerk buddy	Yes	25	181	28/03/2023 15:47	GM	20/06/2023 13:56	GM
Verenigingen		20	55	28/03/2023 16:16	GM	20/06/2023 13:57	GM
Mechanismen		1	1	29/03/2023 10:48	GM	14/04/2023 10:46	GM
Een-op- eencontact	Yes	20	52	29/03/2023 10:49	GM	20/06/2023 13:53	GM
Gelijkwaardigheid	Yes	25	101	29/03/2023 11:46	GM	20/06/2023 17:54	GM
Informeel		23	109	29/03/2023 11:12	GM	20/06/2023 14:43	GM
Vertrouwen	Yes	25	181	29/03/2023 11:24	GM	20/06/2023 14:56	GM
Vraaggestuurd		6	15	30/03/2023 15:53	GM	18/04/2023 14:32	GM
Vrijwilligheid	Yes	24	101	29/03/2023 13:13	GM	19/06/2023 15:38	GM
Wederkerigheid		22	77	29/03/2023 11:07	GM	20/06/2023 10:11	GM

Appendix VII: Letter of invitation

Ben je nieuwkomer en heb je deelgenomen aan een buddywerking? Dan zoeken we jou!

Onderzoek

Voor een onderzoek van de Universiteit Antwerpen, zijn we op zoek naar nieuwkomers die aan ... hebben deelgenomen. In een interview van ongeveer 30 minuten vertel je over jouw ervaring met jouw buddy en het project. Vragen zijn bijvoorbeeld: Wat vond je goed? Wat vond je minder goed? Wat is voor jou de belangrijkste verandering na ...? Er zijn geen goede of foute antwoorden.

Anoniem

Het gesprek is volledig anoniem. Niemand zal dus weten dat je aan het onderzoek hebt deelgenomen. Enkel als jij akkoord gaat, wordt het interview opgenomen met de Iphone of laptop van de onderzoeker.

Waar en wanneer?

Je kiest waar en wanneer je dit interview doet. Dit kan bijvoorbeeld in een café in ... zijn maar ook online.

Heb je nog vragen? Geen probleem. Stuur je vragen gerust naar gaelle.mortier@uantwerpen.be



Are you a newcomer and have participated in a buddy programme? Then we are looking for you!

Research

For a research of the University of Antwerp, we are looking for newcomers to Brussels who have participated in ... In an interview lasting about 30 minutes, you will tell us about your experience with your buddy and the project. Questions include: What did you like? What did you like less? What is the most important change for you after ...? There are no right or wrong answers.

Anonymous

The interview is completely anonymous. So no one will know that you participated in the interview. Only if you agree, the interview will be recorded on the researcher's Iphone or laptop.

Where and when?

You choose where and when you do this interview. This could be in a café in ... or online.

Still have questions?

No problem. Feel free to send your questions to gaelle.mortier@uantwerpen.be

Vous êtes un nouvel arrivant et vous avez participé à un programme de parrainage ? Alors nous sommes à votre recherche!

Recherche

Dans le cadre d'une enquête menée par l'Université d'Anvers, nous recherchons des nouveaux arrivants qui ont participé à un programme de parrainage. Au cours d'un entretien d'environ 30 minutes, vous raconterez votre expérience avec votre parrain/marrain (buddy) et le projet. Les questions sont les suivantes: Qu'est-ce qui vous a plu? Qu'est-ce qui vous a moins plu? Quel est le changement le plus important pour vous après le programme de parrainage? Qu'est-ce que le programme de parrainage vous a apporté? Il n'y a pas de bonnes ou de mauvaises réponses.

Anonyme

L'entretien est totalement anonyme. Personne ne saura donc que vous avez participé à l'étude. L'entretien ne sera enregistré sur l'Iphone ou l'ordinateur portable de l'enquêteur que si vous êtes d'accord.

Où et quand?

Vous choisissez le lieu et le moment de l'entretien, éventuellement dans un café ou un parc ou un entretien en ligne.

Vous avez encore des questions?

Pas de problème. N'hésitez pas à envoyer vos questions à gaelle.mortier@uantwerpen.be

Appendix VIII: Author contributions

Chapter 1: Research report Hannah Arendt Institute: Participation and Networking Trajectories as the fourth pillar of the new Integration Decree

Gaëlle Mortier: Conducting literature review and revising of the manuscript.

Stijn Oosterlynck: Feedback on the study, contribution theoretical framework, critical revision of the manuscript.

Peter Raeymaeckers: Feedback on the study, contribution theoretical framework, critical revision of the manuscript.

Chapter 2: Buddy programmes for newly arrived migrants: Perspectives of policymakers on generative mechanisms for newcomer integration

Gaëlle Mortier: Preparing research, data collection, data analysis, drafting, and revising of the manuscript.

Stijn Oosterlynck: Feedback on the study, contribution theoretical framework, critical revision of the manuscript.

Peter Raeymaeckers: Feedback on the study, contribution theoretical framework, critical revision of the manuscript.

Chapter 3: The key to success? Social network brokerage in buddy programmes for newly arrived migrants

Gaëlle Mortier: Preparing research, data collection, data analysis, drafting, and revising of the manuscript.

Stijn Oosterlynck: Feedback on the study, contribution theoretical framework, critical revision of the manuscript.

Peter Raeymaeckers: Feedback on the study, contribution theoretical framework, critical revision of the manuscript.

Chapter 4: (Em)powering newcomers? Power asymmetries and negotiations between newly arrived migrants and volunteers within buddy programmes

All authors contributed to the study conception and design. Material preparation, data collection, and analysis were performed by Gaëlle Mortier. The first draft of the manuscript was written by Gaëlle Mortier and all authors commented on previous versions of the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.