



DECENTRALISING INTEGRATION

**A new act on integration in the Netherlands: the
solution to integration problems or merely a
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to integration problems or merely a shifting of
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Source picture frontpage	Welcome! App

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Preface

Before you lies the master thesis “decentralising integration: the solution to integration problems or merely a shifting of responsibilities?” It has been written to fulfil the graduation requirements of the Human Geography masters’ specialisation: Europe: Borders, Identity and Governance at the Radboud University in Nijmegen. I was engaged in researching and writing this thesis from November 2021 – November 2022.

I noticed during my bachelors in Human Geography and planning an interest in political geography. During my masters, this interest was specified to legislation of countries within the European Union. I noticed that national acts can have severe international consequences. When it was pointed out to me that the Netherlands would be introducing a new act on integration from the start of 2022, I directly wanted to know more. Why? How? What are the consequences? This was the incentive for the choice of subject for my masters thesis. The research was conducted in the period of a year. In this year, I have familiarised myself with the functionality of integration and I am curious about the long-term effects of the new act on integration 2021. At the same time, I have to admit that struggling was part of the process. This has helped me to realise I have to be more structured when approaching complicated tasks. All in all, it has been an informative experience.

I would like to thank my supervisor Neta-Paulina Wagner, for the excellent guidance and support during the process. Every time I was lost in the web of information, she helped me to be exact and to be relevant in what I wrote. This has helped me a lot with structuring my thesis. I also would like to thank my colleagues from the Welcome! App. Whilst we did not necessarily work together a lot, I still appreciated all of your enthusiasm and it has motivated me to support the company’s goal. A special thanks to Loes Ansems and Julius Weise for giving me the opportunity to join the Welcome! App team and supervising me during the writing process.

Finally, I would like to thank you, my reader. I hope you will enjoy your reading.

Jesse van de Wal

Utrecht, 11 November, 2022

Abstract

This paper compares the implementation of the new act on integration [WI] 2021 in the municipality of Tilburg with the framework of successful integration. The WI 2021 has been active since January 1st 2022. The new act mainly aims improve efficiency and effectiveness of the integration process by decentralising the responsibility for integration to the Dutch municipalities. However, the reactions to the implementation of the WI 2021 were not as hopeful. In order to determine how integration in the municipality of Tilburg functions, its implementation is compared to the scientific criteria of twelve key aspects for successful integration.

With the use of semi-structured interviews with six stakeholders in the network on integration, the implementation of the WI 2021 in the municipality of Tilburg has been clarified. The comparison shows that the municipality of Tilburg includes all twelve key aspects within their implementation of the WI 2021. It can be concluded that the decentralised, customised approach improved the integration system in the Netherlands. However, the implementation of each of the key aspects can, to an extent, be criticised. Its success is dependent on its practicability and the results suggest it would benefit from adjustments on both a local level as well as a national level.

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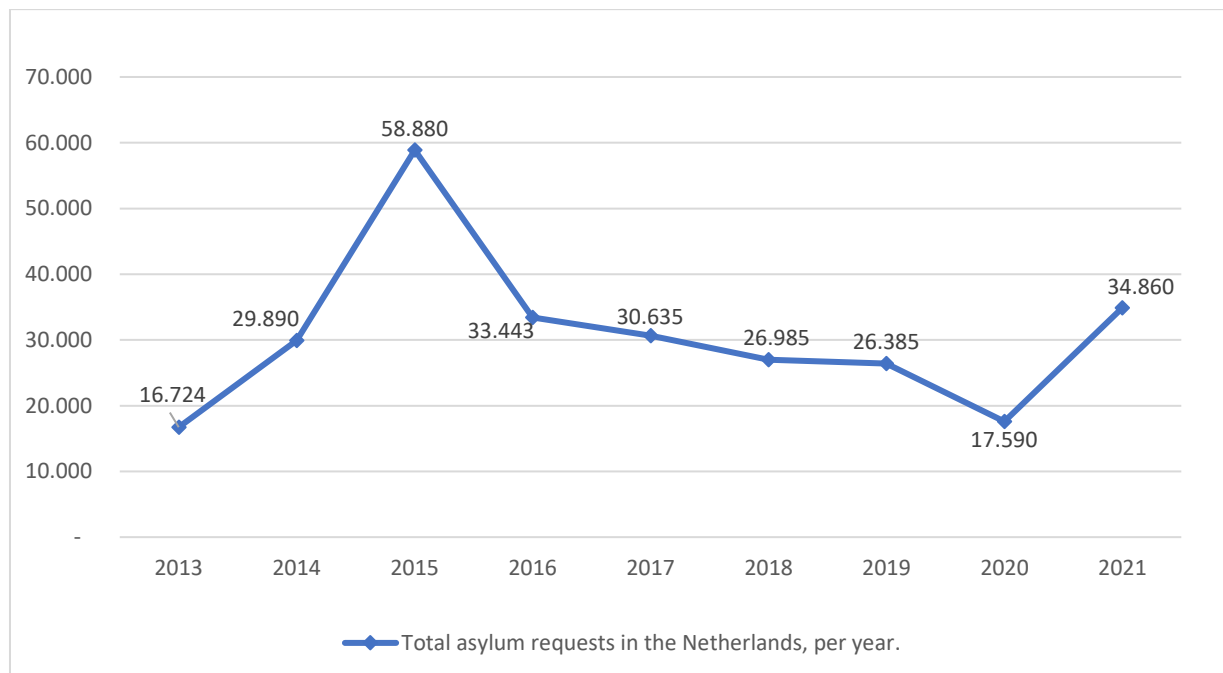
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1. Introduction

The total amount of global displaced people has increased to an all-time high in 2021. With a total amount of 89,3 million people on the run, the refugee crisis has reached its pinnacle (UNHCR, 2022). Prior to this pinnacle, a growing number of newcomers has been noticed by the European Commission since 2015, when it observed a rising amount of newcomers reaching Europe over the Mediterranean Sea (Kriesi, Altiparmakis, Bojar & Oana, 2021). Within the European Union, this has led to a highly politicized and at times heated public and political debate. Mainly because involved countries have experienced difficulties with accommodating all newcomers. Since then, the situation has been labelled as a 'refugee crisis' in Europe (Heidenreich, Lind, Eberl & Boomgaarden, 2019).

This refugee crisis has also been noticeable in the Netherlands. Since 2013, the Netherlands has experienced a growing number of refugees and corresponding asylum requests. Two years later, the total amount of asylum requests in the Netherlands had reached 58.880. That is almost three times as much as in 2013 (16.724). Moreover, the yearly amount of asylum requests has not been as low as in 2013 during the period of 2013 to 2021 (Figure 1). This implies that in a relatively short period of time, the Netherlands had received more asylum requests than before (van Wieringen & Roelants, 2016).

Figure 1: Total asylum requests in the Netherlands, per year



Source: Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek. (2022, February 28). Hoeveel asielzoekers komen naar Nederland? Centraal Bureau Voor De Statistiek. <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/dossier/dossier-asiel-migratie-en-integratie/hoeveel-asielzoekers-komen-naar-nederland->

Corresponding to this growing amount of newcomers, there is a growing number of newcomers receiving status (through a granted asylum request). The Dutch act on integration states that status holders have an obligation to integrate as part of their asylum process (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2011). These people, that are obligated to integrate, have mainly been referred to as *refugees* or *migrants* in academic literature. However, the use of the terms 'refugee' and 'migrant' are under discussion. Namely, refugees and migrants have been framed as people who are dependent on governments and organisations, and should therefore be pitied (Ghorashi, 2014). As long as newcomers are pitied, they are perceived as citizens with a lower value compared to members of the host-society. Therefore, the terms refugee and migrant are negatively connotated. A more neutral

perceived term, such as *newcomer*, is preferred (Van Gorp, Van Hove, Figoureaux & Vyncke, 2021). In this research, the term newcomer is used when referring to displaced people.

To regulate integration among newcomers, the act on integration was formed in 2007 to support integrating into the Dutch society. This act states that everybody that is obligated to integrate, is obligated to finish integrating within three years, by finishing an integration course. The responsibility for succeeding this integration course relies fully on the self-responsibility of newcomers, according to the act on integration from 2007. This implies that newcomers need to search for a fitting integration course which they need to pay for themselves. Most of the time, this is done by lending money from the government (Groenendijk, de Hart & van Oers, 2021).

In recent years, it is argued that this act does not function as desired. Groenendijk, de Hart & van Oers (2021) highlight several bottlenecks concerning the act on integration from 2007. The act was based on the assumption that newcomers would be able to meet the integration obligation from their 'own power.' Therefore, any assistance or aid would be unnecessary (Tweede kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2011). Moreover, if the newcomers should not meet their obligations, they should be punished with a fine. This should stimulate newcomers to become independent and active members of society (Tweede kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2011).

In reality, this self-responsibility for following an integration course and lending money from the government is something that cannot be expected from a vulnerable group such as newcomers (Groenendijk, de Hart & van Oers, 2021). The language courses have been commercialised, which has led to a deterioration on the quality of the integration courses and their teachers. The mix of this self-responsibility, combined with low-quality courses, often results in newcomers failing to meet the integration obligations. Consequently, these newcomers are confronted with high debts of up to €10.000,-. Above that, they are confronted with fines and residential consequences for failing to meet the integration obligations (Groenendijk, de Hart & van Oers, 2021).

In this case, newcomers are dragged into a downward spiral. The longer newcomers fail to meet the obligations, the more consequences they are confronted with. The more consequences they are confronted with, the less they are enabled to finish the integration course. Therefore, they do not have any perspective on finishing integration, constipating the outflow of the integration system. This limited outflow, along with the sizable inflow due to the refugee crisis, is resulting in an overcrowded integration system in the Netherlands (Groenendijk, de Hart & van Oers, 2021). In this situation, newcomers are pushed to become the opposite of an independent and active member of society.

This proves that since the implementation of the act on integration from 2007, the newcomer is put in an unfortunate position before, during and after the integration process (Groenendijk, de Hart & van Oers, 2021). In short, the earlier mentioned problems by Groenendijk, de Hart & van Oers (2021) made the act in that state untenable. Former Dutch Minister Koolmees of Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid deemed the integration system inefficient and ineffective (Koolmees, 2018). The minister announced to revise the integration system to improve efficiency and effectiveness. To reach this, he instituted a new and improved act on integration. The new act on integration [WI] 2021 act has been active since the start of 2022 (Koolmees, 2018).

This WI 2021 has a greater focus on encouraging the newcomer to become an independent and active member of society. In the new act, The Dutch Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid (2022a) stated: *"A newcomer has three years to learn to speak the language and become familiar with the Dutch society. The intention should be to become economically independent as soon as possible. To reach this, an integration exam needs to be achieved."* This WI 2021 was formed in the past years and has been effective since January 1st 2022. Compared to the old act on integration, the greatest

difference concerns the decentralisation of the responsibility for integrating newcomers. The national government transmits this responsibility to the Dutch municipalities. This decentralisation should, in theory, enable municipalities to have close supervision of the integration process and to deliver customised measures for each newcomer. The act enables the municipalities to offer more aid and assistance for the newcomers' integration. How this aid and assistance is captured in the new act, on integration is further explained in chapter 2.

The WI 2021 is expected to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the integration process (Koolmees, 2018). However, some authors are doubting whether the WI 2021 will truly improve integration in the Netherlands (Groenendijk, de Hart & van Oers, 2021). They emphasise that the WI 2021 might still not offer the solution for the unfortunate position newcomers are put in during the integration process. They even elaborate on the possibility of fostering new problems with this act. For example, the WI 2021 implements minor adjustments to the financial consequences when newcomers do not succeed the integration course in time. Whilst newcomers' integration courses are paid for by the government, loans are still offered to family migrants. In this way, the loan issue will be held up. Moreover, two moments for fining are added and the maximum amount of the fines are raised. This results in more financial consequences for the most vulnerable newcomers; those that have not been able to finish the integration course in the first place (Groenendijk, de Hart & van Oers, 2021).

To summarise, the old act on integration did not function as desired. It resulted in financial and residential problems, which disadvantaged newcomers compared to the members of the hosting society and clogged the integration system. It was deemed as inefficient and ineffective. The WI 2021 was supposed to improve this efficiency and effectiveness. Even though there might be improvements in contrast to the old act, it is still expected that the new act will have issues concerning the efficiency and effectiveness. Therefore, this research attempts to compare the WI 2021 within a theoretical framework of successful integration. In this way, an analysis can be established which describes in what aspects the WI 2021 currently falls short.

According to academics, there are twelve aspects that need to be pursued to achieve successful integration (Ager & Strang, 2008; Stack & Iwasaki, 2009; Alencar, 2017; Alencar, 2020). The functioning of the WI 2021 will be measured by comparing it to this context of successful integration. This will be done by a case study in the municipality of Tilburg. This municipality was selected based on their unique approach for the implementation of the WI 2021. In contrast to other municipalities, Tilburg has included the aspect of 'digital skills' within their implementation. Therefore, it embraced the use of technology to support integration in the municipality of Tilburg. This was done by introducing the Welcome! App. This company supports the creation of a social network and new friends and helps newcomers to find their place in society. This is done by connecting organisations, newcomers and locals in the app (Welcome! App, 2022). At this moment, Tilburg is the only municipality in the Netherlands to involve all twelve aspects of successful integration. Therefore, it is the perfect case to test in what aspects the WI 2021 currently falls short.

Because it has been implemented recently, there is an urgency to learn more about the WI 2021. In this early stage, policy is often full of imperfections (DeLeon & DeLeon, 2002). In this way, the act can be evaluated and the implementation can be improved. The research is done by interviewing the actors involved with integration in the municipality of Tilburg. It is assessed in what aspects the actors are involved with and how the actors have implemented these aspects. Thereupon, these aspects are compared to the context of successful integration. This comparison should reveal what aspects the WI 2021 falls short. The downside of this earliness is that the researcher chose not to speak with newcomers. The integration trajectory takes approximately three years. Therefore, newcomers who fall under the WI 2021 have not completed the integration process. For this reason, they are not able

to reasonably reflect on the WI 2021. By excluding the input of newcomers in this research, it is focused on the experiences of actors with the implementation of the WI 2021, rather than the practicability of this new act.

This research is societally relevant because of the societal problem the new act attempts to solve. The former legislation dated from 2007 and staggered in its execution of the integration process. With this law, newcomers had unequal chances compared to the hosting society before, during and after their integration (Groenendijk, de Hart & van Oers, 2021). In response, the ministry set tackling this unfair position as their main goal of the act. In this way, the ministry aimed to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the new act (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2022b).

However, the responses to this act have not been as hopeful. Groenendijk, de Hart & van Oers (2021) expect that this new act will not be able to solve the problems that resulted from the previous act. Moreover, they predict that it will cause new difficulties. Despite the good intentions behind the new act, the act still seems insufficient for achieving the main goal of increasing efficiency and effectiveness of the integration process. Through an early analysis on the effects of the WI 2021, it can be reviewed in what key aspects of successful integration the implementation is incomplete.

This analysis provides an opportunity to reflect on the functioning of integration within the municipalities. The WI 2021 decentralises the responsibilities for integrating newcomers to the municipalities (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2022b). Under the new act, it is the responsibility of the municipality to successfully organise the integration process. The analysis in this research provides a comparison between the implementation of the new act and the framework of successful integration. As a result, the comparison exposes what aspects of the implementation do not yet comply to the aspects of successful integration. These insights will give the municipality an opportunity to evaluate the implementation of the WI 2021. Therefore, this research has the potential to contribute to the overall improvement of the integration process; a process that was stippled as a societal problem before the introduction of the WI 2021.

The scientific relevance of this research originates in the scientific debates on integration. Integration has been a heavily debated subject since the 1980's. This was due to an aspiration of many scholars to conceptualise successful integration. To conceptualise successful integration, Ager & Strang (2008) felt the need to introduce a conceptual framework, which assembled ten core domains of successful integration. When these core domains are established, newcomers are successfully integrated into the host-society.

However, not all of these core domains are standardly included in governmental policies. There seems to be consensus about the importance of implementing the 'functional aspects' (Korac, 2003) of integration which are pursued in policy (core domains such as language learning and work). Yet, paying attention to all the newcomers' aspirations and needs (core domains such as mutual acceptance, equal opportunities and rights, social participation, safety, educational opportunity, financial stability, housing, and health) is currently not standardised as part of integration policies or services (Shaw, Funk, Garlock & Arok, 2021). This trend is also noticeable in the discrepancy between the understanding of successful integration by the theoretical debate (Ager & Strang, 2008) and the Dutch Ministry. Successful integration, according to the definition given by Ager & Strang (2008), consists of twelve core domains; whereas the Dutch Ministry expects the newcomer to accommodate to the three core domains of employment, housing and language & cultural knowledge, according to the WI 2021 (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2022a). This presents a challenge: there needs to be more explicit focus on discrepancies between the understanding of integration and policy objectives and implementation (Damen, van der Linden, Dagevos & Huijnk, 2021). By analysing the

policy objectives and their implementation in the municipality of Tilburg, a more complete picture can be formed on how discrepancy sustains. Thus, this research will contribute to a better comprehension of the link between the understanding of integration and the implementation of the act on integration.

Summarising, to contribute to a better comprehension, the aim is to analyse the functioning of the WI 2021 in the municipality of Tilburg. By doing in-depth interviews with the actors involved, it should give an insight in the functioning of the WI 2021. The results are expected to show in what aspects of integration Tilburg suffices/falls short in comparison to the aspects of successful integration. With these results, the municipality can properly evaluate the WI 2021 and improve its efficacy where necessary. This contributes to solving the earlier mentioned societal problem. To be able to conduct this analysis, the following research question arises:

How does integration in the municipality of Tilburg function since the introduction of the WI 2021 in the Netherlands, when compared to the scientific criteria of successful integration?

This question will be answered by the following sub-questions.

- What is new in the WI 2021?
- What is successful integration?
- How does the WI 2021 function in the municipality of Tilburg?

The next chapter of this research provides background information on the WI 2021. It also explains the timeline of integration in the new situation. Chapter three explains the theoretical framework. The important concepts are explained and defined. Moreover, the main theme of successful integration is operationalised by twelve key aspects. Chapter four explains the methodology used in this research. Chapter five explicates the results from the in-depth interviews for each aspect presented in the framework. The discussion provides a summary of the research and interprets the presented results. It explains how these results lead to a direct answer to the research question. Last, the conclusion provides a critical view on the research process.

2. The WI 2021

In 2018 minister Koolmees from the Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid announced that a new act on integration [WI] 2021 was necessary to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the integration system (Koolmees, 2018). The old act from 2007 was drafted with the idea that if a newcomer would be forced to take full responsibility for his or her integration, he or she would integrate from his or her 'own power' and that any aid or assistance from the national government would be unnecessary (Tweede kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2011). To achieve successful integration, the act from 2007 stated that newcomers, who are obligated to integrate, must pass a state exam within five years. Taking full responsibility in this context meant that newcomers paid for these integration courses themselves. At the same time, the market of the integration courses was commercialised. This commercialisation had a deteriorating effect on the quality of these integration courses. As a result, newcomers had to pay for integration courses themselves, whilst the courses were market driven. If people failed to pass the exam within three years, they could be fined or they could lose their residence permit (Groenendijk, de Hart & van Oers, 2021). These sanctions were aimed at motivating newcomers and eliminating the need for constant supervision and guidance from authorities.

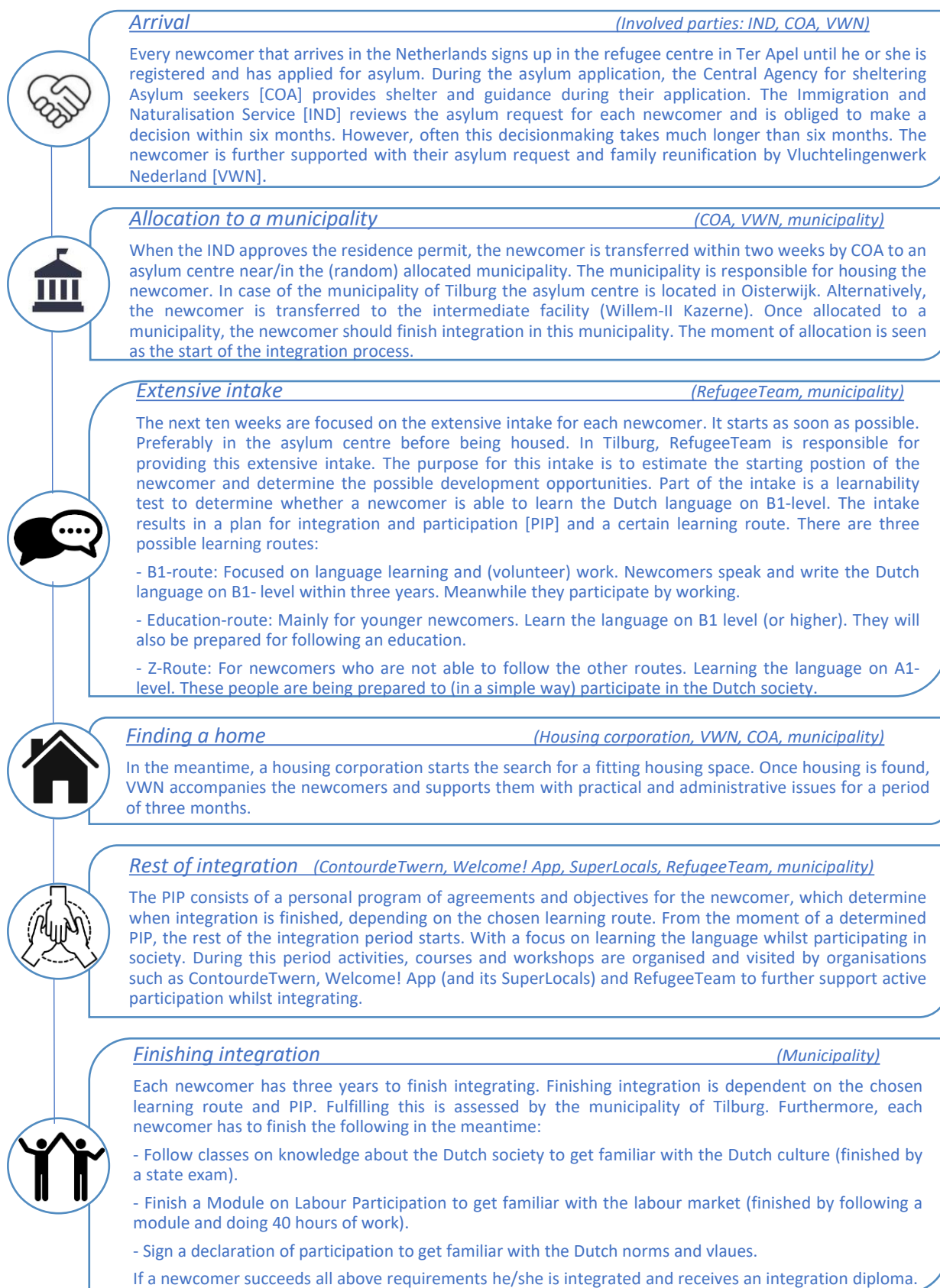
According to Groenendijk, de Hart & van Oers (2021) the renewed act on integration was inevitable due to misconceptions of the old act. One example concerns the commercialisation of the integration courses. Whilst the supply of courses increased, the commercialisation also resulted in a lack of oversight of the government to ensure the quality of the courses. The providers of these courses were insufficiently stimulated to deliver customised courses of high quality. A growing number of newcomers failed the integration exams and were confronted with fines or loss of their residence permits. Newcomers, already being part of a vulnerable group in society, could not be expected to stand up for their interests during their integration (ACVZ, 2021). The combination of a vulnerable consumer and a privatised market resulted in high debts at the end of their integration period. In the meantime, newcomers did still not meet the integration obligations (ACVZ, 2021). Thus, the idea of giving the newcomer full responsibility flopped. This motivated the ministry to restructure integration in the Netherlands.

The WI 2021, provides a different integration structure. The new act is more focused on helping newcomers become participative and self-sustainable members of society. The main difference with the previous act concerns the transferring of responsibilities from the national government to the municipalities. The municipalities are responsible for supervising newcomers' integration, controlling the supply of integration courses and, if necessary, involving other parties to support integration. The responsibility no longer lies with the newcomers. First of all, this is done by conducting an extensive intake with the newcomer. Based on this intake, a plan of integration and participation is composed. This plan contains a customised program for each newcomer tailored to the needs and capacity of the individual. According to their needs and capacity, newcomers are divided between three routes. A combination of participating in the Dutch society whilst learning the language is an important component of the new integration system (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2022b). To fully understand how the integration system is structured under the new act, it is useful to describe the different steps of integration a newcomer has to go through in the Netherlands. (Figure 2). The focus lies on the case study in this research: the municipality of Tilburg (see the following page).

The renewed structure of the integration process is currently implemented by municipalities. Its implementation should solve the problems mentioned earlier. Moreover, it gives a newcomer the opportunity to develop himself to become a participative and self-sustainable citizen (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2022b). Therefore, it aims to be the improved successor of the act on integration from 2007. However, to measure the level of success, it is first needed to establish how successful integration is perceived in academic literature.

2.1 Timeline

Figure 2: Timelining integration for a newcomer integrating in the municipality of Tilburg (own figure).



3. Theoretical framework

In this theoretical framework relevant key concepts are defined and operationalised. First, the differences between newcomers, guest workers and refugees are explained. Subsequently, the term 'successful integration' is discussed based on the conceptual framework of Ager & Strang (2008). This framework names ten key aspects of integration as the criteria of successful integration. However, in recent years, the acquisition of digital skills and leisure time, have received increased attention by scholars as parts of a successful process of integration (Alencar, 2017; Alencar, 2020; Niemi, Manhica, Gunnarsson, Ståhle, Larsson & Saboonchi, 2019; Murad & Versey, 2021). Therefore, to approach the conceptual framework by Ager & Strang (2008) in the modern discourse, it is expanded with these two concepts. The framework used in this research is presented in figure 2.

This research revolves around the concept of integration. Whilst immigration has been a widely discussed subject since the end of World War II, integration remained underdiscussed until the 1980s (Castles, 1995). In that period, there were a lot of guest workers in Western-Europe. Because guest workers were expected to eventually return to their country of origin, they were not expected to actively participate and integrate in society, aside from their working activities. Therefore, they were isolated and excluded from society. However, due to economic recessions, many guest workers in Western-Europe wanted to stay in the country of their arrival. As a result, these guest workers became permanent citizens. However, for permanent citizens, it is expected to actively participate in and contribute to society. Therefore, these former guest workers were confronted with the need to integrate into the hosting society, since they were expected to do so. Consequently, Castles (1986) argued that it is better to plan for orderly settlement through appropriate policies. The notion for a necessary orderly settlement accompanied by appropriate policies laid a foundation for defining integration.

3.1 Defining newcomers

In academic literature, the word newcomer can refer to two types of newcomers: guest workers and refugees. The difference between these types of newcomers lays in the motivation for their migration. Guest workers have an economic motivation and are described by Chiswick (1999) as *"Those who move from one place of work and residence to another across international boundaries, primarily because of their own economic opportunities."* Within this context, flows of guest workers were lured into the Western-European countries in the 1980's -a period of a tight labour market -, for economic opportunities. This process relies on the expectation that these guest workers would, eventually, return to their country of origin (Groenendijk, De Hart & Van Oers, 2021). Because of the temporary nature of their migration, there is no perceived need for integrating into society. Therefore, in the Dutch acts on integration, guest workers have not been included. For this reason, the definition of guest workers will not be used in this research as a concept to describe newcomers.

The concept that will be used, concerns refugees. Refugees are characterised by their political motivation to migrate (Worster, 2012). In international law, the term refugee has had an evolving definition. Worster (2012) defined a refugee as: *"a person who is outside the country of his nationality (or not having a nationality) and is unable or unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country due to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion."*

However, according to Dutch legislation, a share of newcomers is not obligated to integrate. Based on the new act on integration [WI] 2021, I rely on the definition of a newcomer in this research in accordance with Groenendijk, de Hart & van Oers (2021). They explain to whom the WI 2021 is applicable: *"The integration policy focuses on all refugees from outside the EU, who are planning on*

staying in the Netherlands for a longer period of time.” Therefore, this policy excludes EU-citizens from the obligation to integrate. Consequently, in this research, a newcomer is defined as: *“A person who is outside of his non-EU country of origin (or who does not have a nationality) and is unable or unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country due to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion.”*

3.2 Defining integration

Since many scholars have defined integration, integration remains a chaotic concept: *“A word used by many but understood differently by most”* (Robinson, 1998). This makes it difficult to create one comprehensive definition of the concept integration. Castles, Korac, Vasta & Vertovec (2001) noticed that there was no single, generally accepted definition of an immigrant, nor refugee integration. To be able to understand integration, it is necessary to use the specificity principle of Bornstein (2017): *“Understanding often depends on what is studied, where, in whom, how and when.”* In other words, integration should be studied in a particular context, location, person and time (Damen, et al., 2021). Therefore, this research will not establish a definition but rather explain integration on the basis of Bornstein’s principle. So, the local policy (context) of the Dutch ministry (location) states that the following can be expected from newcomers (person): *“A newcomer has three years (time) to learn to speak the language and become familiar with the Dutch society. The intention should be to become economically independent as soon as possible. To reach this, an integration exam needs to be achieved.”* (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2022a). In this research, integration is understood in the light of this context, location, time and person corresponding with the WI 2021 by the Dutch ministry. This understanding of integration is then compared to the conceptual framework of successful integration. Therefore, it is vital to assess how successful integration can be defined.

3.3 Successful integration

The concept of integration is widely used in policies and projects. But, in the early 2000’s there was no operational definition of integration. This resulted in great differences in policy aims (Castles et al., 2001). Therefore, Ager & Strang (2008) saw the need to explore whether an operational definition of ‘successful integration’ is possible. A definition of that kind provides a policy scope. They have created this operationalisable definition by developing a conceptual framework in which they illustrated successful integration. This is done by defining twelve core domains of integration. The framework is illustrated in figure 3. In this framework, four main areas and twelve core-domains are depicted. The figure is made up of four layers. The bottom layer consists of the foundation, meaning it is the basis for the functioning of all other key aspects. Followed by a layer of facilitators. Facilitators are enablers to integration. When these facilitators are reached, they facilitates newcomers to integrate easier. The social connection represents the social aspect of integration. Last, markers and means, are illustrated by the practical needs to function as a self-sufficient member of society (Ager & Strang, 2008). This research will use this framework as a fundament for operationalising successful integration.

Figure 3: A conceptual framework defining core domains of integration.



Source: Ager, A., & Strang, A. (2008). *Understanding integration: A conceptual framework*. *Journal of refugee studies*, 21(2), 166-191. (own adaptation).

3.2.1 Markers and means

Ager & Strang (2008) first introduce the markers and means. These markers and means consisted, at that time, of four core domains of integration: housing, employment, education and health. These core domains are widely acknowledged by diverse stakeholders (Phillimore & Goodson, 2008; Ager & Strang, 2008; Dryden-Peterson & Giles, 2010; Mbanya, Terragni, Gele, Diaz & Kumar, 2019) to be key aspects of integrating into a new society. Murad & Versey (2021) add a fifth core domain that, according to them, must be seen as a key aspect for integration: leisure time. Leisure time contributes significantly to the mental health of newcomers and promotes social participation (Murad & Versey, 2021). Therefore it contributes to the integration of newcomers. The markers and means vary widely across the settled population of any nation. Therefore, it is difficult to determine when 'successful integration' has been achieved, looking at these factors specifically (Ager & Strang, 2008). However, it is possible to explain how these factors can contribute to integration or, alternatively, antagonize integration. The role of these factors is discussed in the following section.

The most important factor to make newcomers feel at home, according to immigrants themselves, is *housing*. However, the definition of a 'home' is contested (Maslow, 1970). A first necessary condition for classifying a house as a home concerns the presence of shelter. Shelter is widely accepted as a fundamental first need. For this reason shelter is often provided at the arrival in the hosting country. Nevertheless, Phillimore & Goodson (2008) state that shelter alone does not sufficiently contribute to housing, as part of a successful integration process. From their perspective, to be classified as a home, a house requires several additional characteristics. They state that a true home is suitable for the amount of people that need to be living in it, is located in a good area, is permanently appointed to the newcomer and can be described as clean and of good quality. Their results show that newcomers are generally struggling to find housing that meets all these characteristics. This indicates that governments still fail to provide a true home to newcomers.

The analysis of Phillimore & Goodson (2008) is supported by research of Ager & Strang (2008), who state that finding an appropriate home in a suitable neighbourhood can contribute significantly to the

integration process. Therefore, this research uses the definition of housing, as given by Phillimore & Goodson (2008), when assessing the question if the WI 2021 provides newcomers with a home. If one of the characteristics mentioned above is missing, the implementation of the new act leaves room for improvement.

Employment is seen as the second most important factor to make newcomers feel at home (Phillimore & Goodson, 2008). From the moment they find work, newcomers become more economically independent. Moreover, they can start planning for the future and they are meeting people from the host-society. These aspects contribute to successful integration (Ager & Strang, 2008). Interviewed newcomers stress the importance of self-sufficiency, having a good quality job (meeting their experience and skill) and a friendly environment, as contributing factors to becoming economically independent (Phillimore & Goodson, 2008). This corresponds with one of the main goals of the Dutch Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid (2022a): *“The intention should be to become economically independent as soon as possible.”* Therefore, this research will use the theory of Phillimore & Goodson (2008) to test whether their established requirements are incorporated with the implementation of the WI 2021. If the implementation does not include all the requirements mentioned earlier, there is room for improvement in future implementation of the act.

Education is seen as the third most important factor in facilitating integration. When learning English is included as a component of education, it is considered as the most important (Phillimore & Goodson, 2008). Education enables people to become more constructive and active members of society (Ager & Strang, 2008). Educational institutions provide spaces for contact with local communities and promote the learning of the local language and culture (Phillimore & Goodson, 2008). However, with insufficient support to learn the host-society’s language, there is a possibility that newcomers experience negative effects of educational institutions in the hosting country (Ager & Strang, 2008). This shows that getting educated does not automatically contribute to successful integration. When referring to education as a core domain of successful integration, it is necessary to characterise education as inclusive, accessible and of high quality (according to the newcomer’s skills) (Dryden-Peterson & Giles, 2010). For this reason, this research will assess these characteristics when testing the education in the implementation of the WI 2021. If there is a characteristic unaccounted for, there is room for improving the education of newcomers.

Good *health* is another factor that is widely seen as an important resource for active engagement in a new society. Good health is realised by providing reliable access to health services and by supporting health outcomes (Ager & Strang, 2008). However, two moments of issues remain when accessing modern western healthcare services (Mbanya, et al., 2019). The first category concerns difficulties before the access to healthcare. Several problems can be thought of, such as: access to information, the preference amongst newcomers for doctors with an immigration background, a long waiting time, financial barriers and family-related and work-related responsibilities. The second category concerns difficulties when entering the healthcare system. This concerns: communication difficulties, the black elephant in the room¹ and the dissatisfaction of newcomers with health care providers (Mbanya, et al., 2019). The presence of these difficulties shows that there is a challenge for governments to help newcomers in receiving good healthcare and sustaining good health. If good health is guaranteed, healthcare is successfully provided. Therefore, this research will include these difficulties when testing the implementation of healthcare as part of integration. If any of these barriers exist, it indicates that there is more support required by the government.

¹ The *black elephant* in the room is a term for newcomers which have perceived their care providers as not being interested in them (Mbanya, et al., 2019)

Leisure activities are also marked as an important contribution to successful integration. Leisure activities are broadly defined as activities undertaken in spare time such as exercising and socialising (Mansvelt, 2009). These kind of activities have been linked to integration by Stack & Iwasaki (2009). They state that, in the case of newcomers, leisure activities provide opportunities to practice speaking and language skills, to develop cross-group relationships and gain cultural knowledge.

Research suggests that newcomers participate less in leisure-time activities compared to other groups, resulting in an opportunity for social participation by newcomers (Niemi et al., 2019). This is, according to Murad & Versey (2021), caused by time duality and time scarcity. Time duality is the inability to adapt to two 'cultural time systems.' Murad & Versey (2021) explain this by using the example of the contrast between the American time system and the Arabic time system. The American time system is heavily scheduled with work-related responsibilities, language classes and social services appointments. Meanwhile, the Arabic time system includes more leisure time. Newcomers would prioritise the American time system, including all responsibilities over the Arabic time system. This results in a decreasing amount of spare time. Time scarcity is defined as simply 'a lack of spare time.' Due to all newcomer's responsibilities, spare time is often not automatically cared for. Nevertheless, there is a severe need for spare time to process the psychological burdens newcomers experience. As Kuo (2014) explains: fewer social connections (after leaving everything behind), combined with an existing trauma (from the terror they flee from) and the adjustment to a new environment present severe psychological burdens. Therefore, in this research, the presence of time duality and time scarcity is tested. When present, there is a challenge for governments to provide newcomers with more time for adjusting to the new circumstances (Murad & Versey, 2021).

This section provided an description of the role 'markers and means' play in the integration of newcomers. These factors are perceived as the most important factors for integration. Table 1 provides an overview of the key aspects: housing, employment, education, health and leisure time. For each key aspect is explained how it contributes to integration and how it will be measured in this research.

Table 1: Overview of the key aspects from 'markers and means' and corresponding explanations.

Marker	Contribution	Measurements
Housing	Providing a home is providing more than merely a shelter. Only then will newcomers feel at home (Phillimore & Goodson, 2008).	Suitable, located in a good area, permanently assigned to the newcomer, clean and of good quality.
Employment	Providing employment helps newcomers to become economically independent, to start planning for the future and to meet people from the host-society (Ager & Strang, 2008).	Contributes to self-sufficiency, of good quality (meeting their experience and skill) and a positive work environment (Phillimore & Goodson, 2008).
Education	Education enables people to become more constructive and active members of society (Ager & Strang, 2008). Also, it provides spaces for contact and promotes the learning of the language and the local culture (Phillimore & Goodson, 2008).	Inclusive, accessible and of high quality (according to the newcomer's skill) (Dryden-Peterson & Giles, 2010).
Health	Good health is seen as an important resource for active engagement in a new society (Ager & Strang, 2008).	<i>Before access:</i> access to information, preference for certain doctors, waiting lists, financial limitations, family-related and work-related responsibilities. <i>During healthcare:</i> communication barriers, the black elephant in the room, dissatisfaction about health care providers (Mbanya, et al., 2019)
Leisure time	Leisure activities provide opportunities to practice speaking and language skills, to develop cross-group relationships and to gain cultural knowledge (Stack & Iwasaki, 2009).	Unable to adapt to two time systems, lack of free time (Murad & Versey, 2021)

3.2.2 Social connection

The process of a social connection is seen as one of the key pillars towards successful integration (Ager & Strang, 2008). Strang & Ager (2010) argue that social connections are achieved when a newcomer perceives a sense of belonging to the host-society. They stress the importance of a sense of belonging by using the example of 'Britishing:' a process where standard Britishness is expected from newcomers (Strang & Ager, 2010). Non-British (unfamiliar) people are characterised as 'the other,' resulting in a demarcation between British people and non-British people within the community. Mulvey (2010), pushes this theory further, by implying that this results in a wantedness of the familiar and an unwanted attitude of the host-society towards 'the other.' Social connections should help newcomers to accommodate to this standard. Thus, social connections should support newcomers to create a sense of belonging. Social connection therefore functions as a tool for removing barriers for integration. To understand this in the context of successful integration, social connections should be understood as tools for overcoming the barriers of the unwantedness and otherness processes. According to Putnam (1993) and Woolcock (1998), there are three types of social connections which contribute to this sense of belonging: Social bonds (family, co-ethnic, co-national, co-religious or other forms of groups), social bridges (with other communities) and social links (with the structures of the state).

The *social bonds* enable newcomers to maintain familiar patterns of relationships. These bonds are generally, but not always, formed with friends and family who share the same culture, religion and language (Culos, Rajwani, McMahon, & Robertson, 2020). This brings newcomers cultural and social activities which offer the newcomers the chance to maintain their own religion, talk in their own language, celebrate their own traditions and exchange news from their home country (Duke, Sales & Gregory, 1999). In this way, maintaining social bonds contributes to a sense of belonging. For example, this could be done by supporting communities to offer a wider set of cultural activities. This will enhance social bonds among newcomers (Culos, et al., 2020). This research tests whether such initiatives are present. When these social bonds are present, the implementation of the new act supports integration. If not, there is a challenge in policy to help newcomers maintaining their social bonds.

Social Bridges are the relationship between newcomers and the host community. Important to mention is the two-sidedness of these relationships. Two-sidedness means that social bridges only contribute successfully to integration when there is a habituation between newcomers and the other members of the communities in which they settle (ECRE, 1998). Ager & Strang (2008) magnify the importance of a mutual friendliness. As a mutual friendliness between the host-society and newcomers contributes to making newcomers feel 'at home.' For newcomers, being recognised and greeted contributes to a sense of security. Besides that, it shows them their presence is welcomed. Consequently, this lays a foundation for establishing long-term relationships. Long-term relationships would socially and economically benefit the whole community (Strang & Quinn, 2021).

When social bridges are neglected, individuals and communities can easily become isolated; further participating into society is hindered. Therefore, Ager & Strang (2008) argue that there should be worked towards long-term relationships (to socially and economically benefit the community) from a basis of mutual friendliness (to establish a feeling of security and welcoming). In policy, this could be established by supporting community engagement initiatives. Such initiatives facilitate newcomers and receiving communities in meeting each other. Also, a social climate that is positive and welcoming towards newcomers and cultural diversity is critical to safeguard and nurture (Culos, et al., 2020). In this research, the presence of such initiatives and a positive climate is tested. Through this method is assessed whether social bridges are forged under the new act. If the municipality does not enhance social bridges, this topic should be a greater policy focus.

Social links refer to connections between newcomers and structures of the state, such as government guidance (Ager & Strang, 2008). Culos, et al. (2020) explain an example from Australia, where newcomers are experiencing difficulties in acquiring access to relevant information and services. This is hindered due to language differences and long waiting times, when making an appointment. This results in unequal access to information and services between the host-society and newcomers. Moreover, there is unequal access to information and services within the newcomer population. Younger people can access useful services and information (on housing, public transportation, governmental and commercial services) more easily than newcomers from other age brackets (Culos, et al., 2020). To achieve genuine equality of access to services and information, there is a mutual effort necessary from both newcomers and the wider community required to overcome earlier stated barriers (Ager & Strang, 2008). Policy wise, this means offering translated support and information. Also, policy should focus on building skills for living independently by linking newcomers to services that can be accessed when needed (Culos, et al., 2020). In this research, the presence of social links is tested by estimating the extent to which support and information is translated. Besides that, this research focuses on the question whether services can be accessed when needed. If information is not

equally accessible for newcomers and the local population, there are still difficulties in providing the social links to newcomers under the WI 2021.

3.2.3 Facilitators

Facilitating domains are domains that help to 'remove barriers' to contribute to integration. Successful integration is hindered by barriers; newcomers may not speak the language, may not be familiar with the common culture, may not feel safe, may not experience a sense of stability (Ager & Strang, 2008) and may not possess sufficient digital skills (Alencar, 2017). These domains were identified as domains where actions could serve to facilitate (or constrain) integration. It is the role of the state to (partly) remove these barriers and allow integration in all other core domains to take place.

Language and cultural knowledge

A widely discussed matter on the subject of integration is the *language* barrier between the newcomers and the local population (Ager & Strang, 2008). The ability to speak the main language of the host community is identified as a central element of the integration process. One example is the UK, where the inability to speak English is seen as a barrier to economic integration, social interaction and full participation into society (Home Office, 2006). The importance of speaking the host nation's language is also recognised by the Dutch government. Speaking the Dutch language is one of the main expectations from newcomers, when integrating in the Netherlands (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2022a). This indicates that newcomers are urged to learn Dutch after arrival, so they can habituate to the other core domains of integration.

Overcoming the language barrier needs to be understood as a two-way process (Ager & Strang, 2008). During this process, newcomers need to accept language learning as part of their integration. Simultaneously, host-societies need to respect the dignity of the newcomers and the newcomers' identities. Policy-related and political discourses claim to be open towards multiculturalism and multilingualism (implying their respect towards new identities). However, in reality the majority of countries have interpreted language learning as a one-way process, demanding newcomers to assimilate into the mainstream society (Schmidt, 2007). Consequently, a system of monolingual learning is created. In such systems learning basic literacy skills - just enough for low-paid jobs - is normalised (Li & Sah, 2019). This seems to be the case in the Netherlands as well. In the Netherlands, learning the language of the host-society is expected from newcomers in the WI 2021 (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2022a). However, to make sure that language classes contribute to a truly multicultural and multilingual society, policy should construct a different approach for these classes. According to Li & Sah (2019), provided language classes should focus on four aspects. These four aspects are:

- Providing multilingual classes
- Contracting qualified and well-trained teachers
- Modifying different levels of language learning, according to the newcomer's skills
- Improving course access and availability

In this research, the functioning of the language classes in the Netherlands is tested based on these four aspects. If any of the aspects is not implemented, there is a motive to consider a different approach towards language classes.

A less discussed subject is the subject of getting familiar with the culture (acculturation). According to Berry (1997), acculturation consists of two main issues that need to be addressed, in order to be able to speak of a contribution to successful integration. Firstly, acculturation requires cultural maintenance. Berry (1997) describes cultural maintenance as: "*the extent to which cultural identity*

and characteristics are valued and maintained.” (Berry, 1997). Secondly, acculturation is influenced by contact and participation. These aspects concern: “the extent to which contact between cultural groups is sought or avoided.” (Berry, 1997). Berry’s two issues are brought together by Phillimore (2011), who – by doing this – has created a conceptual framework of acculturation strategies (Table 2).

Table 2: Acculturation strategies

	Importance of maintaining cultural identity and characteristics		
Relationships with larger society valued		Yes	No
	Yes	Integration – preferred, UK policy, mutual adaptation	Assimilation – one-sided adaptation
	No	Separation – chosen or enforced by society	Marginalisation – can result from exclusion or discrimination

Source: Phillimore, J. (2011). *Refugees, acculturation strategies, stress and integration*. *Journal of Social Policy*, 40(3), 575-593.

In the context of successful integration, acculturation should be pursued by integration (table 2). As table 2 shows, integration is achieved when cultural maintenance is valued and contact and participation are encouraged. When bonds with the host-society are valued and the cultural identities and characteristics are maintained, people are more prone to successfully integrate (Phillimore, 2011). However, integration as an acculturation strategy is often not achieved. Whilst assimilation is often pursued in policy, the integration acculturation strategy is hindered in reality (Phillimore, 2011). This is comparable to the process of acculturation in the Netherlands. Janssens (2015) explains that whilst policy makers use the word *integration*, they actually mean *assimilation*; they expect newcomers to become similar to the Dutch people. Consequently, there is a widening gap between the Dutch citizens and ethnic minorities (Janssens, 2015). This is noticeable from the moment of arrival, where there is a xenophobia from the host community towards the non-dominant. This results in a one-sided cultural adaptation (Assimilation, fig. 2). Moreover, from the moment of arrival contact and participation are hindered by the viscosity of the decision making in the asylum seeking procedure. Due to uncertainties for their future, newcomers do not invest in building relationships in the early stages (Janssens, 2015). This indicates that acculturation is generally shaped by assimilation or even marginalisation. In this research, the acculturation strategy in the Netherlands is analysed. When the acculturation strategy is similar to the assimilation or marginalisation strategy, there is an incentive to improve policy, in order to stimulate inter-cultural relationships to pursue integration. In this process, there is a role for institutions to facilitate interaction. By facilitating interaction, relationships with people from the larger society are encouraged. Encouragement of cultural maintenance can be supported by celebrating diversity (Phillimore, 2011).

Safety and stability

'Safety and stability' has been a common theme in discussions about integration, put forward by newcomers in interviews with Ager & Strang (2008). Safety is defined by Goldsmith (2008) as the need for physical security whilst stability is characterized as psychological security: "*A sense of being settled and safe*" (Goldsmith, 2008). Regarding physical security, newcomers said that they feel more 'at home' when they perceive personal safety in a 'peaceful' neighbourhood. However, when newcomers felt unsafe in their new environment, this led to negative effects on their ability to integrate (Stewart & Mulvey, 2014). The feeling of unsafety is caused by a feeling of being threatened within their neighbourhood. A feeling of unsafety is experienced when there are threatening situations. Threatening situations do not merely arise in the presence of (the possibility of) violence. When a newcomer is confronted with verbal abuse, when he or she had previous confrontations with harassment or intimidation or when a newcomer simply has the perception that an area is threatening, this can result in a feeling of being threatened. These matters affect the newcomer's perception of his environment (Ager & Strang, 2008). Thus, a newcomers' ability to integrate is limited when he or she feels unsafe. Therefore, every confrontation with a feeling of unsafety should be opposed. In this research, it is examined whether newcomers have mentioned a confrontation with such feelings. If so, there lies an opportunity for policymakers to create a more safe environment for newcomers.

Additionally, in the case of psychological security, newcomers feel more 'at home' when there is a feeling of stability. Stability is characterised as the minimization of insecurities (Ager & Strang, 2008). Newcomers experience insecurities concerning their future housing, future community (Ager & Strang, 2008) and their future status (Stewart & Mulvey, 2014). This can be explained by the fact that it is common for newcomers to be moved from one temporary residence to another. Therefore, newcomers keep the possibility in mind that they might need to relocate. This holds them back from settling within a community. Why settle within a community, if settling is only temporary? Also, newcomers neighbours have a tendency of moving around a lot as well (Stewart & Mulvey, 2014), resulting in a constantly changing neighbourhood. Consequently, it is difficult to settle in. Moreover, it can be argued that the temporary status of the asylum procedure negatively influences the settling motivations. As long as there has not been made a definite decision on the citizenship of the newcomer, this withholds the newcomer from participating in society. In this case, they are not compatible with the desire to be active citizens engaged in all aspects of economic, social and political life (Stewart & Mulvey, 2014). Thus, the presence of insecurities limits newcomers in their integration process. Therefore, newcomers' insecurities should be minimised. In this research, it is analysed whether newcomers have been outspoken about their encounters with insecurities. If so, there is an opportunity in policy to focus on reducing insecurities and promoting stability.

Digital skills

In the past decade, there has been increased recognition in literature about the role of digital technologies in newcomers' lives (Alencar, 2017). There is evidence that mobile phones are an essential tool for newcomers in their integration process. Mobile phones help newcomers access information and resources that can help them navigate their migration journey (Dekker, Engbersen, Klaver & Vonk, 2018). Furthermore, mobile phones support newcomers with the complexities of the resettlement (Kaufmann, 2018). Examples of these positive effects have been tested by several scholars. Mobile phones can foster learning and skill development among newcomers, both inside and outside educational settings (Bradley, Lindström & Hashemi, 2017). Moreover, mobile phones have proven to be useful tools for newcomers to coordinate themselves through the place of arrival (Kaufmann, 2018). Therefore, the use of mobile technologies amongst newcomers is associated with social inclusion and with opportunities for access to information that can positively affect their daily lives (Alencar, 2020).

However, some scholars claim that lower levels of digital literacy among newcomers, as well as socioeconomic, linguistic and cultural barriers hinder their ability to adapt to these new technologies (O'Mara, 2012; Alencar, 2017; Gifford & Wilding, 2013). First, digital illiteracy indicates a person is not proficient in the use of technology. Second, the socioeconomic factor is explained as the affordability of technological tools. Last, the linguistic and cultural barriers withholds newcomers from accessing the right information provided by ICT-services. These barriers indicate that there is an inequality in digital skills and accessibility between newcomers and members of the host-society. In this research, it is researched whether newcomers have spoken to the respondents in this research about the presence of these barriers. If so, this demonstrates inequality. In that case, newcomers need to be supported to overcome these barriers, in order to facilitate refugee integration (Alencar, 2020).

3.2.4 Foundation

Rights and citizenship

The foundation domain is based on the rights and the citizenship of the newcomer. As Ager & Strang (2008) explain, this domain is a trade-off between obtained rights from the receiving government in exchange for certain expectations on how the newcomer should behave as a citizen. Again, this concerns a two-way approach. The receiving government needs to establish policy on what the rights of newcomers are and on what can be expected from the newly arrived. To establish effective policy on integration, governments need to clearly articulate the rights accorded to newcomers (Ager & Strang, 2008). Examples of these rights are: human dignity (Duke, Sales & Gregory, 1999), equality (Ring, 1995; O'Neill, 2001), freedom of cultural choice (Ring, 1995), justice, security and independence (ECRE, 1998). Examples of expectations from newcomers can be found in the giving up of linguistic, social and cultural characteristics and in becoming economically independent. Furthermore, they may be expected to participate in voluntary work, to perform an internship or to join the labour force.

The approach towards these rights can be summarized in several integration models, for which Castles (1995) developed a foundation. In his article, he describes four patterns of countries' reactions towards newcomers. Other scholars summarized these reactions into four models as well. These models are the differential exclusionist model (Castles, 1995), the interculturalist model (Bouchard, 2010), the assimilationist model (Castles, 1995; Alba & Nee, 1997) and the pluralist/multiculturalist model (Castles, 1995; Berry, 2011).

This research is executed in the Netherlands, therefore the focus is limited to the models relevant to the Dutch context. Vink (2007) summarises the development of the Dutch response towards newcomers as a state of civic integration. This is a division of the pluralist/multiculturalist model with characteristics of the assimilationist model (Joppke, 2007; Slade, 2010; Bonjour & Lettinga, 2012). Therefore, only these two models will be discussed in this research.

Assimilationist model

In all western countries, the assimilationist model has been applied to some extent. It has been implemented by Western-European countries after the Second World War and it has most of the time been a leading approach in the USA, Canada and Australia since then. Nowadays it is no longer a dominant approach in responding to integration. Most of these developed countries have implemented a mixture of the assimilationist model and the multiculturalist model. This also counts for the Netherlands (Vink, 2007).

The assimilationist model is described by Castles (1995) as a process of one-sided adaptation of migrants to hosting countries. Newcomers are expected to give up their linguistic, social and cultural characteristics. As a result, newcomers become indistinguishable from the majority of the population. The role of the state is to create favourable conditions, in which people are stimulated to adapt to the

dominant culture and values. For example, this is done by using the dominant language towards newcomers and by letting foreign children attend to the normal schools, with no exceptions being made (Alba & Nee, 1997). The final goal is complete absorption into the dominant culture (Castles, 1995).

Multiculturalist model

The multiculturalist model can best be characterised as the acceptance of distinguishable groups of newcomers from the majority population. This concerns a distinguishability with regard to language, social behaviour, culture and associations over several generations (Castles, 1995). Governments who embrace this approach, do not expect newcomers to give up their diversity (although the newcomers are expected to accustom to the majority's key values). Moreover, newcomers receive equal rights and chances in all spheres of society (Berry, 2011).

Implementing these rights can be done by two approaches, according to this model. The 'laissez-faire' approach is a one-sided process. Here, it is not seen as the role of the state to maintain the cultural differences. The other, two-sided approach expects governments to actively steer on the maintenance of cultural differences between small ethnic groups and the majority population (Berry, 2011). This approach is currently fully implemented in the USA, Australia and Canada. Aside from these clear examples, there are mixtures of the assimilationist model and the multiculturalist model noticeable in a lot of other western countries.

Civic integration

The Netherlands presents itself as a typical example of a multiculturalist country, where religions and ethnic differences are accommodated on equal footing (Bonjour & Lettinga, 2012). However, since the introduction of the Newcomer Integration Law [WIN] in 1998, newcomers in the Netherlands are obligated to take an integration course. This course consists of Dutch civic and language lessons. Later on, the original legislation from 1998 was expanded in the integration act in 2007. With the introduction of this act, newcomers are obliged to master the language of the host-society and to familiarise themselves with the civics: the political institutions, culture and history (Joppke, 2017). The introduction of the integration act in 2007 has put severe pressure on the newcomer to adapt to the Dutch language and culture (Bonjour & Lettinga, 2012). Thus, whilst multiculturalism is celebrated, the current status reveals some demanding assimilationist features. This is labelled as a state of civic integration by Joppke (2007; 2017).

In this research, the WI 2021 is put within the context of the different integration models. It is assessed whether the WI 2021 is a form of a multiculturalist model, an assimilationist model or a civic integration model that falls beyond the national models from Castles (1995) - a mixture between both models. This analysis will provide insights in the used approach of the WI 2021. Based on these insights, stakeholders can familiarise themselves with the newcomers' rights and duties in the Netherlands. Thereupon, these insights provide an opportunity to unite the understanding of integration with the implementation of integration.

3.4 Current debate

Looking back at the expectations from newcomers concerning integration in the Netherlands, newcomers are expected of the following: *"A newcomer has three years to learn to speak the language and become familiar with the Dutch society. The intention should be to become economically independent as soon as possible. To reach this, an integration exam needs to be achieved."* (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2022a). These expectations are similar to what Korac (2003) describes as 'functional aspects' which are normally pursued through policy. When looking at the framework on integration (Ager & Strang, 2008), the functional aspects of Dutch integration

correspond with employment, housing, mastering the language and cultural knowledge. In this case, integration is aimed at becoming self-sufficient through learning the culture and language. Furthermore, newcomers are expected to find paid work (Steimel, 2017). However, attention to all newcomers' aspirations and needs (such as mutual acceptance, equal opportunities and rights, social participation, safety, educational opportunity, financial stability and health) is not standardized as part of integration policy or services (Shaw, Funk, Garlock & Arok, 2021). In other words: the other core domains for integration presented by Ager & Strang (2008) are often neglected in policy. This shows the discrepancies between the understanding of successful integration on the one hand and both policy objectives and the implementation of policy (Damen, et al., 2021) on the other. For a newcomer to reach his or her full potential, more extensive, practical and person-oriented support is desired during the early stage of integration. During this process, it is important to be aware of the fact that what is initially provided as support for integration does not hinder the newcomer's independence (Damen, et al., 2021).

The goal behind the WI 2021 was to create an improved version of the old act of 2007. It is an attempt to enhance the fulfilment of all the newcomers' needs. However, it is apparent from what is expected from newcomers that there is a discrepancy between the understanding of integration from Ager & Strang (2008) on the one hand and the implementation of the new act on the other. Furthermore, the WI 2021 is already criticised by Groenendijk, de Hart & van Oers (2021). They state that the WI 2021 is a process in which inequalities between newcomers and the hosting society are preserved. Therefore, the WI 2021 might not automatically be an improvement. For this reason, it is necessary to assess how all aspects of successful integration are pursued. When this framework is compared to the implementation of the WI 2021 it reveals on what aspects the WI 2021 is not (yet) in accordance with all the newcomers. This research attempts to discover where the implementation of the new act can be improved. When looked into at an early stage of the implementation, there is still room for improvement. How this was done, is explained in the methodology chapter (chapter 4).

4. Methodology

This chapter aims to describe the methodologies used in this research. It elaborates on the considerations and choices that have been involved in this research. First, this chapter provides a description of the used method to collect the data. Included in this description is an explanation of the consequences for using this method. Furthermore, it consists of the justification for the selected research area and the contacted participants. Also, the ethical considerations are explained. Then, an explanation of the data analysis is given. Last, the methodological choices are evaluated and justified.

4.1 Methodology

This research aimed to compare the implementation of the new act on integration [WI] 2021 with the theoretical framework of successful integration. As apparent from the literature in the previous chapter, the correct implementation of integration is based on the functioning of twelve key aspects. The comparison revealed in what key aspects the current implementation of the WI 2021 in the municipality of Tilburg does not comply to the framework of successful integration. Moreover, this comparison revealed the functioning of each aspect and could elaborate on shortcomings in the current implementation. These results provide an opportunity for stakeholders to evaluate their implementation at an early stage. This evaluation helped improving integration in the municipality of Tilburg. Moreover, the results give a better sense of the discrepancy between the understanding of integration on the one hand and implementation of the WI 2021 on the other.

This research aimed to collect first data on the functioning of the recently introduced act on integration. Due to the recent introduction, there were two consequences for methods used in this research. First, the context in which integration was researched, was unexplored. To get a better understanding of an unexplored subject it is obvious to gather detailed data (Silverman, 2020). Qualitative research is used when investigating an issue in great detail (Silverman, 2020). Therefore, the researcher chose to gather in-depth data by doing qualitative research. Second, the WI 2021 became effective during the course of this research. Expectedly, secondary data on the functioning of the new act could not have been collected yet. Therefore, all data used in this research was primary gathered data.

As explained, in this research primary, in-depth data was collected by doing qualitative research, for which various research methods could be used. The most common methods for conducting qualitative research that were explored for this research are observation, focus groups, interviews and secondary research (Silverman, 2020). Due to the recent implementation of the new act, there was a lack of existing research. Therefore, only primary data was gathered. The research method of secondary research was excluded. The research method observation is commonly used to get a better understanding of the context and phenomenon under study by observing it in practice (Kawulich, 2005). For this research, observing would have involved looking at integration in practice. In other words: observing the practicability of integration. However, this research' scope is more focused on analysing the implementation of the WI 2021, rather than the practicability. Accordingly, the research method of observation was excluded. The same goes for the method of focus groups, which is often used as a complementary method to observations (Omidian & Ahearn, 2000). Focus groups could offer an opportunity to bring together a small group of participants to answer questions in a moderated setting. In this way, focus groups offer an opportunity to observe a large amount of interaction in a limited period of time (Gibbs, 1997). Similar to the observation method, focus groups would have had a scope on the practicability of integration. In this research, focus groups would not have contributed to answering the research question. In future research, these methods could be relevant if the practicability of the WI 2021 is researched.

The remaining method on gathering qualitative, primary data was by conducting interviews. An interview is usually conducted to achieve a profound image of the experiences of the respondents (Silverman, 2020). In this research, it was of importance to visualise the implementation of the WI 2021. In detail, this visualisation showed how these aspects have been implemented and what the stakeholders' experiences have been with implementing the WI 2021. This visualisation was later compared to the framework of successful integration. The results of this comparison showed what aspects of successful integration are implemented accordingly. More important, the results showed in what aspects was room for improving implementation. This analysis contributes to answering the research question. Therefore, conducting interviews was the preferred method used in this research.

Interviews can be conducted in three different forms: structured interviews, unstructured interviews or semi-structured interviews. Structured interviews have a predetermined set of questions in a specific order and often consist of close-ended questions. These types of questions show characteristics of a quantitative research method (Bryman, 2006). In this research, it was determined a qualitative method is preferred. Therefore, the use of structured interviews was excluded. Unstructured interviews are the most flexible type of interviewing. To provoke the interviewee to talk more open and freely during the interview, the questions and order are not determined in advance (Bryman, 2006). In this research, it was of importance that all aspects of integration were covered in the conversations with the stakeholders. An unstructured interview would increase the possibility that certain specifics would not be covered. Therefore, unstructured interviews were not the preferred method.

The preferred method in this research was conducting semi-structured interviews. Interviews in this form are a mixture between structured and unstructured interviews (Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson & Kangasniemi, 2016). The interviewer has a plan for what is asked, but the questions do not have to follow a particular order. Moreover, the types of questions switched between open-ended and closed-ended questions. This allowed the interviewer to approach the interview with flexibility, whilst following a predetermined thematic framework (Kallio, et al., 2016). This predetermined thematic framework for semi-structured interviews can, according to Silverman (2020) best be captured in a topic list. In this research, a topic list based on the aspects in the theoretical framework was formed (appendix 9.1). This list functioned as an interview guide and it was brought to all interviews. In this way, the researcher was able to guarantee order when necessary. At the same time, the researched had the flexibility to modify the order of the questions and switch between open-ended and closed-ended questions.

4.2 Research area

The WI 2021 has been implemented by the Dutch government since 1st January 2022. With the introduction of this new act, integration was decentralised. Therefore, integrating newcomers became the full responsibility of Dutch municipalities (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2022b). In this research, interviews in one municipality as a case study were conducted. A case study is preferred when there is an attempt to learn more about a little known or poorly understood situation (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). Creswell (2003) adds: *"In a case study, the researcher explores in depth a program, an event, an activity, a process or one or more individuals."* Because of the fact that the WI 2021 has been active since 1st January 2022, it can be stated that the act was recently implemented during the research period. Due to this recent implementation, there was little known about the implementation of the WI 2021 in the Netherlands. Also, a case study is commonly used when exploring a process (Creswell, 2003). This research focused on analysing the integration process. Therefore, the research method of a case study complied with the demands from Leedy & Ormrod

(2001) and Creswell (2003). A case study of one municipality was chosen to describe the implementation of the WI 2021.

The case study that was chosen in this research, was the municipality of Tilburg. This research aimed to compare the functioning of the WI 2021 with the theoretical framework of successful integration. According to the theoretical framework of successful integration, successful integration consists of twelve key aspects. Recently, digital skills were added as a factor of the theoretical framework of successful integration (Alencar, 2020). The municipality of Tilburg was at the moment of research the only municipality that had included the technological possibilities of an app to support integration (Welcome! App, personal communication, November 17, 2021). In other words, Tilburg is the only municipality that included digital skills as part of their implementation of the new act. Naturally, the municipality of Tilburg was the only municipality where implementation could be compared to all twelve key aspects of successful integration. Therefore, the municipality of Tilburg was the only possible case study to conduct this research in correctly.

4.3 Participants

Since the introduction of the WI 2021, the municipality of Tilburg has the responsibility for newcomers integrating within their municipality. To facilitate this implementation, the municipality selected several companies. Each stakeholder supports the municipality in the integration process with their expertise. The implementation is influenced by two types of actors: internal actors (the municipality) and external actors (other involved parties supporting integration) (Silverman, 2020). The presence of several companies implies that implementing the new act was a multi-actor process. Each actor is involved in implementing different key aspects of integration. This variety in companies, implies there is a variety in knowledge and experiences too. This was explained by McLaughlin (1987): *“An actor’s information is casted in terms of their particular incentives, goals and constraints.”* This means that, to obtain a complete image of the implementation, it is necessary to interview all actors involved in the implementation of the WI 2021. Only if that is the case, it is possible to compare the implementation of integration in the municipality of Tilburg with the framework of successful integration.

As explained, the full network on integration in the municipality of Tilburg was involved in this research. The municipality of Tilburg appointed the Welcome! App to be a leading character within this network. Welcome! App was enabled to collaborate with other stakeholders and unify integration. In other words, the App carried out a responsibility for integrating newcomers, in close collaboration with other stakeholders in the network. Due to this teamwork, the company had clear insights in the actors involved in the implementation of the new act on integration in the municipality of Tilburg (Personal communication, January 26, 2022). For the purpose of this research, the Welcome! App was requested to provide an overview of the involved actors in the network of integration in the municipality of Tilburg. The company identified several key actors within the network. According to Welcome! App, there are six types of actors involved (Personal communication, January 26, 2022). The six categories of actors and the involved actors per category are displayed in table 3. This table envisions the structure of the network on integration. The governmental organization functions as a supervisor, responsible for the well-functioning of the network. The nationally operating organizations are involved in an early stage of the integration process, prior to being housed within a municipality. They are responsible to enable newcomers to settle in a specific municipality. After being settled, the locally operating organization and third parties are responsible for further guidance during the integration process. Locals are often volunteers that support locally operating organisations in the practicability of their activities. A ‘Superlocal’ is a local that is specifically hired as a volunteer at the Welcome! App. Similar to locals, Superlocals support the Welcome! App in the practicability of their activities.

Table 3: Overview of the network on integration within the municipality of Tilburg.

CATEGORY	ACTOR	PURPOSE	INTERVIEWEE
GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS			
	Municipality of Tilburg	Supervision	Integration policy officer
NATIONALLY OPERATING ORGANISATIONS			
	Central agency for asylum seekers [COA]	First support, asylum request	N/A
	Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland	Support whilst being housed	Team leader for Tilburg
LOCALLY OPERATING ORGANISATIONS			
	Refugee Team	Extensive intake, support whilst integrating	Operations manager
	ContourdeTwern	Support whilst integrating	Employee on refuge and guidance
THIRD PARTIES			
	Welcome! App	Central player in the network	Community manager
VOLUNTEERS			
	(Super)locals	Easily-accessible, local support	Superlocal in Tilburg
NEWCOMERS			
	Newcomers	The people integrating	N/A

This research aimed to interact with the full network on integration. In Tilburg there are eight actors involved within the network. The ninth actor, newcomers, was deliberately excluded in this research. The interviews were conducted in such an early stage of the implementation that newcomers could not have finished the new integration process. Therefore, their experiences could not yet be measured. Whilst newcomers' experiences are valued for the development of integration in the Netherlands, they were excluded as an actor in this research. Also, it can be argued that it is unethical to conduct interviews about the experiences of the newcomers this soon after arriving in the Netherlands. Kabranian-Melkonian (2015) argues newcomers are likely to have experienced many complications during their tribulations, such as trauma and loss, anguish and poor health, poverty and unemployment, etc. It was therefore decided to exclude newcomers from this research.. This research aimed at conducting interviews with the seven remaining actors in table 3.

The exclusion of newcomers in this research had limited consequences on the results of this research. This research had a focus on the implementation of the new act on integration, rather than the practicability. To test the practicability of the WI 2021, the experiences of newcomers are greatly valued. It is strongly advised to conduct this research from a practicable point of view. This would be a relevant contribution to the understanding of integration. Moreover, that would be complementary to this research, as it highlights the opposite side.

The actors involved in the network were contacted via an employee of the Welcome! App. This employee e-mailed the other companies with a request for an interview. This e-mail contained a

request for talking to the employee that is mainly involved with integration in Tilburg. The participants' position within the firm is included in table 3. Revealing their position could be contrary to preserving the participants' anonymity. If this was the case, the positions were altered to an alternative. This way, the participants are less traceable. If they responded openly, they were contacted by the researcher to arrange a meeting. If there was no response to the e-mail, they were contacted by calling. This phone call contained another request for participation in this research. If participation was denied, there were no further options for arranging an interview and that company was renounced.

As a consequence, not all actors involved in the network were interviewed. The COA waived on their participation in this research. The spokesman of the COA did not want to participate due to the negative media attention the company received recently. As a consequence, a part of the information of the functioning of the network was missing. However, it was estimated that all organisations' activities are intertwined within the network. Therefore, other actors could subvene, even though an actor is missing. As a result, it can be assumed the information gap would be little. With the exclusion of COA as an actor in the network on integration in the municipality of Tilburg, the total amount of conducted interviews in this research was six interviews.

The conducted interviews were held in person at an agreed location. Due to circumstances, in some cases it was not possible to meet in person. In that case, interviews were conducted with the use of the free online program 'Google Meets.' The interviews were recorded for analysing purposes. For recording, the Dictaphone on the researcher's mobile phone was used. For analysis, these records were converted into transcripts of the interviews. The interviews lasted one hour on average. This time was needed to cover all aspects of successful integration in one interview.

Conducting interviews raised a range of ethical concerns (Sanjari, Bahramnezhad, Fomanj, Shoghi & Cheraghi, 2014). According to Sanjari, et al. (2014) some important ethical concerns that needed to be taken into consideration are anonymity, confidentiality and informed consent. Anonymity is secured when any sensitive information is disregarded in the final report of the research. Examples of sensitive information can be: the name, the address and the specific occupation of the interviewee. This information makes the interviewee traceable. That information could be used to confront the participant with his or her utterances during the interview. In that case, the interviewee might not feel comfortable anymore to talk open and freely (Sanjari, et al., 2014). However, as the participant should not feel obstructed when talking about their utterances, anonymity of the participant was secured by removing their name, their occupation and other sensitive information which could make them traceable from the transcripts (Silverman, 2020). Moreover, all participants proofread the transcripts of their interviews. In any case information was wished to be altered by the participant, it was adjusted in the transcripts.

Confidentiality, in the context of human research, refers to the agreement between the researcher and participant about how their information will be handled, managed and disseminated (Sanjari, et al., 2014). As mentioned before, the whole conversation was recorded with the use of the Dictaphone-app on the researcher's mobile phone. Prior to the interview, every participant was asked for permission for recording. All participants agreed with the recording, if these records would be used solely for analysing purposes. As agreed upon, these records were deleted right after the completing the research. To process the information into analysable data, the records were transcribed. These transcripts were proofread by the participants. This was not only done to ensure their anonymity, but also to determine whether their statements had been correctly interpreted and written down. If any participant was unsatisfied with the result, their statements were adjusted according to the participants' wishes. Furthermore, the transcripts were added as an appendix (appendixes 9.3-9.8) in the final report of the research. In order to be able to fully assess the research, these appendixes were

disseminated to the Radboud University. Other parties interested in receiving the final report, receive a version wherein the appendixes containing the transcripts were removed. This way, the confidentiality in this research was secured.

In qualitative research, it is of utmost importance that there is informed consent between the participant and the researcher (Sanjari, et al., 2014). Informed consent means the investigator, in advance, specifies to the participant what data is collected and how they are to be used. Clarifications need to include the following: nature of the study, the participants' role, the identity of the researcher, the objective of the research and how the results will be published and used (Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden, 2001). The nature of the study, the participants' role, the identity of the researcher and the objective of the research were explained to the participant multiple times. In the first e-mail, from an employee the Welcome! App team, contained a detailed description of these clarifications. Also, these issues were addressed at the start of each interview. During the interview, it was also mentioned how the results would be published and used. To make sure everything was understood by the participants, the researcher asked if there were any questions before starting the rest of the interview. The researcher applied this approach to secure the informed consent.

4.4 Analysis

To convert the interviews into analysable data, the interviews were recorded and transcribed. The literal transcription of interviews was done to remain close to the told reality when analysing the data (Silverman, 2020). Even though an interview guide was used, participants tended to deviate on subjects they are passionate for. Therefore, interview data consisted of a chaos on comments and statements of the participants (Silverman, 2020). Analysis can be a helpful tool to bring order within this chaos.

There are three approaches for analysing qualitative data: content analysis, discourse analysis and thematic analysis (Jaspal, 2020). A content analysis is used to identify patterns in recorded communication. It is used to find out more about purposes, messages and effects of content of communication. Discourse analysis focuses on studying written or spoken language in relation to its social context. It aims to gain an understanding of social groups and how they communicate. A thematic analysis searches for common themes, topics, ideas, patterns of meaning in qualitative data. It is often used when there is an interest in people's views, opinions, values, experiences or knowledge from a set of qualitative data (Jaspal, 2020). This research compared the WI 2021 with the framework of successful integration. To gain a full image of the implementation of the WI 2021, the researcher interviewed the involved actors. Within these interviews, respondents talked about their opinions and experiences with the WI 2021. These kinds of questioning match the interests presented at the thematic analysis. Therefore, a thematic analysis was chosen.

The collected data on the implementation of the WI 2021 was compared to the framework of successful integration. Thematic analysis was used to process this data systematically. In thematic analysis, there are two distinctions to make. First, the distinction between deductive and inductive coding. Deductive codes are codes which are directly relatable to the theory. This approach is used when testing an established theory. Inductive codes are formed by striking comments and statements which are not directly related to a theory. In this case, the data is expected to contribute to contribute to a new framework (Silverman, 2020). In this research, the framework of successful integration was established prior to the research. Therefore, deductive coding was expected. However, this framework of successful integration was compared within a new context of the recently implemented act on integration. The understanding of successful integration benefited from new insights in the context on this new act. Therefore, inductive coding would be a valuable contribution to the results too. This research used a combination of both deductive and inductive coding.

Second, there is a distinction between a semantic approach and a latent approach. A semantic approach means that the specific content of the data is analysed. This approach is used when there is an interest in people's opinions and experiences. In contrast, a latent approach involves reading into the assumptions and subtext underlying in the data. A latent approach is used when there is an interest in what the statements reveal about the participant's assumptions and social context (Javadi & Zarea, 2016). In order to compare the framework of successful integration with the WI 2021, it was of importance that an image was created on how the WI 2021 was implemented. This was done by asking participants about their opinions and experiences with the implementation of the WI 2021. Asking for opinions and experiences has similarities with the requirements for semantic approach. Therefore, this research used a semantic approach.

After transcribing, thematic analysis of qualitative data is done by coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In this research, the three phases of coding from Silverman (2020) were used: open coding, axial coding and selective coding. Open coding is done by reading through the transcripts of the interviews and marking (parts of) texts which comply to the same subject (code). This was done with the tool of NVivo. An online program, that is provided by the Radboud University for all students. Within this tool, the texts were automatically sorted by subject. It helped creating an overview in the collected data. Axial coding was done by analysing the coded parts of the text. The pieces of text were compared to each other and remarkable similarities and differences are collected for the next phase: selective coding. Selective coding means that the remarkable concepts following from the axial coding are connected to the existing theory or being expanded to a new theory (Silverman, 2020). The result of this selective coding is presented in a coding tree (appendix 9.2). This overview presents the inductive codes, which are a product of the theoretical framework. Furthermore, it presents deductive codes, which emerged from the analysis of the qualitative data.

The qualitative data gathered in this research provided insights in the experiences and opinions of the implementation of the WI 2021 in the municipality of Tilburg. This full image of the implementation was compared with the aspects of the framework of successful integration. In the next section, the opinions and experiences of the implementation from the case study are described. In order to compare, this implementation is linked to the existing framework of successful integration. This is explained by covering each key aspect of the framework of successful integration separately.

5. Results

The previous chapter described the method for gathering and analysing qualitative data. The results of this analysis are presented in this chapter. This chapter's structure follows the structure presented in the theoretical framework (chapter 3). This means that each aspect of the framework of successful integration is covered separately. Similar to the theoretical framework, the aspects will be ordered as follows: the markers & means (housing, employment, education, health and leisure time), the social connection (social bonds, social bridges and social links), the facilitators (language & cultural knowledge, safety and stability and digital skills) and the foundation (rights & citizenship). Each implementation of these aspects is described. Followed by a comparison with the key aspects of successful integration. This is done to test whether the implementation fulfils the criteria. Any potential problems or shortcomings are elaborated upon, as well as the success-stories.

5.1 Markers and means

Housing

Ager & Strang (2008) point out that housing is mentioned as the most important factor for newcomers to feel at home. The municipality of Tilburg agrees on this statement: *"Without housing, it is impossible to integrate."* (municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5). Naturally, providing housing for newcomers receives close attention from several parties in the network on integration (Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland [VWN], Centraal Orgaan Asielopvang [COA], municipality of Tilburg). The involved parties each contribute on a different phase of housing.

Finding a housing space for newcomers can be difficult for municipalities. Once a newcomer has received a permanent residence permit he or she is allocated to a municipality. From that moment, the search for a housing space starts. During this search, newcomers spend their time in a temporary facility or a refugee centre, until a proper house is found. Currently, there is a nationwide shortage of affordable housing (Boelhouwer & Van der Heijden, 2022). This overstrained housing market was acknowledged by several stakeholders within the network (Welcome! App, Appendix 9.3; ContourdeTwern, Appendix 9.4; RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6; SuperLocal, Appendix 9.7). For newcomers, this shortage means that housing corporations have difficulties with finding proper housing (ContourdeTwern, Appendix 9.4). Consequently, there is an overpopulation in all temporary facilities across the country: *"... they are bulging."* (ContourdeTwern, Appendix 9.4). The new act on integration [WI] 2021 was not introduced to directly enlighten the pressure on the housing market and, simultaneously, the pressure on the temporary facilities. However, the WI 2021 involves a 'warm transfer' of newcomers from the COA to the municipalities. This warm transfer aims to smoothen the process of information exchange between the COA and municipalities (Divosa, 2022a). In this way, housing corporations are able to find proper housing more easily.

Proper housing should measure up to the characteristics of a home. These characteristics are presented by Phillimore & Goodson (2008) as: suitable, in a good neighbourhood, of good quality, clean and permanent. In Tilburg, the search for proper housing proceeds as follows. The search starts with an initial conversation between the newcomer and COA. In this conversation the newcomer is screened and a customer profile is composed (Divosa, 2022b). This customer profile, among personal features, mainly consists of housing requirements. This profile is handed over to the municipality in the 'warm transfer.' The municipality disseminates the profile to housing corporations and VWN (VWN, Appendix 9.8). Based on this profile, housing corporations search for suitable social housing (ContourdeTwern, Appendix 9.4). A housing space for newcomers integrating in Tilburg is found rather quick, according to ContourdeTwern (Appendix 9.4) and the municipality of Tilburg (Appendix 9.5). They state that people are housed within a matter of months. However, Welcome! App (Appendix 9.3) and RefugeeTeam (Appendix 9.6) nuance this statement by saying that finding a housing space can last

one to two years. Generally, the municipality of Tilburg is rather quick in housing newcomers. However, this statement is not valid for every case.

When housing is found, it should meet the characteristics of a home (Phillimore & Goodson, 2008). Suitability is one of these characteristics of a home. Most of the time suitable housing is found rather easy, based on the customer profile drafted by COA. The main problem arises when large families need to be housed. People from for example Eritrea (VWN, Appendix 9.8) or Syria (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6) tend to have larger families than the common Dutch households. There are simply nearly no homes available for families with six, seven or eight children (VWN, Appendix 9.8). These families either have to wait longer for a suitable house, or are crammed into a house that is too small: *"It has some similarities with how people lived a hundred years ago."* (VWN, Appendix 9.8). VWN discusses unsuitable housing with the housing corporation to search for a compromise. For example by finding two houses next to each other for one family. Renovating an attic to add a bedroom is another option. However, most of the time it means that larger families are living on a smaller surface. The alternative is to refuse to live in a cramped house. In that case, families are left without housing (VWN, Appendix 9.8). Moreover, from the moment they get offered a house and the newcomer decides to reject, newcomers are treated similar to every other Dutch citizen. This means that they have to sign up at the housing corporations and sit out the waiting list. Housing corporations in Tilburg take years to provide a house for people on the waiting list (ContourdeTwern, Appendix 9.4). This indicates that the search for suitable housing can cause problems.

Other characteristics of a home are: being in a good neighbourhood, of good quality, clean and permanent (Phillimore & Goodson, 2008). Concerning the neighbourhood of newcomers' houses, ContourdeTwern (Appendix 9.4) admits social housing is concentrated in certain areas within the city (Northern Tilburg and Southwest-Tilburg). Whilst in these areas people have *"A little bit less to spend."* (ContourdeTwern, Appendix 9.4), it is not necessarily true that these areas can be marked as lesser neighbourhoods. These are just different kinds of neighbourhoods (ContourdeTwern, Appendix 9.4). The quality and cleanness are acceptable as well. Houses in social housing are maintained by the housing corporation. Housing corporations have an obligation to meet Dutch housing standards. These standards are checked in accordance with VWN. This company joins newcomers during their first visit of their new house. Together, they check the condition of the residence (VWN, Appendix 9.8). Therefore, one can assume that these houses are of good quality and clean (ContourdeTwern, Appendix 9.4).

Permanent housing is not an issue for the majority of newcomers. Impermanent housing is particularly noticed among underaged newcomers. Newcomers aged 18 or older receive a housing contract for an indefinite period (VWN, Appendix 9.8). However, housing corporations do not want to favour underaged newcomers with respect to the local young population. Therefore, underaged newcomers receive a temporary housing contract for a period of five years. In this way, every underaged Dutch citizen has equal chances in the housing market. However, when a newcomer's contract expires, these newcomers often have no idea how to get a permanent residence. Consequently, newcomers are becoming homeless or are in a situation where they are very dependent on other people (VWN, Appendix 9.8). Giving underaged newcomers a temporary contract has a reversed effect. It leads to a illogical division; for newcomers entering the housing market in Tilburg, it is more advantageous to be an adult than to be underaged.

During the rest of the housing process the newcomer is supported by VWN with administrative issues and practical help. First, VWN helps the newcomer to walkthrough the housing contract with the housing corporation (VWN, Appendix 9.8). Where housing corporations often want to finish this quickly, VWN tries to explain what is included in the contract. Housing corporations often merely

communicate in Dutch or English, which makes it difficult to communicate. Supportively, VWN makes sure newcomers understand what is expected from them (VWN, Appendix 9.8). When communication possibilities are limited, a family member of the newcomer or a translator is hired to translate the information (VWN, Appendix 9.8). Second, VWN signs up newcomers in the joint waiting list of the housing corporations in the Tilburg area 'Woning in Zicht.' In the case they want to apply for other housing, they have more possibilities concerning the waiting list. For these kind of administrative issues and practical help, newcomers can approach their contact person from VWN (Appendix 9.8).

When looking at the qualifications of a home from Phillimore & Goodson (2008), housing in the municipality of Tilburg is generally in a good neighbourhood, of good quality and clean. Minors excluded, housing in Tilburg is also permanent. Also, housing in Tilburg is generally suitable. Particularly large families have troubles finding suitable housing. These characteristics of a home are pursued in cooperation with VWN. This company guides and supports newcomers during the process of housing.

Employment

Ager & Strang (2008) explain that employment is seen as the second most important aspect for being able to integrate. The importance of employment is acknowledged in the WI 2021. As is apparent from one of the main goals: *"... becoming economically independent as soon as possible, preferably by finding (paid) work."* (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2022a). As a result, the newly responsible municipality experiences an *"extreme involvement (in employing newcomers)."* (municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5). This involvement was perceptible for more stakeholders in the network. Welcome! App (Appendix 9.3), ContourdeTwern (Appendix 9.4) and RefugeeTeam (Appendix 9.6) mentioned a close involvement with the employment of newcomers.

The main difference in finding employment for newcomers under the WI 2021 is the customised approach. Decentralising integration in the new act supports the idea of enabling governments to deliver customised measures concerning employment (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2022b). In practice, the process of finding employment starts directly after being housed. At first, newcomers attend the newly introduced extensive intake with RefugeeTeam (Appendix 9.6). During the extensive intake, employment is widely featured. The newcomer's working experience is discussed and their skills are estimated (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6). Based on this knowledge, people are divided between the three newly established learning-routes: education route, B2-route and the Z-route. Employment is mostly important for people marching the Z-route (Divosa, 2022b). For them, the plan for integration and participation [PIP] will focus on employment. This plan is formed in dialogue with the newcomer during the extensive intake. This dialogue consists of informing the newcomer about the labour possibilities in the Netherlands, discussing about what he or she wants to do and whether this is realistic according to the skills and experience (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6). RefugeeTeam (Appendix 9.6) aspires to have a participation position for each newcomer to start learning the language directly after this extensive intake. The PIP is successfully finished when newcomers have spent 800 hours in language schooling and 800 hours in participation in three years (Divosa, 2022b). This 800 hours of participation includes orientation on the labour market, building a network, doing volunteer work and labour (municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5).

The question of the quality of these jobs remains. The way employment can contribute to successful integration is illustrated by Phillimore & Goodson (2008). Qualitative employment should result in a self-sufficient newcomer. He or she works in a position according to his or her skills and experience. Also, this job is in a friendly collegial environment.

Starting with the quality of the workplaces. This is guaranteed for people integrating in the municipality of Tilburg, according to the local government (Appendix 9.5). Due to the extensive intake, it is possible

to look for companies matching the newcomer's interests, skills and experience. Low-quality jobs are hereby excluded for newcomers. Newcomers will not accept low-quality jobs anymore. Why? *"Because they are shit jobs. They are underpaid and have poor provisions. So they (newcomers) will not do it anymore."* (municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5). Due to the customised approach of the extensive intake and the PIP, the quality of employment for newcomers integrating in Tilburg is guaranteed.

However, two nuances are to be drawn for this statement. First, people who have a university degree from their country of origin need to be aware of the fact that they are obliged to settle for a lower-end profession in Tilburg (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6). This is mainly because of initial language differences and the differences in expected skills. The differences in expected skills are explained as: *"It is often the case that when people have a university degree in accounting in Syria, they match the skills of a bookkeeper in the Netherlands."* (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6). In this example, a case of underemployment is illustrated (Duke, Sales & Gregory, 1999). Second, Dutch companies are not fully comfortable with hiring newcomers in their company (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6). They might not have had good experiences with hiring newcomers in the past or believe they are not able to overcome the language differences (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6). These processes form barriers for further integration (Mulvey, 2010). Therefore, RefugeeTeam (Appendix 9.6) believes Dutch companies need to open up more towards hiring newcomers. In the current stage of labour shortage, the openness of Dutch companies has improved (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6).

Looking at the demands for qualitative employment from Phillimore & Goodson (2008), employment is successfully supporting integration. Due to the wide recognition of employment during the process, newcomers are supported to become economically independent citizens. A job matching their skills and experiences are a direct result of the extensive intake. Aside from a certain unwantedness among Dutch companies to hire newcomers, their jobs are generally in a friendly environment. It is important to keep in mind that a process like underemployment is still effective. These processes can negatively affect the quality of the job, which would limit newcomer's potential to integrate.

Education

The third most important aspect for successful integration is education (Ager & Strang, 2008). Its importance is also apparent in the WI 2021 in the Netherlands. The new act structured a whole education route, specifically for educating the younger audience (Divosa, 2022b). In this route, people are being prepared to enter the labour market by educating them (municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5). According to participants' learnability, they are divided between the levels of Dutch schooling (intermediate education level, higher education level and university-level). In this way, they are prepared for entering the labour market according to their skills. The education route is *"the ideal picture of how education should be accomplished (among newcomers)."* (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6) The ideal picture is a representation of education within a context of successful integration. Therefore, it should meet the criteria of education as a key aspect for successful integration. These criteria are inclusive, accessible and qualitative (Dryden-Peterson & Giles, 2010).

Similar to the process of employment, this process starts in the extensive intake. During the intake, it is estimated whether a newcomer is willing to follow an education and at what level he or she is capable of doing so (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6). Moreover, newcomers are informed by RefugeeTeam about the duration of their education takes and what their future labour opportunities will be when education is finished (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6). Then, these people are linked to a fitting educational institution. The municipality of Tilburg has contracts with schools in different levels of education: secondary vocational education (ROC), higher professional education (Fontys) and university-level (University of Tilburg) (municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5). This way, every

newcomer that is willing to follow an education, is able to do so within their capabilities. With providing these options, the accessibility of education is guaranteed.

It is important to draw a nuance to this accessibility. Namely, that the Dutch education system is often of a higher quality than the education in the country of origin. Therefore, there is a relatively small group of young people whose learnability is proportionate to enter university-level. The municipality states: *“The target for Tilburg is to integrate 295 status holders this year. I think the estimation is that two of them will make it to university.”* (municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5).

Moreover, educating newcomers is expensive. Under the new act, municipalities are responsible for paying for the newcomer’s education during integration (Divosa, 2022b). RefugeeTeam explains the problem: *“The whole education route falls into nothingness. The education route particularly is often quite expensive. Educational institutions want to offer education but education costs so many thousands of euros and the municipalities claim that is unaffordable (with their received budget).”* As a result, less people are attending the education route (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6). This *“ideal picture of the education system”* (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6) is not as ideal as it is presented. The problem with educating newcomers is a matter of affordability, rather than accessibility.

Another demand for a successful education system is the quality of education received by newcomers (Dryden-Peterson & Giles, 2010). Quality is dependent on whether education is given according to the newcomer’s skills and experience. RefugeeTeam (Appendix 9.6) explains that determining the learnability of a newcomer is difficult in some cases. Generally, the local community rolls into an education system which they have been prepared for. In the case of newcomers, they have to adapt to a new education system, which might be confusing (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6). *“We need to understand that the people who come here, have a completely different image of what education is. So, to find your way and to decide what you want to do is an immense task.”* (Welcome! App, appendix 9.3). This, among other factors, complicates finding the fitting educational level: *“... it is possible they are a bit older and they might be less proficient with the language and, thus, less familiar with the education system, that it can cause newcomers to become undereducated.”* (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6). Which is important to keep in mind when talking about the quality of education for newcomers.

As preparation for integration, newcomers are helped to familiarise themselves with the education system with the help of switching programs. Before accessing the education system, newcomers in the education route follow a pre-education program. This is provided at every level of education (Municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5). In this program, people are familiarising themselves with the Dutch education system. Moreover, they receive more basic knowledge on how to join the education system at an appropriate level (municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5). Also, learning the language is a fundamental element in these switching programs (municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5). The idea is that newcomers in the education route are able to learn the Dutch language on B1-level or higher (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2022a). Throughout this switching program, people are prepared to follow the same courses as the regular Dutch students (municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5). When there is little distinction between participants, education is more inclusive (Dryden-Peterson & Giles, 2010). Using the switching programs therefore contributes to both the quality as well as the inclusiveness of the education system.

As education is part of the extensive intake, the subject is widely honoured in the integration system under the new act. The establishment of an education route as one of the three main routes, offers the younger population a possibility to follow education on their level. Also, the switching programs contribute significantly to the quality and inclusiveness of the education system. However, there are some critiques based on the accessibility, affordability, quality and inclusiveness which are important

to recognise. Concluding, whilst education is widely covered in the WI 2021, there are still some complications.

Health

Another key aspect in the framework of successful integration is healthcare. Good health is widely seen as an important resource for active engagement in a new society (Ager & Strang, 2008). The importance of healthcare is acknowledged by several stakeholders in the municipality of Tilburg (ContourdeTwern, Appendix 9.4; RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6; VWN, Appendix 9.8). In the first three months, with the support of VWN, newcomers are helped with administrative issues regarding healthcare (VWN, Appendix 9.8). The main difference under the WI 2021 concerning healthcare is the introduction of the extensive intake. During this intake, both their mental health and their physique are widely discussed. In this way, newcomers receive healthcare, fitting with their health status (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6). After the phase of practical help and the extensive intake, newcomers should be able to find different healthcare institutions when necessary (VWN, Appendix 9.8).

Before a newcomer is able to access healthcare, there are several barriers to overcome. According to Mbanya, et al. (2021), newcomers need to be helped by providing information, by considering preferences for specific doctors, with long waiting lists, to overcome financial barriers and by conflicting responsibilities concerning their job or family. In an early phase of integration, newcomers are supported by a phase of practical help and the extensive intake. These processes both contribute to overcoming barriers in healthcare.

The practical help phase is offered during the first three months after being housed (VWN, Appendix 9.8). In first instance, VWN helps with other practical issues concerning healthcare. For example, it might be difficult for newcomers to understand how the Dutch health insurance system works: *“People are often not even familiar with the concept of health insurance, let alone all those ingenuity we have here in the Netherlands.”* (VWN, Appendix 9.8). As support, VWN guides them through the system and try to explain how it functions. This is done with the help of videos and animations, often translated into the common languages to be sure the newcomer truly understands what is explained (VWN, Appendix 9.8). If the concept is clear, VWN helps the newcomers to sign up for health insurance, the healthcare allowance and other administrative issues (VWN, Appendix 9.8).

Also, VWN helps newcomers to sign-up to a family doctor. This process in Tilburg is described as *“... quite a challenge.”* (VWN, Appendix 9.8). Mainly because doctor’s offices solely allow people within a certain distance from the office. In Tilburg, often too many people live within this distance surrounding the office. The result is long waiting lists before family doctors can admit more patients (municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5). As a consequence, a lot of family doctors have a patient stop. Thus, newcomers are unable to sign-up to a family doctor. These waiting lists are one of the barriers that need to be overcome to successfully integrate (Mbanya, et al., 2021). RefugeeTeam explains why it is a disturbing situation that this barrier is still present: *“We get a lot of questions from people who are concerned about their ailments. We advise them to go see a doctor. But at that moment they do not have a doctor yet.”* (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6). As a result, newcomers are not transferred to a professional for treating their ailments.

Moreover, these waiting lists results in the inability for newcomers to get their preference for a doctor granted. Whilst newcomers might have a preference for doctors who have a migration background (Mbanya, et al., 2021), they are merely allowed to sign-up to a family doctor in their neighbourhood (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6). Regardless, these people are delighted when they are appointed to a family doctor. Therefore, they will not complain (municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5). In some other

branches of the healthcare sector, these waiting lists are less evident. Due to the open registration of dentists, signing-up is relatively easy (VWN, Appendix 9.8).

During the extensive intake, the topic of healthcare is widely discussed (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6). In the beginning of the intake, talking about health means asking questions about their well-being and whether they are familiar with how to visit a doctor (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6). After the intake, a phase of orientation starts. During the orientation phase, four weeks are reserved for explaining healthcare possibilities in Tilburg. The physical and mental condition of the newcomer are discussed. Moreover, they are informed about all forms of healthcare and where the care providers can be found (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6). Afterwards, newcomers should be able to find their way to the different health care providers when necessary (VWN, Appendix 9.8). In this way, newcomers are able to overcome the information barrier (Mbanya, et al., 2021).

However, some health departments are not as easy to access the necessary care. The main example given is the mental care department (Welcome! App, Appendix 9.3; Municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5; RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6; VWN, Appendix 9.8). This is caused due to two trends. First, mental healthcare has not been a significant part of integration in the past years. The importance of mental health has been undervalued for years (Municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5). This led to a situation where *“Especially mental help is expensive and challenging to receive.”* (Welcome! App, appendix 9.3). In some cases, healthcare is unaffordable. Unaffordability in healthcare is a barrier in the framework of successful integration (Mbanya, et al., 2021). A bright spot in this context, is that the municipality is filing a subsidy application for mental healthcare. In this way, the municipality aims to accomplish that mental care is more included from the beginning of the integration process (municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5).

The second trend is the stigma surrounding psychological ailments. Especially in the countries of origin this stigma is apparent: *“You can be characterised as a crazy person, or in some cases even possessed when you have certain ailments. It is often not acceptable to succumb to pressure, or to be sombre, or to have a trauma. It is often perceived as weakness.”* (VWN, Appendix 9.8). In this context, newcomers are anxious to elaborate on any mental issues. Rather, they admit they have a headache or that they are tired (VWN, Appendix 9.8). This shows that even after their preparation, there are still barriers present before accessing healthcare.

During the accessing of healthcare, there are also barriers to overcome. Mbanya, et al. (2021) explain that there could be communication difficulties, a case of the *black elephant in the room* or a dissatisfaction with the healthcare provision. The (un)successfulness of these factors are largely dependent on the experiences of newcomers themselves. However, in this research no newcomers were interviewed. Therefore, there is limited knowledge presented about the barriers during healthcare.

The barrier of communication between the newcomer and professional (Mbanya, et al., 2021) was featured in the interviews with the stakeholders. There is a tension between the lingual capabilities of the newcomer and the obligation of the doctor to provide good care: *“If you are not able to communicate with someone or someone cannot express himself good enough to tell you what is wrong or you are not able to explain your treatment or advice, then you are not able to provide good care.”* (VWN, Appendix 9.8). In that case, a doctor is obligated to overcome this language barrier. Fortunately, there is a regulation which states that doctors can get a translator relatively cheap or even for free (VWN, Appendix 9.8). The extent to which this option is used by doctors remains uncertain. Nevertheless should this regulation help to overcome the language barrier relatively easy.

The last healthcare barrier is the dissatisfaction with the healthcare provided. The barrier often occurs due to a misconception between how healthcare is perceived by the newcomer and how it is provided by the caretakers (Mbanya, et al., 2021). In Tilburg, the only struggle mentioned is a dissatisfaction about the approachability of doctors. Some people were used to casually walking by the doctor's office. Often, this was to show doctors a minor injury (VWN, Appendix 9.8). In the Netherlands, it is necessary to call for an appointment if one would like to attend the doctor's office. The awkwardness of being obliged to make an appointment, without a possibility to just walk by, refrains newcomers from visiting a doctor (VWN, Appendix 9.8).

Whilst it is stated that the care circuit is *"pretty well-organised"* (ContourdeTwern, Appendix 9.4), it is important that there is an awareness of the shortcomings in the current structure. Some problems are caused by supra-municipal processes. For example waiting lists for family doctors is a problem in other cities across the Netherlands too (Municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5). Still, newcomers are a relatively weak group of society which demand more care than the average citizen (Mbanya, et al., 2021). Therefore, the inaccessibility of healthcare in the first months of their integration, among the other presented shortcomings, limits newcomers to further integration.

Leisure time

Leisure time has been added to the framework of Ager & Strang (2008) as one of the key aspects for successful integration. Stack & Iwasaki (2009) state that leisure activities provide opportunities to practice speaking and language skills, develop cross-group relationships and gain cultural knowledge. Its importance in Tilburg is apparent from the involvement of the actors in the integration network of Tilburg (Welcome! App, Appendix 9.3; ContourdeTwern, Appendix 9.4; municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5; RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6; VWN, Appendix 9.8). They are organising activities, workshops, courses, etc. to keep newcomers busy and participating and therefore promoting their integration (Welcome! App, Appendix 9.3). Since the introduction of the WI 2021, leisure time has received increased attention. Within the extensive intake, leisure time is a widely discussed matter.

Leisure time is widely covered in the extensive intake by RefugeeTeam (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6). During this intake, newcomers are asked how they spend their leisure time. Moreover, the possibilities for sports, workshops, courses and hobbies are explained (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6). Also, during the participation period (after the extensive intake), newcomers are stimulated to participate in the leisure atmospheres. For example by bartending at the local football club or by playing football themselves (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6). Thus, by implementing the extensive intake, newcomers are getting familiar with a wide variety in participating activities. However, the extent to which newcomers participate, is largely dependent on the individual (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6). Some people tend to spend less time on leisure activities.

According to Murad & Versey (2021), newcomers tend to spend less time on leisure activities due to two reasons: a lack of spare time and the need to prioritise between two different time systems. First, newcomers experience a time scarcity, originated by the responsibilities connected with their integration. However, this does not seem to be the case in Tilburg. Welcome! App states that for example people in the intermediate facility, during their week only have workshops and language classes and that the rest of the week is spare time (Appendix 9.3). Therefore, it is expected that people have enough time to spend on other activities.

The second reason newcomers tend to spend less time on leisure activities is due to the need to prioritise between two time systems (Murad & Versey, 2021). Newcomers experience a time duality, in which they need to adjust to a new time system in which they get used to their new environment. This period limits them to participate in activities because their minds are set on adjusting. Thus, whilst

newcomers have enough spare time, it does not necessarily mean they want to spend that free time on recreating (Murad & Versey, 2021). In Tilburg, it is mentioned that newcomers are experiencing a pressure and stress due to this time duality (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6; Municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5). For example, newcomers experience a lot of stress about their family reunification: *“Where I fancy some relaxation, when I experience a lot of stress ... They do not want to spend their free evenings on activities because they are experiencing stress.”* (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6). The municipality of Tilburg explains that this time duality is a matter of being mentally overloaded:

“These people are mentally overloaded. They are individuals who are suffering with mental and physical issues. First they are experiencing insecurities about their permit. They are staying in a refugee centre for way too long. They are pumped around to different residences. They are moved and moved, we cannot even imagine what that is like. They are linked to a municipality, they have to wait for any housing, they need to get used to all those new surroundings. This is new, the language is new. They are confronted with a mountain of organisations, they have children that need proper care. They have had it up to here.” - Municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5

The network on integration in Tilburg explained one other reason that causes newcomers to spend less time on leisure activities: the capability to organise activities. ContourdeTwern, Welcome! App and the municipality offer sporting activities, courses and workshops for newcomers to attend (SuperLocal, Appendix 9.7). Also, there is a large diversity in activities organised. Especially ContourdeTwern promotes a variance in activities: *“We operate based on demand. In other words, people give us a signal of what they want or miss in a certain activity. Then, we will look how we can alter the newcomer’s situation, to an environment in which these shortcomings are fixed.”* (Appendix 9.4). In this way, activities are available and inviting for every newcomer.

However, there are some limitations in organising activities. The municipality explains that it would be beneficial if more sports or different kinds of sports need to be offered to newcomers (municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5). However, there are financial constraints to organising sporting activities and expanding the offer. The municipality is unable to overcome these limitations with the current budget (municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5). Also, due to the amount of parties involved in organising activities, there is a challenge in the monitoring and the planning of activities. The past has proven that sometimes activities were organised in timeslots that were reserved for compulsory language classes. Parallel planning of activities from different organisations causes problems (SuperLocal, Appendix 9.7).

On the one hand, the interviews show that newcomers do not necessarily experience a time scarcity. On the other hand, the time duality makes it difficult to enthuse people to participate in activities. The municipality is cautious when approaching newcomers for these kind of activities. As described, it is: *“a very challenging balancing-act between giving people enough space and at the same time welcoming them by doing things together with them.”* (municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5). In other words, there is a challenge in finding a middle way that works for each specific newcomer. This shows that leisure time is a complicated aspect of successful integration.

5.2 Social connection

Social bonds

The social bonds are created so newcomers get a chance to maintain their own religion, talk in their own language, celebrate their traditions and exchange news from their home country (Duke, Sales & Gregory, 1999). With that, a sense of belonging can be created which contributes to successful integration. In Tilburg, social bonds are not necessarily promoted. Rather, groups of people from different cultures are mixed to avoid clique formation (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6). Therefore, social

bonds have had a limited presence. In the introduction of the WI 2021, social bonds have not received increased attention.

In particular cultural groups in Tilburg, social bonds are promoted. It is proven that promoting a wider set of cultural activities enhances social bonds among newcomers. Desirably, creating a community (Culos, et al., 2021). Whilst this is normally avoided in Tilburg (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6), an exception was made for Eritreans integrating in Tilburg. Particularly Eritrean people aged 35 years or older, have difficulties in mastering the Dutch language (VWN, Appendix 9.8). Consequently, these people have difficulties connecting with the local population and creating a network. This results in the opposite of the desired sense of belonging; social isolation (Culos, et al., 2021). In order to prevent social isolation, second best is to promote social bonds. By creating a community, people can ask for help and guidance there (VWN, Appendix 9.8).

The result was the opening of Mossob: an Eritrean meeting centre/restaurant/teahouse. A lot of Eritrean people are pushed to go there to meet other Eritreans and create a community (VWN, Appendix 9.8). This helps them to create a network and motivates them to take initiative in organising activities for their community: *“So that not only Dutch people interfere in organising activities for them, but also to forge more bonding within the community.”* (VWN, Appendix 9.8). In that case, creating these kind of activities and enhancing social bonds is important (VWN, Appendix 9.8)

According to Welcome! App (Appendix 9.3), this can be done more frequently. The interviewee stated that promoting these activities can contribute to creating bonds. When organising activities, it is important to *“... place yourself in someone else’s shoes. ... We often think from our own perspective of what we think that is important for them. But we have to put it in their perspective.”* (Welcome! App, Appendix 9.3). It is already noticeable that activities with a focus on their own culture, are much better attended (Welcome! App, Appendix 9.3). Community-building is proven to have positive effects on the people integrating within the community.

Social bridges

Social bridges are the connection of the newcomer with the local population. The formation of these bridges is deemed as important (Ager & Strang, 2008). Mainly because these bridges encourage newcomers and the local population to get mutually accommodated to each other’s presence. To successfully contribute to integration, this accommodation ideally leads to establishing a long-term relationship (Strang & Quinn, 2021). Several involved parties argue they have been stimulating these encounters for the benefit of integration (Welcome! App, Appendix 9.3; ContourdeTwern, Appendix 9.4; RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6; VWN, Appendix 9.8). With the introduction of the WI 2021, social bridges did not receive increased recognition. Prior to the WI 2021, social bridges were already largely involved in the integration process and the stakeholders have said that they will continue to do so (Welcome! App, Appendix 9.3; ContourdeTwern, Appendix 9.4; RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6; VWN, Appendix 9.8).

To let social bridges contribute to successful integration, the aim should be to create a two-sided relationship. This is achieved by mutual friendliness and giving newcomers a feeling of being welcomed by the local population (Ager & Strang, 2008). To achieve this, community engagement activities are organised and a welcoming atmosphere is stimulated. Such initiatives facilitate newcomers and the local population in meeting each other. In Tilburg, this is done in several stages of integration.

In first instance, acquaintance is facilitated during the orientation phase. In this phase, the involved organisations will literally take newcomers to the streets and let them get acquainted with their new surroundings (municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5). They are being introduced to their neighbours by VWN (Appendix 9.8) and are taken to community centres by other parties (municipality of Tilburg,

Appendix 9.5). This shows initiative to stimulate an acquaintance with the local population in the early stages of integration.

Moreover, the involved parties organise and support all kinds of activities and initiatives to support integration. There is a wide variety of possible activities to attend for newcomers. A selection of such activities have been given in the interviews. For example the 'Video friends project' (during COVID-19 lockdown) where locals would video-call newcomers for 30 minutes per week. In first instance, this video-calling was merely for having a nice conversation. At the same time, it functioned as a moment for practicing the Dutch language and establishing a network (VWN, Appendix 9.8). Another example are the cooking activities, organised by ContourdeTwern. In such activities, different cultural groups are invited to collectively cook a traditional meal in the community centre. ContourdeTwern really believes in the power of food: *"Eating together always results in talking and cooperating."* (ContourdeTwern, Appendix 9.4). These kind of initiatives promote the construction of social bridges.

On the one hand, there is a group of locals who are fully committed to welcoming newcomers in the involved organisations. On the other hand, the willingness of the ordinary Dutch community is limited. This is apparent from the examples given from the interviewed organisations (Welcome! App, Appendix 9.3; ContourdeTwern, Appendix 9.4; RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6; SuperLocal, Appendix 9.7). RefugeeTeam is welcoming a group of twenty newcomers to start integrating each month. However, there is never a willingness among twenty Dutch volunteers that like to be linked to them (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6). Notably, this willingness grows with the current influx of Ukrainian refugees. In the case of Ukrainians, locals are willing to volunteer (Welcome! App, Appendix 9.3). However, finding volunteers who like to help newcomers from non-western countries is problematic: *"It is hard to find locals who want to contribute by helping these (non-western) newcomers."* (Welcome! App, Appendix 9.3).

Among the stakeholders, there is a sense that the Dutch population could contribute more extensively in newcomer's integration: *"There should be more general acceptance of other cultural groups among the Dutch population as a whole."* (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6). Other parties think there is a challenge in motivating the Dutch population to motivate them to volunteer. For example by improving communication: *"There is an opportunity in communicating more. Explain that they can contribute by going to an activity once, without them thinking they are obliged to do more volunteer work directly. ... There is a role for social media to achieve this. Not only through Welcome! App, but for example through the media of the universities, colleges and student associations."* (SuperLocal, Appendix 9.7). But, as ContourdeTwern puts it: *"Sometimes, it seems like there is an unbridgeable distance between ethnical groups."* (Appendix 9.4). So, whether this is achievable remains uncertain.

In the end, social bridges are stimulated by the network in Tilburg. This is done by organising activities and enforcing encounters between newcomers and the local population. However, among Dutch people there is a lack of willingness to interact with other cultural groups: *"It might still be, that the Dutch live in a compartmentalised society. Which is an old-fashioned concept. But in this case, it is still relevant."* (ContourdeTwern, Appendix 9.4). This segregation in the Dutch community makes it difficult to enhance these social bridges.

Social links

Social links are of equal importance to the other social connectors, according to Ager & Strang (2008). These connectors are enablers for integration. Social links are the connection between the newcomer and the structure of the state they are integrating in. To establish this connection, newcomers receive guidance in a wide variety of topics (VWN, Appendix 9.8). This variety is not only noticeable in the amount of topics, also several partners in different stages of the integration process provide guidance

on social links (Welcome! App, Appendix 9.3; ContourdeTwern, Appendix 9.4; RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6; VWN, Appendix 9.8). This large involvement illustrates the importance of social links.

Under the WI 2021, the provided guidance has increased lightly. Prior to the introduction of the WI 2021, newcomers were guided the structure of the state as well. This was done by clarifying a fixed set of housing, health, financial self-reliance, etcetera during the whole trajectory of integration (Municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5). Due to the introduction of the WI 2021, newcomers receive a more customised approach. For example in the extensive intake. During the intake, the extent to which newcomers are able to understand the information is estimated (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6). Based on the newcomers' understandability, a customised approach is adopted. This customised approach reckons with newcomers ability to speak the language (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6), the ability to read and write (ContourdeTwern, Appendix 9.4), the prior familiarity with state structures and the level of education (VWN, Appendix 9.8). Therefore, the WI 2021 improved the transmission of information during the integration process.

For social links to meet the requirements of successful integration, policy should focus on creating independent living skills by linking newcomers to services that they can access when needed. Also, support and information should be translated during the provided guidance (Culos, et al., 2020). To create independent living skills, newcomers receive guidance during the whole trajectory of integration (Municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5). First guidance is received during the extensive intake (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6). Afterwards, VWN guides newcomers through a phase of practical help (VWN, Appendix 9.8). In this phase, newcomers are helped to overcome certain practical issues. For example, they are helped to sign-up to a bank and helped to open a bank account. Moreover, they are learned how to spend money wisely (Municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5). Also, the Dutch tax system is explained and the relationship between citizen and municipality is clarified (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6). These examples are illustrative for the social links provided at an early stage. The rest of the integration trajectory, newcomers can approach RefugeeTeam (Appendix 9.6) and ContourdeTwern (Appendix 9.4) for further guidance. This helps them to create independent living skills.

However, whether this guidance is understandable for every newcomer remains uncertain. Mainly because translated support is less naturally provided. In fact, the Dutch language is commonly used, unless newcomers are unable to understand Dutch (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6). Whether this approach successfully transmits information on the structure of the state remains uncertain: *"It (the information) has to be repeated, repeated, repeated ... and even then, some still find it difficult to understand what they are learning."* (VWN, Appendix 9.8). A suggested solution is to offer bilingual information (ContourdeTwern, Appendix 9.4). This is already done in the early phases of integration. ContourdeTwern (Appendix 9.4) suggests it would help further in the integration process too. For example, in municipal letters: *"Personally, I think it is important people truly understand what is said. ... If you have explained what is said in Dutch, then you should also provide the letter in Arabic or another language. This way, people can read it peacefully, in their own time. Let him take the Dutch letter as well and try to expand their knowledge of the Dutch language this way."* (ContourdeTwern, Appendix 9.4).

Besides providing translated information, it would be extremely helpful to have a translator in every conversation with newcomers (VWN, Appendix 9.8). Without the use of translators, helping newcomers familiarise themselves with the structure of the state is more complicated. When both sides cannot express themselves properly, creating social links comes down to merely demonstrating (VWN, Appendix 9.8). In this case, it is unlikely newcomers will create independent living skills. Therefore, having a translator in every conversation with newcomers would be helpful (VWN,

Appendix 9.8). However, hiring translators for every conversation with newcomers is too costly for the current budget (ContourdeTwern, Appendix 9.4). Further in the integration process, the translated support gradually diminishes. In this structure, it remains uncertain whether newcomers truly have familiarised themselves with the structure of the state: *"We notice that it is difficult for newcomers to understand everything directly. ... I cannot claim that people understand everything from the moment they leave our supervision. I am 100% sure it is explained to them, multiple times. Whether they remember it, is largely dependent of the context in which it is explained."* (VWN, Appendix 9.8).

Complementary to creating independent living skills, it is vital to have a centralised information provision that can be accessed when needed. In this context, being independent means that newcomers can find their way in society, without the help of guiding institutions (Culos, et al., 2021). They should be able to help themselves acquiring the information provided by the institutions. Currently, accessing the right information when necessary is complicated. Mainly because the information is provided by several different sources: *"There are a lot of different counters that they have to deal with."* (municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5). Several parties have stated that a centralised information desk would be beneficial in the guidance of newcomers (Welcome! App, Appendix 9.3; Municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5; RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6). The municipality expressed an ambition for a centralised information counter (Municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5). However: *"In practice, it seems that this is often hard to accomplish."* (Municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5). Therefore, Welcome! App, independently from their assignment in Tilburg, aims to collect all information necessary, provided in every language. Their goal is that every newcomer in the Netherlands can access all necessary information in every phase of their lives (Welcome! App, Appendix 9.3).

Concluding, newcomers are helped to familiarise themselves with the structure of the state. All necessary information is translated when necessary and explained to them. However, whether newcomers comprehend and remember the information provided is largely dependent on the context in which it is explained. In this way, not every newcomer is properly helped to create independent living skills. To secure this, it is suggested that translators should be used in every conversation with newcomers. Another suggestion is a centralised information counter. This is a project in progress.

5.3 Facilitators

Language and cultural knowledge

The next key aspect for successful integration is language and cultural knowledge. According to Ager & Strang (2008), facilitators remove barriers for integration. In other words, a newcomer should be familiar with the Dutch language and the Dutch culture, to be able to commit to the other aspects of successful integration. For that reason, language and cultural knowledge are an important aspect of integration. Since the implementation of the WI 2021, there is an increased attention for learning the language: *"Currently, learning the language is the main focus. From the moment of the extensive intake."* (Municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5). Furthermore, the new act includes three learning-routes. One of these routes is focused on letting the more skilled newcomers learn the language on a higher level (Municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5). The B1-route has a mere focus on letting newcomers learn the Dutch language on B1-level. Prior to the implementation, the main focus was learning the language on A2-level for everyone (Municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5). Also, in the WI 2021, language classes are decommercialised (Divosa, 2022b). Once again, the governmental organisations are in control of language classes. With this reformation, the range of language classes has been restricted to solely government-approved classes (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6). According to Li & Sah (2019), language classes of good quality measure up to four aspects: contracting qualified

and well-trained teachers, improve course access and availability, modifying different levels of language learning, providing multilingual classes.

Contracting qualified and well-trained teachers, modifying different levels of language learning and the course access and availability are captured in the WI 2021. Due to the decommercialisation of the language classes, the governmental organisations are responsible for offering language classes (Divosa, 2022b). The municipality cut the offer of language classes to solely qualitative classes. There is close supervision on the offer of language classes and the language classes are evaluated every six months (Municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5), which is good for the participants (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6). In this way, hiring qualified, well-trained teachers is assured. Moreover, the WI 2021 captured a responsibility for municipalities to make language classes available and accessible (Divosa, 2022b). The municipality of Tilburg purchases language classes at several different providers. These are offered to newcomers. In this way, plenty of language classes are available for newcomers integrating in Tilburg (Municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5). Also, since 2022 the language classes are paid for by the municipalities (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2022b). Status holders are no longer forced to lend money from the education implementation service [DUO], to follow an education. Whilst status holders can follow language classes for free, this service is not available for family migrants. They have to pay for their language classes themselves, often by lending money from DUO (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid). Thus, whilst availability of language classes is secured, the accessibility of language classes is only partially available.

Another difference in the WI 2021, is the introduction of the B1-route. The sole focus of this route is to learn the language on B1-level. This eases the possibility to learn Dutch on a harder level. At the same time, language classes for learning the language on A1- or A2-level are provided as well (Municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5). In this way, different levels of language learning is secured. The last characteristic of language classes is the availability of multilingual classes. These kind of classes are not available. Language classes are provided in Dutch to expose newcomers to the Dutch language as much as possible (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6).

Aside from the formal language classes, it is important newcomers practice speaking the language in informal settings (ContourdeTwern, Appendix 9.4). In informal settings, people gain confidence in talking Dutch. This stimulates them to practice speaking the Dutch language in all kinds of situations (Welcome! App, Appendix 9.3). There is a wide variety in informal language learning. For example ContourdeTwern offers courses in 'practical language.' These are not official language courses but support newcomers to develop skills that help them with workplace-language (ContourdeTwern, Appendix 9.4). Furthermore, the offer varies from talking groups, talking cafes, talking moments to more specific language courses (ContourdeTwern, Appendix 9.4). These informal activities achieve desired effects: *"People are really doing their best to speak Dutch, at least with us. Sometimes some Google Translate or English is necessary. But the people who somewhat speak Dutch, really want to practice Dutch."* (SuperLocal, Appendix 9.7). This shows that the informal language learning has an important contribution to newcomers learning the language.

Aside from learning the language, acculturation has is a part of integrating in the Netherlands (Janssens, 2015). Gradually, newcomers become familiar with the culture of the hosting society whilst integrating. In Tilburg, this is done by organising cultural activities and networking, newcomers become more familiar with the Dutch culture (Welcome! App, Appendix 9.3; ContourdeTwern, Appendix 9.4; RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6; VWN, Appendix 9.8). With the implementation of the WI 2021, these organisations have proceeded their activities concerning acculturation. Therefore, the WI 2021 did not renew the acculturation of newcomers.

Acculturation is dependent on two variables: the extent to which newcomers are able to maintain their cultural identity and the extent to which relationships with the larger society are valued (Berry, 1997). Based on these variables, Phillimore (2011) developed a conceptual framework where four acculturation strategies are explained. According to this conceptual framework, integration can be achieved when both of Berry's (1997) variables are included in policy. Contrarily, when both variables are neglected in policy, marginalisation is reached. Assimilation suggests a one-sided adaptation to the dominating culture and separation means that relationships with the larger society are rejected.

As Janssens (2015) described, the preferred acculturation strategy in the Netherlands is integration. However, often when policy makers refer to integration in the Netherlands, they often mean assimilation. This means a one-sided adaptation of newcomers to the dominant culture. Moreover, as a result of xenophobia and lasting uncertainties, newcomers are living isolated whilst being obligated to give up on their own cultural preferences (Janssens, 2015). In this case, integration in the Netherlands has similarities to the marginalisation strategy. According to the network on integration in Tilburg, cases of xenophobia and lasting uncertainties are noticeable in the Netherlands. This is apparent from examples given by several actors: *"Integration in the Netherlands is based on distrust, not on trust. ... People are treated as refugees, not as humans."* (ContourdeTwern, Appendix 9.4), *"It is apparent that we are currently living in a racist society. ... When you look at all the hoops status holders need to jump through and what kind of racist society they then end up in."* (Municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5) and *"Officially, the rule is that the IND has three months to come to a decision. They can extend this procedure with three months maximum. ... At this moment, the IND standardly spends six months to have a first look at the case."* (VWN, Appendix 9.8).

Moreover, assimilation tendencies are noticeable during the integration process. The Dutch norms and values are highly appreciated. In other words, newcomers are expected to abide to Dutch norms and values. The stakeholders provided a few examples in the interviews: *"When making an appointment for example. You are expected to be there. And if you cannot be there, you have to call to cancel."* (VWN, Appendix 9.8), *"We also provide cultural participation. Learning them about the Dutch manners."* (ContourdeTwern, Appendix 9.4) and *"There is a mandatory online module where newcomers learn about the Dutch society and culture."* (Municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5). Aside from this tendency towards assimilation, newcomers themselves feel the urge to learn about the Dutch society, culture and norms and values (SuperLocal, Appendix 9.7). In the Welcome! App, they ask a lot of questions about the Dutch culture: *"What is normal? What is allowed and what is not? What are typical Dutch dishes? When friends invite me over, do I bring them a present? That kind of questions."* (SuperLocal, Appendix 9.7). These examples sketch an assimilated image.

The acculturation strategy of assimilation does not meet the characteristics of the desired integration. To reach integration, inter-cultural interaction should be facilitated and cultural diversity should be celebrated (Phillimore, 2011). To facilitate inter-cultural interaction, stakeholders in Tilburg are mainly enforcing acquaintances and organising cultural activities. Enforcing acquaintances happens at an early stage in the integration process. From the moment of being housed, VWN (Appendix 9.8) takes newcomers to meet their neighbours. Moreover, ContourdeTwern (Appendix 9.4) hired volunteers that take newcomers to the streets. These volunteers bring newcomers to the city hall, to the station and to other important facilities. Further in the integration process, all kinds of activities are organised to facilitate interaction. Some newcomers went to the football match between the Netherlands and Germany with RefugeeTeam (Appendix 9.6). Other examples have been illustrated at the results of social bridges in section 5.2. Similar to the conclusion of social bridges, inter-cultural interaction is accounted for. However, among the Dutch population there is a lack of willingness to interact with other cultural groups.

This trend can be countered by the suggestion of Phillimore (2011): by celebrating diversity. Celebrating diversity means that newcomers are stimulated to propagate their own culture. In this way, different cultures are promoted to co-exist and interact. The stakeholders in Tilburg provided a few examples in which newcomers are stimulated to propagate their culture. For example the Eritrean restaurant Mossob (VWN, Appendix 9.8), a Turkish supermarket (ContourdeTwern, Appendix 9.4) and *“a good Afghan restaurant around the corner”* (Municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5). Aside from these examples, stakeholders did not mention any clear examples of celebrating cultural diversity. Actually, Welcome! App (Appendix 9.3) pleads for a greater celebration of diversity: *“We have to realise that integration goes two ways. We need to stop focussing on that what is Dutch, needs to remain Dutch. To make an impact, we need to make an effort to understand their culture.”*

Language and cultural knowledge is largely accounted for when integrating in Tilburg. Due to the WI 2021, the language classes have improved. Qualified teachers are hired, availability has improved and different levels of language schools are available. However, language schools are currently not evenly accessible for all newcomers. Family migrants have to pay for their language classes themselves. Acculturation in Tilburg has strong similarities to the assimilation strategy. Whilst there is a great diversity of activities organised to facilitate interaction, the Dutch population is limitedly motivated to participate. This could be countered by celebrating more cultural diversity.

Safety and stability

A key aspect for successful integration is the sense of feeling safe and being stable (Ager & Strang, 2008). Goldsmith (2008) explains that this is achieved when there is a perception of both physical security as well as psychological security. Physical security of newcomers in the first stages (in the asylum centres) is provided by the Dutch government in collaboration with the COA (Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid, 2020). As soon as a newcomer is appointed to a municipality, the extensive intake starts. An integral part of the intake is providing ‘a warm welcome’ (Municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5). The warm welcome is focused on propagating that newcomers are welcomed in a safe environment (Divosa, 2022b). In this way, a sense of physical security is established at an early stage of integration. Due to the extensive intake, there is more focus on physical security in the WI 2021.

Newcomers mentioned that their ability to integrate is affected when they feel unsafe (Stewart & Mulvey, 2014). Therefore, policy should focus on minimising threatening situations for newcomers (Ager & Strang, 2008). Threatening situations do not merely arise in the presence of (the possibility of) violence. When a newcomer is confronted with verbal abuse, when he or she had previous confrontations with harassment or intimidation or when a newcomer simply has the perception that an area is threatening, this can result in a feeling of being threatened (Ager & Strang, 2008). These situations should be avoided as much as possible. The interviewees were asked whether newcomers have spoken about such threatening experiences.

A limited amount of examples of such experiences have been shared. Overall, the interviewed stakeholders were positive: *“Actually, the people integrating have a lot less negative experiences with our citizens than we would expect.”* (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6). The main negative example given, is the discriminative attitude towards newcomers. This discriminative attitude is a product of institutionalised racism in the Netherlands (Municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5). This institutionalised racism is expressed by a distrusting attitude towards newcomers during the asylum procedure. *“These people are shocked. They left everything behind and are completely displaced, distressed and unsafe. To finally come to Ter Apel, where they are treated as criminals, questioned by the military police and the IND”* (ContourdeTwern, Appendix 9.4). These experiences of distrust contribute to a feeling of being threatened. This hinders newcomers in their development (ContourdeTwern, Appendix 9.4).

This institutionalised racism is not merely expressed in the asylum procedure, but also by physical violence. By a share of the Dutch population, there is a sense of distrust towards newcomers (ContourdeTwern, Appendix 9.4). This is noticeable in the society's attitude towards newcomers in the current housing crisis. Whilst the Dutch population is struggling to find affordable social housing, status holders receive their social housing as part of their integration. The Dutch population feel disadvantaged and blame newcomers for their misfortune (SuperLocal, Appendix 9.7). Sometimes, the shortage on the housing market leads to physically threatening situations: *"In some cases somebody throws a stone through the window. Attached to that stone is a note that says: "Get lost, we do not want you here.""* (ContourdeTwern, Appendix 9.4). In that case, newcomers are confronted with harassment and intimidation. These experiences could limit the newcomer from further integration (Ager & Strang, 2008).

Stability, priorly described as psychological security, is established when insecurities are minimised (Ager & Strang, 2008). The WI 2021 is composed to contribute to the minimisation of insecurities. As a result of the extensive intake, a customised PIP for every newcomer is established (Municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5). This PIP provides a personalised plan, which includes how citizenship can best be achieved in a particular case (Municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5). Based on the PIP, stakeholders can act more rapidly on potential insecurities. Therefore, the WI 2021 contributes to providing stability.

According to Ager & Strang (2008), newcomers feel more 'at home' when there is a sense of stability. Insecurities among newcomers are common when they are uncertain about their future housing, their future community (Ager & Strang, 2008) and their future status (Stewart & Mulvey, 2014). The interviewees were asked whether newcomers experienced such uncertainties during their integration process.

The insecurities about future housing and future community were covered in the key aspect of housing (section 5.1). For a period of time, newcomers live from one temporary asylum centre to another asylum centre. Once they get appointed a home, the permanence of housing is guaranteed (minors excluded) (VWN, Appendix 9.8). Also, newcomers are not living in specifically bad neighbourhoods (ContourdeTwern, Appendix 9.4). Uncertainties about future status are more common. As mentioned earlier, the IND has three months to come to a decision on the asylum request. They can extend this with three months extra. Thus, the IND is obligated to decide within six months. However, at this moment they automatically spend six or seven months before someone even inspects the asylum request (VWN, Appendix 9.8). In an early stadium, newcomers are insecure about their future in the Netherlands. This obstructs newcomers from integrating: *"The quicker someone can start, the quicker someone is stable, the better it is."* (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6).

Moreover, in some cases resident permits are temporary: *"Sometimes, newcomers receive a permit for only a year. But that is really dependent on what country they are from."* (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6). These people are well aware when their permits are expiring (VWN, Appendix 9.8). In these situations, newcomers experience a lot of stress and will push to get their permits extended (VWN, Appendix 9.8). In other cases, the stress about their future causes them to cave in (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6). Thus, even if their permits are extended, as long as they receive temporary permits, newcomers experience stress about their future.

Complementary to the residence permit, newcomers file family reunification requests. Mainly VWN (Appendix 9.8) supports newcomers with family reunification requests. They mention that people experience insecurities about their family reunification: *"Of course they experience a lot of stress and worries about their family. Their family is in a war or fleeing from a war and all contact disappeared. ..."*

They just want to see their family but that is not working out." (VWN, Appendix 9.8). During this period, newcomers can only think about their family. Consequently, they are not focused on integrating and have troubles with school, learning the language and meeting people (VWN, Appendix 9.8). These uncertainties concerning their family reunification obstruct newcomers from integrating.

Safety and stability is generally cared for under the WI 2021. Only in exceptional situations, the physical security is debatable. However, as ContourdeTwern (Appendix 9.4) puts it: *"It (physical violence) does not occur much. But every incident that occurs, is one incident too much."* Currently, threatening situations to physical security still occur. The same goes for psychological security. Whilst the subject receives extra attention in the WI 2021, newcomers still experience insecurities on their future status and family reunification requests.

Digital skills

Mobile technologies amongst newcomers is associated with social inclusion and with opportunities for access to information that can positively affect their daily lives (Alencar, 2020). Therefore, mobile technologies provide an important contribution to integration. The implementation of the WI 2021 does not include improving digital skills for newcomers. However, it enables municipalities to spend their provided budget for the purpose of implementation (Divosa, 2022b). In the case of Tilburg, the municipality chose to hire Welcome! App to support the implementation of the WI 2021 (personal communication, 17 November, 2021). In this way, the new act provides opportunities for the use of technological possibilities in the integration process.

To promote the use of technology in integration, technology should be equally accessible for all newcomers. This can be done by removing barriers for accessing digital tools (Alencar, 2020). Alencar (2020) states that these barriers are: digital illiteracy, the linguistic and cultural barrier and the socioeconomic barrier. These barriers withhold newcomers from accessing the right information. In this research, the stakeholders were asked whether these barriers are familiar to newcomers integrating in Tilburg.

Digital illiteracy indicates that a person is not proficient in the use of technology (Alencar, 2020). The differences in digital literacy among newcomers is exemplary for the differences in digital skills. Some of the stakeholders did not recognise such differences. ContourdeTwern (Appendix 9.4) states that the digital skills of newcomers should not be underestimated: *"Whilst they were on the run, they probably had only one resource for communication. In my experience, they are super skilled with their smartphones."*

However, other sources confirm the large contrast in digital skills among newcomers: *"For example, you have to reckon with Syrian women over 60."* (Municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5) and *"In the Welcome! App, people can add profiles. These profiles consist of some personal information and name and age. I notice that the people who add profiles, are mainly in their twenties."* (SuperLocal, Appendix 9.7). Also, this difference in digital skills among newcomers is noticeable in the linguistic and cultural barrier. These barriers withhold newcomers from accessing the right information when needed (Alencar, 2020). The linguistic barrier is largely represented in the aspect of social links. Newcomers are experiencing troubles because they do not master the Dutch language. Whilst a lot of support is translated in the Welcome! App (Appendix 9.3), there is still a share of information unavailable in other languages than Dutch (ContourdeTwern, Appendix 9.4). Moreover, newcomers may not be used to technology in their everyday lives. Within this cultural barrier, there is a large difference between newcomers: *"Some people have never even been on the internet. Others can do everything on the computer."* (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6). Thus, on the one hand newcomers are perfectly capable of using smartphones, as they have learned prior to and during their journey. On the other hand, there is

a share of newcomers that have minimal experience with the use of technology. As a result, these people need to be educated in the use of digital tools.

The education in the use of digital tools is partly cared for in the municipality of Tilburg. This is done in different stages of integration. Prior to the integration process, newcomers can attend a digital skills workshop (Welcome! App, Appendix 9.3). Moreover, in all modules provided by RefugeeTeam, there is a component that focuses on digital skills: *“For example, we explain to them how logging into your Digi-D works.”* (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6). Also, VWN helps newcomers to use their mobile phones independently for practical issues: *“We try to make sure that everybody has their own phone and corresponding apps. And that they know their own codes and passwords.”* (VWN, Appendix 9.8). However, VWN admits that their accompaniment is not aimed at producing digitally skilled newcomers (VWN, Appendix 9.8). For the rest of the integration process, there is no specific workshop or training to acquire more digital skills (Welcome! App, Appendix 9.3; RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6).

The socioeconomic factor is simply explained as the affordability of digital tools (Alencar, 2020). Stakeholders interpreted digital tools as tools for accessing the internet. Therefore, the use of smartphones and laptops/computers was discussed. Smartphones are affordable among newcomers: *“99% of the newcomers has a well-functioning smartphone. Rarely, you find someone with an old Nokia device.”* (VWN, Appendix 9.8). Therefore, basic digital skills are mainly explained within mobile phones (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6). The possession of a computer or laptop is less evident: *“Whether people have similar digital skills on their laptops does not matter. Mainly because not everyone has access to a laptop or computer”* (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6). In this way, people have access to the internet. However, some can only access this through their smartphones.

Whilst nearly all newcomers have access to smartphones, the interviews proved large differences in digital skills among newcomers. These are explainable by digital illiteracy and the linguistic and cultural barrier. Low-skilled newcomers are supported to overcome practical digital issues. However, the provision for further digital skills is limited.

5.4 Foundation

Rights and citizenship

The foundation domain is based on the rights and citizenship of the newcomer. As Ager & Strang (2008) explain, this domain is a trade-off between the obtained rights from the receiving government in exchange for certain expectations on how the newcomer should behave as a citizen. Based on the trade-off between rights and duties, Castles (1995) recognised four patterns in countries' reactions towards newcomers. Summarised, there are four patterns noticeable: the differential exclusionist model (Castles, 1995), the interculturalist model (Bouchard, 2010), the assimilationist model (Castles, 1995; Alba & Nee, 1997) and the pluralist/multiculturalist model (Castles, 1995; Berry, 2011). Whilst the Netherlands pursues the pluralist/multiculturalist model, Vink (2007) noticed a state of civic integration in the Act on integration [WI] 2007. Civic integration is the pursuit of a pluralist/multiculturalist model with assimilationist influences (Joppke, 2007). In other words, newcomers had the right to be distinguishable with regard to language, social behaviour, culture and associations. At the same time, they are expected to familiarise themselves with the civics: the political institutions, the culture and the history (Joppke, 2017). The interviewees were asked about the rights and expectations of newcomers integrating in Tilburg. Based on insights in the rights and expectations, the position of the Netherlands can be understood. Is the country currently successfully pursuing the pluralist/multiculturalist model or does it neigh more towards the assimilationist model? It is a possibility that the Netherlands is currently still in a state of civic integration – a mixture of both models.

With the introduction of the WI 2021, the rights of newcomers have not necessarily been altered. The rights of newcomers are established in the constitution, just as for every other citizen (Municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5; ContourdeTwern, Appendix 9.4). In the constitution, it is established that discrimination based on religion, philosophy of life, political affiliation, race and gender is not allowed (Wetten.nl, 2022). This proves a pursuit towards a pluralist/multiculturalist model. Aside from the constitution, newcomers abide to the act on integration (Municipality of Tilburg, Appendix 9.5). In this act, the right for being prepared to join the Dutch society is established (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2022b). Since the alternation of this act, newcomers receive closer and customised supervision by the municipalities. Also, a share of the provided workshops is focused on explaining a newcomer's rights and expectations (Welcome! App, Appendix 9.3). In this way, newcomers become better adapted to the local context. As a result, newcomers are able to participate quicker into the Dutch society (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2022b). Thus, the right for being prepared for participating in society did not alter by introducing the WI 2021. Mainly the fulfilment of the act has been refined.

The same goes for the expectations of newcomers when integrating in the Netherlands. Under the WI 2007, the expectations from newcomers were solely focused on succeeding the integration exam within a period of three years (Groenendijk, de Hart & van Oers, 2021). In other words, the newcomer has three years to become familiar with the Dutch language and society. As described by the Ministerie of Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid (2022a), the expectations of newcomers under the WI 2021 are: *"A newcomer has three years to learn to speak the language and become familiar with the Dutch society. The intention should be to become economically independent as soon as possible. To reach this, an integration exam needs to be succeeded."* In contrast to the WI 2007, the current expectations of newcomers are focused on helping them to become economically and socially independent members of society. As a reciprocity, newcomers are obligated to commit to integration and to participate in society (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6). In this way, there is not necessarily an alternation of the expectation to participate in the Dutch society. Instead, the WI 2021 means an alternation in how newcomers are prepared for participating in the Dutch society. Based on these expectations: *"Indeed, I think that assimilationism is ongoing. But I believe that is the most realistic form."* (RefugeeTeam, Appendix 9.6). In other words, the Netherlands is currently propagating to be a pluralist/multiculturalist country. However, the WI 2021 shows some assimilationist tendencies.

In this chapter, the results for all twelve key aspects of successful integration was explained. First, the influence of the WI 2021 for each aspect was explained. Then, the aspects' requirements in the context of successful integration were repeated. Last, the functioning of the aspects of integration was explained for the municipality of Tilburg. These results provide input for directly answering the research questions posed in the introduction. Based on these results, the following chapter will provide a comparison between the framework of successful integration and the functioning of integration in the municipality of Tilburg.

6. Discussion

The outcomes of this research have provided insights in the functionality of integration in a decentralised context. However, the results should be interpreted with caution due to the limitations of this research. This chapter explains a reflection on the research process. Its limitations and consequences of the research design are discussed, as well as the implications for interpreting the results. The chapter is finished with several recommendations for future research.

This research has assessed the functionality of integration under the new act on integration [WI] 2021. This is done by expanding the framework of key aspects for successful integration from Ager & Strang (2008) towards a model consisting of twelve key aspects. Subsequently, the implementation of the WI 2021 in the municipality of Tilburg has been compared to the theoretical framework of successful integration. The comparison lead to the following research question: *How does integration in the municipality of Tilburg function since the introduction of the WI 2021 in the Netherlands, when compared to the scientific criteria of successful integration?* The comparison showed that the implementation of the WI 2021 in Tilburg included all factors of successful integration from the framework of Ager & Strang (2008). With the introduction of the extensive intake, the plan for integration and participation [PIP] and the three learning routes, the framework of successful integration is accounted for. However, within each of the twelve factors shortcomings or specific problems were explained by the stakeholders in the municipality of Tilburg. These results indicate that there is room for improvement in all aspects of integration in the municipality of Tilburg.

The results show differences between the implementation of the WI 2021 and the framework of successful integration. To uncover how these differences originate, it is important to understand how the WI 2021 was composed. To answer this, the following sub-question was formulated: *What is new in the WI 2021?* The main difference between the WI 2007 and the WI 2021 is a shift in responsibilities. Since January 2022, municipalities have received full responsibility for integrating newcomers within their territory. This is done to establish a more customised approach, improving effectiveness and efficiency. This customised approach includes an extensive intake and, based on this extensive intake, a personalised PIP is composed. Moreover, to be able to provide more personally adjusted integration further in the integration process, three learning routes have been introduced. Based on the newcomer's learnability, he or she is placed in the best fitting learning route. In this way, newcomers are offered to integrate in the best manner possible for them.

To be able to compare the results with successful integration, it must first be understood what successful integration withholds. The second sub-question was formulated as: *What is successful integration?* First, this research adopted the theoretical framework of successful integration from Ager & Strang (2008), which consists of ten key aspects. Based on further research, two aspects of leisure time (Stack & Iwasaki, 2009) and digital skills (Alencar, 2017) were added to the framework used in this research. Based on existing literature, a total of twelve key aspects for successful integration were summarised and explained. When looking at the implementation of this framework in policy, Korac (2003) determined that often merely the functional aspects (housing, employment and language and cultural knowledge) are standardised part of policy. These functional aspects have a focus on creating a self-sufficient member of society (Steimel, 2017). In other words, a mere focus on the functional aspects would account for three of the twelve key aspects of successful integration. Thus, according to the presented framework for successful integration, a sole focus on the functional aspects would be insufficient for achieving successful integration.

In the WI 2021, the main expectations from newcomers were illustrated as follows: *"A newcomer has three years to learn to speak the language and become familiar with the Dutch society. The intention should be to become economically independent as soon as possible. To reach this, an integration exam needs to be achieved."* (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid, 2022a). Based on these expectations, it is likely that the WI 2021 is also based on merely the functional aspects of housing, employment and language and cultural knowledge. This implicates that the WI 2021 is solely focused

on creating self-sufficient sufficient members within society. However, according to the theoretical framework of successful integration, a more comprehensive approach is necessary to truly create self-sufficiency among newcomers. Therefore, it is expected that the WI 2021 does not achieve successful integration. The analysis of the implementation of the WI 2021 was tested in the municipality of Tilburg. To determine whether their implementation includes all key aspects for successful integration, the third sub-question was formulated as: *How does the WI 2021 in the municipality of Tilburg function?*

In the results section, positive and negative elements of all twelve key aspects were described. In a positive sense, the presented results from the conducted interviews showed that integration in the municipality of Tilburg functions rather well. The WI 2021 was composed with the idea to improve effectiveness and efficiency of the integration system. From that theory, it could be expected that the WI 2021 would be an improvement, compared to its predecessor. In practice, the effectiveness and efficiency seems to be improved. Meaning that all key aspects for successful integration are, in a way, accounted for. Especially due to the introduction of the extensive intake and the PIP, it is recognisable that multiple aspects receive more attention under the WI 2021. In some cases, certain aspects are covered even before newcomers are housed. Furthermore, there was a positive pattern noticeable with the introduction of the learning routes. With the addition of three learning routes, newcomers are enabled to flourish in their own development, on their own level and with the support of the involved actors. The focus on becoming a self-sufficient member of society by learning the language and culture and getting a paid job remains. However, contrary to the expected results from Korac (2003), the WI 2021 has a more comprehensive scope than solely the functional aspects.

In a negative sense, the WI 2021 is not the perfect example of how integration is supposed to be. The framework of successful integration is the ideal picture of how integration is meant to be constructed. However, integration does not occur in a vacuum. There are external factors effective, which are negatively influencing the integration process. This influence is noticeable by the stakeholders' concerns in each aspect of the framework. These concerns were often caused by two external trends that negatively influence integration: discrimination and scarcity: *"... this is about scarcity in time, scarcity in funding and a scarcity in people."* (Appendix 9.5). The discrimination is noticeable in the 'safety and stability'-aspect and the 'social bridges'- aspect. These aspects proved a presence of institutionalised racism and an unwillingness among the Dutch population to invest in the integration of newcomers. Moreover, newcomers are pointed out as an accelerator of the current housing crisis. The scarcity is noticeable by the inability to provide translators among several aspects. Also, the fact that newcomers have merely three years to fulfil their integration expectations indicate a scarcity in time. The negative trends of discrimination and scarcity are illustrative for the shortcomings of the, currently active, WI 2021. Thus, whilst the implementation meets all aspects of the framework on successful integration, the finalisation of these aspects showed limitations.

These trends of discrimination and scarcity were not mentioned in the theoretical framework of successful integration. Therefore, these specific implications in the WI 2021 were unexpected. But, these results were unexpected but are perfectly explainable. Namely, the theoretical framework of successful integration appears in an ideal integration context. A context in which there is sufficient funding and a welcoming host-society. However, as mentioned before, integration does not occur in a vacuum. Within the Dutch context these trends of discrimination (Andriessen, 2020) and scarcity (Geuijen, Oliver & Dekker, 2020) were already recognised. The responsibility for countering these national trends lie at a national level. The power of local actors is limited to the local context. Paradoxically, the responsibility for integration has recently been decentralised to local actors. Notably, this causes a sense of powerlessness among the interviewed stakeholders in countering these trends.

These findings contribute to a clearer understanding of the discrepancy between the understanding of successful integration and integration policies. This research contributes to this discrepancy in two

ways. First, this research provides insights in integration policies in the local context. As mentioned before, factors beyond the functional aspects of housing, employment and language and cultural knowledge (Korac, 2003), are often not standardised part of integration policies (Shaw, Funk, Garlock & Arok, 2021). Due to the decentralisation of the WI 2021, this research could test this theory in a local context. In a local context, there is more potential in providing a customised approach for each newcomer. As proven in this research, a customised approach contributes to the implementation of all key aspects of successful integration. Therefore, this research has shown that the theory of Shaw et al. (2021) can be opposed when integration is executed in a local context.

Second, this research provides an awareness that the framework of successful integration is not automatically applicable on every scale. In different scales, the contexts alter. This research compared the framework of successful integration to a local context. As apparent from the results, there are trends on a national level that are influencing the capabilities of local actors. Therefore, when composing integration policies, there needs to be a greater awareness of the specificity principle of Bornstein (2017). Meaning, integration should be studied in a particular context, location, person and time (Damen, van der Linden, Dagevos & Huijnk, 2021). In the case of the WI 2021, this research has proven that the new act needs to be evaluated in both a local context as well as a national context to be able to determine whether integration is successful.

Also, this research produced a reusable framework for analysing the implementation of the WI 2021 in the municipality of Tilburg. The comparison presents a direct image on what is expected for successful integration and the functioning of the implementation of integration in the municipality of Tilburg. Not only its success-stories are described but also the shortcomings are elaborated on. Based on the findings in this research, the municipality of Tilburg can evaluate their implementation of the WI 2021. Following on this evaluation, the stakeholders can improve their implementation. Moreover, this research can function as an example on how the new act on integration can be evaluated for other municipalities too. The WI 2021 has been effective since January 1st 2022. In the early stages, policy is often full of imperfections (DeLeon & DeLeon, 2002). Therefore, other Dutch municipalities can experience similar needs to evaluate. By using this research, other municipalities can conduct similar researches on the functioning of their implementation of the WI 2021. On their turn, these evaluations can be mutually exchanged, enabling municipalities to learn from and help each other. In this way, they can commonly strive towards successful integration across the Netherlands with the local power of the WI 2021.

Thus, it can be concluded that the WI 2021 checks all the boxes of successful integration; all factors are accounted for. But truly successful integration is dependent on the details of these factors. The WI 2021 stands or falls with its practicability and the results suggest that it would benefit from some adjustments. Whilst this can be concluded, it is necessary to reflect on the limitations of this research. First, there is a share of data missing from the network on integration in Tilburg. Preferably every actor involved in the integration network in the municipality of Tilburg was interviewed. Whilst most of the involved actors were open for being interviewed, the Central Agency for Asylum Seekers [COA] did not assent to an interview. The COA is already in the spotlight in the current asylum reception crisis. Therefore, they do not automatically assent to an interview. It is therefore important to keep in mind that, when talking about sensitive topics, some parties are not automatically willing to cooperate with research. It is expected that the effects of the absence of COA is negligible. The COA is mainly involved in the pre-integration process, prior to appointing a newcomer to a municipality. The major part of integration occurs within a municipality. Therefore, their insights would have a limited contribution to the results. Moreover, other actors in the network were able to fill this knowledge gap by elaborating on their and the newcomers' experiences with the COA.

The second limitation in this research is the sample size. The sample size of the results is limited to a research area of one municipality. The municipality of Tilburg has functioned as a case study for this research. The context to which the WI 2021 is implemented in, differs for each municipality. Namely,

the municipality themselves can decide how much of the integration process is outsourced. The municipality of Tilburg has chosen to outsource the whole process to other parties and functions as a director in the network. The other parties operate on a local level. ContourdeTwern is only active in the region. Even VWN, a nationally operating actor, receives a variety of assignments dependent on the municipality they are hired in. Thus, the assessment of the key aspects need to be seen in a local context, with locally operating parties. This results in a different implementation of the WI 2021, in different municipalities across the Netherlands. Due to these regional indifferences, it is only logical to do first observations on the WI 2021 in one municipality and see whether the results are generalisable to other municipalities.

Mainly because of these regional indifferences, the generalisability of this research to other municipalities is questionable. However, whilst the fulfilment of implementation differs for each municipality, the assignment originating from the WI 2021 is the same. This means that processes like the extensive intake, the formation of a PIP and the provision of housing are mandatory for every newcomer integrating in the Netherlands, regardless of the municipality he or she integrates in. Also, the main difficulties with implementing the WI 2021 originate from nationwide problems (discrimination and scarcity). These should, to some extent, be familiar to policymakers in other municipalities. Whilst the explained shortcomings will not be identical in every municipality, the common problems can be evaluated cooperatively. Based on the common assignment to properly implement the WI 2021 and the influence of national problems, the results are generalisable to other municipalities. Regardless of the unique fulfilment of the implementation for each municipality, this research can function as a framework on how to properly evaluate the implementation of the WI 2021 in other municipalities.

The reliability of the data is impacted by the choice of actors. Namely, by interviewing employees companies about their own activities, it is expected that these employees depict a rather positive image of their implementation. In this research, employees of organisations involved in the implementation of the WI 2021 in the municipality of Tilburg have been interviewed. They are specifically hired to execute the implementation as successful as possible. For the sake of the company, it is expected that their employees would exaggerate on their successes and might remain silent about potential failures. Therefore, the results might present an unreliable image on how the stakeholders construct the assignment in practice. However, this research mainly focused on the implementation, rather than the practicability. Focusing on the implementation meant that merely the presence of the key aspects and corresponding characteristics were tested. If present, the characteristics would be marked as successful, regardless of their practicability. All additional information on their practicability was considered as valuable extra data. For answering the research question, the image of the practicability of integration was unnecessary. Therefore, the unreliability based on the choice of actors did not influence the presented results.

To measure whether the implementation is also successful in its practicability, it is recommended to conduct research on the other side of the story. A correct implementation is important and the new act falls or stands based on details. Therefore, it is important to talk about these details with newcomers integrating under the WI 2021. They can explicitly explain which elements of the implementation do or do not support their integration. Comparing the results from these conversations with the results from this research provides insights in both the implementation as well as the practicability of the WI 2021. Unfortunately, newcomer's first experiences with the WI 2021 will be available in three years, when the first newcomers have gone through the whole integration process. It is recommended to conduct a complementary research into the practicability of the WI 2021 in three years.

Again, the WI 2021 stands or falls with its practicability. As mentioned by the municipality of Tilburg: *"It stands or falls with what happens on the floor. And that floor is more unruly than it seems on policy level. So the challenge lies with the practicability of the new act."* (Appendix 9.5). This indicates that

more specific research needs to be conducted in the characteristics of the key aspects. There is an opportunity for future research to look more detailed into the implementation of the key aspects separately. This future research, accompanied by the practicability research, should provide insights in how the WI 2021 can be a true form of successful integration.

Also, it is recommendable to conduct research into the role of digitalisation in integration. An actor that is mentioned explicitly in this research as a unique actor for all municipalities is the Welcome! App. The Welcome! App functions as a helpful tool for the implementation of the WI 2021. It uses the technological possibilities of an app to create friendships, a network and supports newcomers to find a place in society. In the results of the social links, it is explicitly mentioned that newcomers would benefit from a centralised information provision where all the needed information is collected. There is an opportunity for the Welcome! App to function as this centralised source of information. Moreover, there is a role for digital tools to support the functioning of other key aspects. Digital tools can for example strengthen social bonds, create social bridges, provide an agenda for activities and connect newcomers with job opportunities, services the Welcome! App already provides (Appendix 9.3). This, along with the digital competence of most of the newcomers (explained in the 'digital skills'-aspect), shows that there is a future for digital tools in the integration process. The Welcome! App is at the moment of conducting this research only active in the municipality of Tilburg², but the general use of digital tools in the integration process would benefit other municipalities as well. Therefore, it is recommendable that future research focuses on the role digital tools can fulfil in the integration process. This increased attention in digital skills would help other municipalities to consider involving digital tools in their implementation of the WI 2021 as well.

It is also recommended to conduct research into the consequences of decentralising the responsibilities for integration. Since the introduction of the WI 2021, the municipalities have received full responsibility over integrating newcomers within their territory. This means that integration is currently approached in a local context. However, as established before, the local context is influenced by national problems of discrimination and scarcity. These nationwide problems are influencing the capabilities of municipalities to successfully implement the WI 2021. Therefore, it seems that the WI 2021 is not THE solution to the current integration problems. Rather, it is merely a shift in responsibilities to municipalities, backed by insufficient support and insufficient funding. Therefore, it is recommendable for future research to evaluate the feasibility and affordability of the WI 2021 under the current circumstances.

² This was the case at the start of the research. Currently, Welcome! App is also active in the municipalities of Dordrecht, Venlo and Leiden.

7. Conclusion

The current research aimed to compare the implementation of the new act on integration [WI] 2021 with the scientific criteria of successful integration. The main research question in this research was:

How does integration in the municipality of Tilburg function since the introduction of the WI 2021 in the Netherlands, when compared to the scientific criteria of successful integration?

The implementation of the WI 2021 was analysed by interviewing the network on integration in the municipality of Tilburg. In a total of six interviews, the twelve scientific criteria of successful integration were covered. By comparing the implementation of the WI 2021 to the scientific criteria of successful integration, this thesis has shown that the WI 2021 is a rather successful successor of the WI 2007. However, the implementation of the WI 2021 shows shortcomings when looking into the details. These shortcomings are explainable by the overarching national problems, such as discrimination and scarcity, that are negatively influencing the local capabilities to successfully integrate newcomers. Concluding, the WI 2021 in the municipality of Tilburg functions properly when compared to the scientific criteria of successful integration. Its implementation is an improvement in the efficiency and effectiveness compared to its predecessor. However, the shortcomings suggest that the WI 2021 is not THE solution to integration problems. Instead, it is mainly a shift in responsibilities, backed by insufficient support and insufficient funding.

This research was conducted to be able to evaluate on the WI 2021 in an early stadium of its implementation. Because of this earliness, it was not yet possible to collect any valuable data on the experiences of newcomers. It would be a great addition to have such a research, complementary to this one. Also, this earliness meant that this research was collecting data on a new, unresearched subject. Under these circumstances, the choice for doing interviews as a research method appeared to be the right decision for collecting data. This method corresponded to collecting data under new circumstances. The interviews gave a lot of insights on this relatively new subject of the decentralisation of integration.

These insights should provide sufficient reason to acquire more knowledge on the role of decentralisation in integration. Not only can the municipality of Tilburg use this research to evaluate on their implementation of the WI 2021, also other municipalities can use it to evaluate their implementation. Even national policy makers can use this research to critically evaluate the WI 2021. Moreover, the decentralisation of integration could be an opportunity among other countries in the European Union. Future research should focus expanding the knowledge on the influences of national contexts on local powers in the case of decentralised integration. Possibly, these insights provide opportunities to similarly solve integration problems in other countries that are struggling with integrating newcomers.

Integration in the Netherlands has previously been characterised as inefficient and ineffective. The Dutch national government composed the WI 2021 to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the integration system by decentralising it. However, the reactions to this decentralisation were not evenly hopeful. This research has shown the WI 2021 is an improvement and seems to have succeeded in addressing the main goals of efficiency and effectiveness. Moreover, by analysing the decentralisation of integration, this research contributed to the knowledge about the discrepancy between the understanding of integration and policy objectives and implementation in a decentralised context. Therefore, the findings in this research have contributed to the understanding of the applicability of the framework of successful integration from Ager & Strang (2008) in a local context.

8. Literature

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9. Appendixes

9.1. Topiclist interview stakeholders

Overarching theme	Specifically	Question
Acquaintance	Introduction interviewer	Introduction of the research subject and expressing mutual expectations
	Introduction stakeholder	Name, age, company, profession, motivation for this kind of work.
Successful integration	Introduce successful integration	Explaining the twelve factors towards successful integration.
Housing	Involvement	Is your company involved in the housing of newcomers?
	Organisation of housing	How is housing organised in the municipality of Tilburg?
	Appropriate housing	What does your company think is appropriate housing for integration?
		Does housing in the municipality of Tilburg meet standards as: suitable, in a good area, permanent, good quality & clean?
Employment	Involvement	Is your company involved in employment of newcomers?
	Organisation	How is employment organised in the municipality of Tilburg?
	Appropriate employment	What does your company think is good employment contributing to integration?
		Does employment in the municipality of Tilburg often include self-sufficiency, good quality (experience + skill), in a friendly environment?
Education	Involvement	Is your company involved in the education of newcomers?
	Organisation	How is education organised in the municipality of Tilburg?
	Appropriate education	What does your company think is good education, contributing to integration?
		Can you characterise the education in the municipality of Tilburg as: inclusive, accessible and of high quality (skills)?
Health	Involvement	Is your company involved with the accessibility of health care?
	Proper healthcare	What, in your opinion, is proper healthcare?
	Before access	How is the healthcare information provision?
		Is there a possibility to go to a doctor with an immigration background?
		How accessible is healthcare for newcomers?
	During access	What are newcomer's experiences with healthcare services in the municipality of Tilburg?

		What is your company doing to overcome barriers in healthcare provision?
Leisure	Involvement	Is your company involved in the accessibility of leisure activities?
	Encouragement	How are the newcomers in the municipality of Tilburg encouraged to participate in leisure activities?
	Time	Is there enough free time to participate in leisure activities?
Social bonds	Explanation	Explain what social bonds are (friends, family who share the same culture)
	Involvement	Is your company involved in maintaining social bonds?
	Encouragement	How does your company contribute to maintaining social bonds of newcomers in the municipality of Tilburg?
Social bridges	Explanation	Explain what social bridges are (relationship between newcomer and host-society)
	Involvement	Is your company involved in creating social bridges?
	Encouragement	How does your company contribute to supporting social bridges (i.e. community engagement activities)?
Social links	Explanation	Explain what social links are (connection between newcomers and the structures of the state)
	Involvement	Is your company involved in the provision of accessible information for newcomers?
	Accessibility	How equally accessible is relevant information for newcomers? (Think of language differences, long waiting time, age differences)
Language and cultural knowledge	Involvement	Is your company involved in the accessibility and provision of language classes?
	Language classes	How accessible/available are language classes?
		What is the quality of the language teachers and classes?
		Are there different levels in language classes available?
	Cultural knowledge	How well do the newcomers in the municipality of Tilburg get familiar with the local culture?
		How does your company contribute to newcomers getting familiar with the local culture?
		How well does the local community of Tilburg accommodate to newcomers?

		How does your company contribute to the local community accommodating to newcomers?
Safety and stability	Involvement	Is your company involved in the safety and stability of newcomers?
	Safety	What, do you think, is the status of safety of newcomers in the municipality of Tilburg?
	Stability	How is the process towards permanent housing in the municipality of Tilburg? Is there a lot of moving?
		What kind of communities do newcomers end up in?
		What does the process for becoming citizens look like? And how long does it take?
Digital skills	Technology	Does your company use technology to help newcomers integrate?
		Do you notice any differences in digital skills between newcomers? If yes, where do these differences come from?
		Does your company, in any way, help newcomers with their digital skills? How?

9.2. Coding tree analysis

Normal font: deductive code

Cursive font: inductive code

KEY ASPECTS FOR SUCCESSFUL INTEGRATION	ASPECT	CODE
MARKERS & MEANS	Housing	<i>Term for housing</i>
		<i>Housing market</i>
		Suitable
		<i>Administration</i>
		<i>Guidance</i>
		Permanent
		Neighbourhood
		Good quality
		Clean
	Employment	Self-sufficiency
		<i>Dual trajectories</i>
		Good quality
		Friendly environment
	Education	<i>Work supply</i>
		Inclusive
		Accessible
		<i>Affordability</i>
	Healthcare	High quality
		Information access
		<i>Health insurance</i>
		Preference for doctors with an immigration background
		Waiting time
		<i>Day-care</i>
		<i>Dentist</i>
		Financial barriers
		Family and job responsibility
		Communication difficulties
	Leisure time	Black elephant in the room
		Dissatisfaction with care providers
		<i>Offer of activities</i>
		<i>Accessibility of activities</i>
		Free time
		Time system
SOCIAL CONNECTION	Social bonds	<i>Community building</i>
		Specified activities
	Social bridges	Two-sidedness
		Friendliness
	Social links	Long-term relationships
		Bilingual information provision
		<i>Translators</i>
		Creating independent living skills
FACILITATORS	Language and cultural knowledge	Access to services and information
		Contracting qualified and well-trained teachers

		Multilingual classes
		Multiple levels of language learning
		Accessibility and availability
		<i>Informal language learning</i>
		<i>Norms and values</i>
		Facilitate interaction
		Celebrate cultural diversity
	Safety & stability	Confrontations with verbal abuse
		Confrontations with harassment or intimidation
		Perception of an unsafe area
		Status
		<i>Family reunification</i>
		Future housing
		Future community
	Digital skills	Digital illiteracy
		Linguistic and cultural barrier
		Socioeconomic barrier
FOUNDATION	Rights and citizenship	Rights
		Expectations