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Creating Citizen-Workers through Civic Integration

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Abstract

The shift to the workfare state has brought about ways of governing welfare subjects, the practical implementation of which has often been delegated to private state agents and their street-level bureaucrats. In the neoliberal paternalist state, the words and deeds of these street-level agents become even more relevant in order to understand the impact of contemporary social policies. This article focuses on the case of migrants in the Netherlands, who are problematised in particular as (potential) welfare subjects. By analysing the civic integration programme content for migrants, it reveals the responsibilising and disciplining discourses and practices used to promote the ideal of citizen-worker. That the task of inculcating the virtues and skills demanded by neoliberal policies has been transferred to private course providers makes state ideology all-invasive. While the lack of integration and participation is linked to individual failure, the state loses its social face in the process.

1. Introduction

European welfare states have been transforming in the last few decades from providing income protection to citizens to investing on the activation of citizens. This shift from welfare to workfare state has been marked by 'neoliberal paternalism'; neoliberal to the extent that its governance has been transferred from state actors to private actors and paternalist to the extent that the emphasis is less on rights and opportunities and more on duties and obligations (Soss *et al.*, 2011: 203). In the Netherlands, this trend has become increasingly visible from the 2000s onwards as successive Dutch governments took bold steps to foster activation (Hemerijck *et al.*, 2013: 26). The policy focus has thus become one of 'preventing people from becoming dependent upon social security and on bringing people back into the labour market' (Mascini *et al.*, 2012: 165–6).

Although welfare state reforms affect all benefit receivers, the 'welfare dependency' of migrants has been particularly problematised in the Dutch political debate as being emblematic of their lack of integration. As a result, the new generation of civic integration policies have been designed to stimulate labour-market participation and to free migrants from welfare dependence by

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'responsibilising' them. Civic integration trajectories have thus become a tool of disciplining migrants so as to inculcate the virtues and skills that are desired of them as Dutch citizens.

Dutch civic integration is contractualised in a way that is similar to workfare contracts in that the integration contracts call for individuals to take responsibility for themselves. Indeed, the current Dutch civic integration policy regime presents the process of civic integration as a contract between the migrant and the state,[1] according to which the migrant accepts the responsibilities that need to be undertaken and only when the responsibilities are fulfilled is the migrant entitled to the status and rights of citizenship (Van Houdt *et al.*, 2011).

Since the introduction of the Social Assistance Act in 2004, the municipalities have a strong incentive to reduce the numbers of social assistance recipients, as it confronts municipalities directly with the financial consequences of over- or under-spending (Van Berkel, 2010: 24). Moreover, welfare state reform has gone hand-in-hand with a wider application of new public management instruments (ibid.: 29) entailing the privatisation and marketisation of the provision of welfare services.[2] The 2007 Civic Integration Law launched a similar reform agenda in the field of provision of civic integration courses. The outcomes of these social policies have thus become more dependent on implementing agencies, which are often private companies. As the state authorises the authority of private social actors (Rose, 1999: 49), power and authority becomes dispersed in society rather than concentrated in the hands of centralised state actors (McDonald and Marston, 2005: 383). This makes the analysis of these private state agents, who are the new 'street-level bureaucrats' (Lipsky, 1980), even more relevant.

'Street-level organizations are pivotal players in the making of public policy. Although they do not determine policy's explicit content, these organizations can be understood as de facto policymakers in the sense that they informally construct (and reconstruct) policy in the course of everyday organizational life.' (Brodkin, 2011b: 253) The empirical work of this research hence focused on the policy 'end-products' as produced by street-level bureaucrats, i.e., the discourses and practices migrants are exposed to during their civic integration trajectories. Whereas the state can exercise control over the civic integration content by determining the subjects and exam requirements, civic integration course managers determine how the civic integration courses are organised, and course teachers transfer this information to their migrant students. How is civic integration policy translated into actual discourses and practices as these street-level agents exercise their discretion and adopt adaptation strategies? This was the question guiding the analysis of Dutch civic integration material and the conduct of fieldwork on Dutch civic integration courses in 2011. The sixteen semi-structured interviews were undertaken with policy officials who were involved in the formulation of the current Dutch civic integration policy as well as with street-level bureaucrats who operationalised and implemented the policies. The ethnographic fieldwork

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included non-participant observations in civic integration classes in The Hague, semi-structured interviews with five course teachers and informal conversational interviews with migrants. In this paper, I limit my analysis to the data relating to employment and participation.

The paper begins with a theoretical section summarising the concepts and approaches I borrow from the existing literature to analyse discourses and practices of civic integration in the Netherlands. This is followed by a short introduction to the Dutch context. Before I move on to the empirical analysis, I present my methodology and data. I first examine the discourses of citizenship included in the official civic integration material. The question that is addressed here is how these discourses responsibilise migrants to integrate and to participate in the labour market. Next, I present a civic integration programme mainly targeted at welfare-receiving migrants, and I study a class on this programme to demonstrate the strategies used by course teachers to discipline migrants into becoming citizen-workers. I argue that the authoritative teaching of responsibilisation disregards the difficulties migrants face in the Dutch labour market, in terms of access to jobs and the devaluation of their skills, and diminishes the social face of integration and participation policies.

2. Governing in the workfare state

In neoliberal regimes, freedom is not unconditional when it comes to governing citizens. Citizens are free in shaping their private lives, but, as liberated subjects, they have to behave responsibly (e.g., as workers, consumers, parents) (Clarke, 2004: 33). To the extent that individuals perform well and fulfill their responsibilities, they are 'free' from central control (ibid.: 38). The classes of citizens failing to fulfill their responsibilities, principally welfare beneficiaries, are subject to increased surveillance, compulsory workfare schemes and sanctions for non-compliance (Dean, 2002: 45). Some scholars have even argued that contemporary Western states treat some welfare recipients in a manner that effectively denies their status as citizens (Hindess, 2001: 107).

To enforce their surveillance regimes, neoliberal states rely on lower-level actors and private providers, who 'have been given greater policy discretion and have been called on to use their discretion in ways that enforce obligations and curtail deviance among the poor' (Soss *et al.*, 2011: 203). The governance of workfare is thus 'more dispersed in its organization, more muscular in its normative enforcement, and more firmly rooted in the market logics of performance, profitability, and competition' (ibid.). The predominance of market values in welfare-to-work policies has also brought issues of motivation, choice and behavioural change to the forefront of policy design and public debate (Wright, 2012: 310). Nowadays in welfare policy rhetoric, 'the lived reality of claiming benefits and looking for work is largely ignored in favour of a

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version of events that magnifies the worst examples of misbehaviour (e.g., fraud or laziness) and generalises this to all benefit recipients' (ibid.: 321). By individualising unemployment, the 'work for all' approach neutralises and de-legitimises the varied lived realities of non-employment, dismisses structural causes of unemployment (such as global recession) and ignores involuntary individual constraints (Wright, 2012).

This approach has given rise to coercive workfare regimes with the aim of 'correcting' the moral and behavioural deficiencies of welfare recipients. A legal right to welfare is thus no longer sufficient to claim social benefits as citizens are expected actively to seek a way out, with the support of professionals if necessary, before having recourse to state social benefits (Ossewaarde, 2007: 492). The so-called 'contracts of inclusion' (Handler, 2005: 101) fall under this neoliberal regime whereby recipients are empowered and have 'rights' to work or training and obligations to participate. Yet, as Ossewaarde (2007) has also pointed out, such arrangements are not real contracts as not all parties to these contracts can negotiate conditions of participation which creates a power imbalance between clients and agencies of workfare (Handler, 2005: 102). From a governmentality perspective, such contracts use 'technologies of agency' as they aim at enhancing and improving citizens' capacities for participation and action (Dean, 2010).

Hindess (2001) would identify this as being representative of a developmental understanding of both individuals and populations according to which many people, in the West as well as outside it, are seen as not – or not yet – ready for freedom. Within this hierarchical order, 'some people, the more cultivated inhabitants of civilised states, are seen as being relatively close to the condition of individual autonomy while others are seen as being at a greater or lesser distance from that condition' (Hindess, 2002: 133). The corresponding project of reform becomes the 'civilising mission' of government, consisting of projects of gradually improving subject populations (idem). Individuals are thus obliged to agree to 'a range of normalizing, therapeutic and training measures designed to empower them, enhance their self-esteem, optimise their skills and entrepreneurship and so on.' (Dean, 2010: 197). The current civic integration trajectories for (non-Western) migrants in Western Europe could be seen in a similar fashion, as migrants are obliged to fulfill the terms of civic integration contracts in order to 'earn citizenship' (Van Houdt *et al.*, 2011). The civic integration trajectories entailed by these contracts not only aim to teach practical skills, such as language and how to find one's way through the institutions of a country, but also to impose norms and values which are deemed to be 'national' (Suvarierol, 2012).

The Dutch citizenship ideals professed by civic integration are largely influenced by neoliberal policies aiming to discipline citizens to become self-reliant citizen-workers. The policy of 'personal responsibility' was the trademark of the cabinets of the Christian Democratic Prime Minister, Jan Pieter Balkanende (2002–2010). Their successor coalition cabinet composed of the liberal *Volkspartij*

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voor Vrijheid en Democratie (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy) (VVD) and the Christian democrat *Christen-Democratisch Appèl* (CDA) got rid of integration policy all together so as to move away from the idea that migrants have to live up to and fulfill 'other demands'.[3] In the end, all citizens have to live up to certain norms and values. Every Dutch citizen needs to be responsible and self-reliant and to provide for their own living (*je eigen broek ophouden*).[4] The responsibility of migrants according to these plans is to integrate (*inburgeren*), that is one needs to speak the Dutch language and possess particular skills and norms in order to live up to the demands of the Dutch labour market.[5] The current coalition cabinet of the liberal VVD and social democrat labour party *Partij van de Arbeid* (PvdA) has adopted a continuation of this integration approach and emphasises the migrants' own responsibilities, their duty 'to participate and to share the basic principles of society' and to contribute to society by being self-reliant.[6]

3. Analysing civic integration practices

The content of the Dutch civic integration programme has been previously analysed by scholars from the perspective of nationalism and gender studies. Whereas the focus on 'national' norms and symbols is not specific to the Netherlands (Suvarierol, 2012), the translation of the civic integration policy goals into practice has taken country-specific forms. For example, whereas the emancipation of migrant women was a priority for the Dutch government, the Dutch civic integration programme only focused on promoting migrant women's role in mothering and (unpaid) care work (Kirk and Suvarierol, 2014).

The issue of participation, another major aspect of Dutch civic integration, on the other hand, has not been analysed in detail. This is an empirical gap as the current government has made activation and participation central to their social policy, under which integration policies also fall. Analysing civic integration programmes in terms of the content and strategies employed to induce labour market participation is thus a fruitful endeavour as activation for new immigrants has a double agenda: an activation agenda and a citizenship agenda (Hagelund and Kavli, 2009: 259).

Since Lipsky's seminal work on street-level bureaucrats (1980), the importance of implementing agents for understanding the actual impact of policies has been underscored by empirical research. The changing role conception for workfare agencies, in enforcing activation policies, has led to revived research interest in the actions of street-level bureaucrats, in the field of social policy studies (Brodkin, 2011a; Brodkin, 2011b; McDonald and Marston, 2005; Soss *et al.*, 2011; Mascini *et al.*, 2012; Dunn, 2013). The specific case of bureaucrats dealing with migrants has also been examined from a similar perspective (Hagelund, 2005; Hagelund, 2009; Hagelund and Kavli, 2009; Shutes, 2011).

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To study the overall civic integration content and the official rhetoric on employment and participation, I analysed the pre-integration package containing the film *Naar Nederland* (Going to the Netherlands),[7] on the basis of which the migrant has to pass an exam to demonstrate her/his basic knowledge of the Dutch language and society. *Naar Nederland* is the official publication that is designed to assist migrants' integration abroad.[8] The choice for this material lies in the fact that the Dutch government does not provide any official learning package for civic integration courses in the Netherlands. It is up to private publishers to design, and up to course providers to choose, course books. I have, however, analysed the teacher's instructions of the course package *Nederlands aan het werk. Inburgeren: daar gaan we werk van maken.* (Dutch at work. Civic integration: we will work at it.),[9] which, according to the publisher's website, is used by forty-eight civic integration course providers,[10] to provide an overview of the topics that are covered in relation to employment and participation.

The contents of the pre-integration and civic integration materials resemble each other, and the themes that are covered correspond to the topics of the civic integration exam. Whereas civic integration material is more detailed, the pre-integration material touches upon the overall philosophy of Dutch civic integration policy and introduces the migrant to the normative expectations of Dutch society. The textual analysis of this material provided in Section 4 should be seen as a description of the societal and political context within which street-level bureaucrats work. Moreover, the fact that these issues are included in the pre-integration package represents the Dutch government's attempt at preventing welfare dependency in future migrants.

In order to extract the government discourse on migrant integration, I furthermore analysed policy documents on integration and interviewed national and local policy officials who worked on different aspects of Dutch civic integration policy. To gain an insight into how street-level bureaucrats interpret and execute their work of providing civic integration courses, I interviewed civic integration course managers in a formal interview context.

The next group of street-level bureaucrats was the civic integration teachers. I was allowed to spend one full day at a civic integration course in The Hague, where I could attend various classes. I chose to conduct on the spot informal interviews with the teacher and migrants, as my aim was to obtain spontaneous reflections on the immediate course content, rather than full accounts of their individual backgrounds. In line with the non-participant observation methodology, I focused on the 'here and now' and acted as much as possible as a part of the group instead of as a researcher.

The class of which I present an in-depth analysis in this article is the course 'societal participation (*Maatschappelijke Participatie*)'. This course was exemplary as it focused on the idea of participating in society. It demonstrated how this key goal of Dutch civic integration policy is translated into course contents and thus

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how (neoliberal) citizenship is defined, framed and instructed to migrants. Both the lecture by the teacher and the interaction between him and the migrants represented a crystallisation of the workings of the workfare state. The teacher of the observed session was a man in his late fifties, who had taken up this job after a losing his job in the private sector and a period of unemployment. The participants of the observed session were all welfare recipients except for one new migrant who barely spoke Dutch and seemed to have got lost in the building according to her account and ended up with a wrong group according to the teacher. The eight migrants were a diverse group in terms of age, labour history and their knowledge of the Dutch language (for more information on the migrants, see Section 5).

4. Working for your civic integration

In the Netherlands, the initial focus of civic integration was learning the Dutch language as there was a perceived mismatch between unskilled migrant workers with limited competence in the Dutch language and the post-industrial labour market (Entzinger and van der Zwan, 1994). Afterwards, the perception of mismatch widened to include a lack of knowledge and adoption of Dutch cultural norms and values, as well as behavioural expectations (Schinkel, 2007). The content of the current Dutch civic integration programme aims to teach the basics of the Dutch language and society, and has an additional focus on practical aspects such as finding work, caring for a family or starting a new business in the Netherlands. To acquire a permanent residence status in the Netherlands, migrants have to obtain this knowledge by attending civic integration courses, at the end of which they are evaluated through a computerised civic integration exam.

The official preparation film for Dutch civic integration abroad, *Naar Nederland* (To the Netherlands), summarises the knowledge and virtues migrants are desired to possess to survive in the Netherlands. The virtues of responsibility and self-reliance are amongst the core values repeatedly mentioned in *Naar Nederland*. In the film, settled migrants speak about their experience in the Netherlands[11] and forewarn newcomers about what is awaiting them:

'You need to be self-reliant (*zelfstandig*) here, and it is not possible for everyone.'[12]
'If I do nothing, I get nothing, I achieve nothing.'[13]
'I noticed here in Holland that it's the people who stick their necks out, ask questions, and dare to take the initiative who get on faster than the ones who wait and see whether this or that is allowed or possible. The more you dare, the more you integrate and learn things.'[14]
[Author's translation from Dutch]

The first excerpt included in the introductory chapter of the film makes clear from the start that one needs to be self-reliant in the Netherlands, which is qualified as a quality that is not possible for everyone to attain – one needs

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to be able to take action. The 'employment and income' chapter is where the importance of working hard is emphasised time and again. Whilst migrants are asked to take their fate into their own hands, doing nothing is presented as a failure strategy. Instead, one needs to take initiative and to dare instead of waiting for things to happen. This is the way to integrate in the Dutch society. The responsibility is thus placed on the shoulders of the migrant, as s/he has to work at making her settlement in the Netherlands a success.

The accounts of migrants are followed up by the narrator of the film who once more expresses the crux of the matter:

> For many people who don't yet know the country, the Netherlands would appear to be a paradise, but nothing happens automatically. There are opportunities here in the Netherlands to build up a future together, but you have to work hard for it yourself. Do you want to do that and can you do that?[15]
> [Author's translation from Dutch]

As this excerpt explicitly states, the Netherlands is not a paradise, even though it might look like it from a distance. This emphasis seems to stem from the assumption of the Dutch policy-makers that migrants have too high expectations of life and prosperity in the Netherlands. This is why the film not only shows the chances and opportunities but also the 'impossibilities' (*onmogelijkheden*).[16] The conveyed message is that the migrant should be prepared to accept all these aspects of the Netherlands before they migrate. The migrants have to work hard for everything themselves. Migrants are thus asked to take up this responsibility and to assess whether they are able to do it. The fact that this excerpt concludes the substantive part of the film[17] suggests that it is a core message that the migrant is asked to reflect upon before embarking on their journey to the Netherlands.

Migrants are not only expected to work for their integration into Dutch society, e.g., by learning the language or getting settled in the Netherlands, but there is also an ideal citizenship model that is sketched by the Dutch state to which migrants must conform. A citizen-worker is the ideal citizen, and working is *the* condition to be a part of Dutch society:

> Work is important. In the Netherlands, the aim is that everyone works, both men and women, so each has his or her own income. This applies to women with children, too. One of the first questions a Dutch person will ask is, 'What kind of work do you do?'. No answer means no job. When you get to the Netherlands, you need to find work as soon as possible because once you've got a job, you've got your own income. Besides, you'll get to know other people more quickly and learn to speak Dutch more quickly. If you work, you're a part of it all. People take you seriously.[18]
> [Author's translation from Dutch]

It is with this excerpt that the 'employment and income' chapter of the pre-integration film *Naar Nederland* begins. This excerpt stresses that working is not only necessary in order to be able to earn an income but also to be able to be

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taken seriously. One's job is presented as a central part of one's identity and it is pointed out that this is the first question everyone is likely to be asked in the Netherlands. The visual image that accompanies this excerpt consists of a scene where the main character of the film, who does not have a job, has no answer to this question. He is looked down upon by the Dutch man who poses this question at the bus stop. The message is clear: You are nobody without a job. As a local politician puts it, participating in society can take many forms, but 'the best way to participate in this country, is by working'.[19]

However, the pre-integration film portrays a rather discouraging picture with regard to the prospects for migrants in the Dutch labour market:

> As a recent immigrant, there are still jobs in cleaning and sanitation and in market gardening. For other work, you need to able to speak, read, and write proper – or 'proper' Dutch. As unemployment among migrants is greater than amongst Dutch people, you may have a lot of trouble getting a job. And you may well have to be content with a job below your capacity.[20] [Author's translation from Dutch]

The only opportunities presented to the migrant are the low-skilled jobs in cleaning and gardening. As Bjørnson argues, whereas the Dutch policy discourse claims to prepare newcomers for the post-Fordist job market, the content of the course textbooks reinforce career choices in the Fordist sectors (Bjørnson, 2007: 73). Here, as in the rest of the film, it is underscored repetitively that mastering 'proper Dutch' is the condition for obtaining better jobs. So without good Dutch language skills, migrants can only get low-skilled jobs (e.g. cleaning). The importance of learning Dutch as an economic asset is thus emphasised, in line with the policy ideology of 'language as commodity' (ibid.). At the same time, by focusing on the essentiality of Dutch language skills in the post-industrial labour market, the job opportunities for newcomers are reduced rather than expanded (ibid.: 74). As Ghorashi and van Tilburg (2006) have also pointed out, the increased emphasis on competence in the Dutch language has become a major obstacle to entering the Dutch labour market, even for highly educated refugees. Under this new language regime, linguistic imperfections have become markers of the degree to which newcomers deviate from employers' visions of the 'ideal employee'. This provides employers with yet another basis to legitimise discriminative hiring and promotion practices (Bjørnson, 2007: 74). That discrimination towards migrants in the Dutch labour market is a structural problem has been demonstrated by experiments where Dutch researchers have shown that, when identical CVs were sent under native and migrant names, migrants' CVs were disadvantaged (Dolfing and van Tubergen, 2005; Andriessen *et al.*, 2012).

The portrayed image of the migrant in the film is thus one of the 'typical migrant' who is not expected to have the capacity to access any job other than in the lowest ranks of the labour market when s/he arrives in the Netherlands.

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It appears that the Dutch government has neither any illusions that migrants will have a good position in the labour market, nor does it want to create any illusions as it prepares migrants for the possibility that their capacities may not be fully rewarded in the job market. The government seems to accept that it has failed to raise the socio-economic prospects of the migrant population whilst it announces that unemployment is higher amongst the migrants and that they may end up with a job below their capacities (which eventually means that the Dutch government does not mind whether or not it uses the full potential of its citizenry). The most important thing is to find work and to be employed.

5. Civic integration meets workfare

The policy priority of employability is reflected in the fact that work constitutes an obligatory topic in the Dutch civic integration courses and exams. The aim is to explain that migrants need to take an active attitude to searching for and finding work. The contents of this basic work-search training include how to read job advertisements, how to conduct a job interview, how to negotiate a work contract, and how to interact with colleagues.[21] In line with the overall focus of the Dutch integration course on teaching norms, this training also includes the expected informal behavioural codes on the work floor, e.g., job interview etiquette (arriving on time, appropriate clothing, etc.), addressing superiors, responding to requests from colleagues, appropriate informal conversations with colleagues (which topics to address, responding to jokes). In this sense, the civic integration course resembles workfare arrangements that include courses on basic job search and interview presentation skills elsewhere (McDonald and Marston, 2005). These types of 'rehabilitation courses' rest on the premise that being jobless is an individual instead of a structural problem, 'some type of deficit that could be remedied through teaching and instruction' (McDonald and Marston, 2005: 386).

Where civic integration meets workfare most closely is in the case of 'old' migrants (oldcomers – *oudkomers* in Dutch), who arrived before 2003 when the current civic integration policy was introduced and who have been included in the policy by former Minister Verdonk. There were large numbers of migrants who had been living in the Netherlands for decades without speaking Dutch. Old migrants who did not possess Dutch nationality were obliged to either prove they could speak Dutch by producing a diploma or by passing an exemption test (*Korte Vrijstellingtoets*) that required a higher language level – B1 – than that required from the standard civic integration test. 'Oldcomers' failing to fulfill these conditions, were obliged to follow a civic integration course. This led to much resentment, especially among (older) male labour migrants who had worked all their lives and in some cases were still working, and who now – often just before retirement age, as the policy includes all migrants up to the age of sixty-five – had to start learning Dutch (Bağcı, 2012).

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Initially, the plan of the government was to extend obligatory civic integration to include resident aliens and three groups of naturalised Dutch citizens: religious civil servants (e.g., imams), mothers and welfare recipients. However, the Council of State (*Raad van State*) determined that this was in violation of the principle of equality. Naturalised welfare recipients could, however, still be made to follow a language course via welfare regulations. The official argument for justifying the obligation to follow a language course was that these migrants' lack of language skills might be forming a big problem in terms of their labour market position.[22] The main goal was to get these migrants out of welfare dependency through disciplinary measures and course content.

In the Netherlands, municipalities are responsible for implementing both welfare and integration policies, and in many Dutch cities social policy and integration is a combined policy area. Remarkably, many of the public and private agents involved in the shaping or organisation of civic integration courses were also actors active in the domain of social policy and reintegration. The NGO responsible for overseeing the quality of civic integration courses, *Stichting Blik op Werk*, was originally set up by a series of organisations involved in the area of employment services (*arbodiensten*) and reintegration (*reintegratie*), working on keeping people in their jobs or searching out jobs for the unemployed.[23]

Furthermore, some of the largest private course providers were originally reintegration bureaux, which is logical according to a course manager as they can now combine reintegration activities with learning Dutch, which fits the spirit of the current civic integration policy.[24] Such providers have 'coaches' whose goal is to activate inactive people: 'to train people how to recognise opportunities, to grab opportunities, and above all to be working, to be working as soon as possible'.[25] In what follows, I provide a detailed description of the civic integration programme mainly targeting welfare-receiving migrants in The Hague, with the aim of demonstrating how neoliberal governance is translated into practice by street-level bureaucrats.

Migrants sent by The Hague Social Services to the course provider are subject to a one-day intake, where they have an introductory session and a short twenty-minute test to determine their language level after which they are offered a 'course contract'. If they accept the contract, they can start the courses. According to the interviewed course manager in The Hague, some migrants refuse to sign this contract. It became clear during the course which I attended, however, that refusing has consequences for their welfare benefit.

This particular course provider was offering some demand-oriented courses to this group of migrants which included computer skills, career planning, empowerment and societal participation. Career planning involved looking for and applying for a job. The 'empowerment' course simultaneously targeted two groups of welfare recipients: those that want (*welwillers*) and those that can (*welkunners*). The *welwillers* were those that actually wanted a job but could

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not get one. They lacked self-confidence, so the empowerment course aimed to 'boost their ego'. The *welkunners*, on the other hand, do not want a job (read: *any* job) whereas they could easily get one. In their case, the empowerment course aimed to 'make their ego more modest' as their expectations needed to be lowered so that they would take up available job opportunities. This short course description seems to be comparable to the analysis by McDonald and Marston (2005) of Australian employment service case managers. They were also trying in some cases to lift the self-confidence of some clients while trying to make others have more 'realistic' (meaning low) expectations as to the kinds of jobs they could obtain. The latter was experienced by welfare recipients as forcing them to take up jobs they did not want (McDonald and Marston, 2005: 390). In the workfare state, 'To be "choosy" then is not only being irresponsible, it also means the person may be seen as rigid in their wish to pursue only certain types of employment or for an individual to decide that the costs simply outweigh the benefits' (Marston, 2013: 823).

The contract signed by these migrants obliges them to follow courses for twenty hours per week. The societal participation course must be attended until the end of the contract. The main idea of the societal participation course is to incite people to work, whether it is paid or volunteer work, and thus to become active. Migrants are exempt from the course if they can prove that they work. Otherwise, there are two options: if they attend the course for two hours per week, they can complete the training in a year. If they attend for four hours per week, they can complete it in six months.

Throughout the observed societal participation course, the teacher adopted two teaching strategies: pedagogical and authoritative. Hagelund (2009), talking about Norway, defines these strategies as follows: The 'pedagogical strategy' rests on an assumption of ignorance. 'This does not imply the view that people know nothing, but that what they know lacks relevance and validity in the context of Norwegian society and schooling ... [It] aims to transform the minorities' points of view' (Hagelund, 2009: 90). The 'authoritative strategy' is 'mobilised in situations that may be recognised as dilemmatic, but where the dilemma is nullified by turning it into a hierarchy of values' (Hagelund, 2009: 92). As the following analysis will demonstrate, although the teacher was using the pedagogical strategy while he was lecturing, the authoritative strategy was dominant in his interactions with the migrants as they responded to the contents of the course.

What struck me the most during the course was that although half of the migrants were nearing retirement age, the teacher was addressing them as if they were a class of school children. McDonald and Marston (2005) observe this approach in the general treatment of welfare recipients. The welfare subject is approached as a 'non-citizen' who can be legitimately governed in the interest of turning them into a citizen-worker (McDonald and Marston, 2005: 387–8). The unemployed person is thus positioned almost in a childlike manner requiring

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paternalistic intervention which gives little respect and recognition to the person as an adult moral subject (ibid.: 387).

The course teacher used two lines of arguments in order to stress that it is the responsibility of the migrants to get out of their current state of unemployment. The first line of argument centred on the fact that it is a social duty to work and that they have to pay back for the welfare benefits they get. Here are some excerpts from his discourse:

'If you had work, then the municipality would not be able to oblige you [to participate in this course].'
'You all already have a salary. You are going to give something back for what you get.'
'It is not the idea that you stay on welfare longer than necessary. It is emergency assistance [sic. *Bijstand*]. It is temporary. That is what it is for. For a while. You have to show that you want to work [afterwards].'
[Author's translation from Dutch]

In the first excerpt, the teacher makes it clear that it is a consequence of the migrants' behaviour that they have to attend this course, as they would not be in this situation if they had found work. This is in line with the policy discourse that sees remaining employed as an individual responsibility. The second excerpt is interesting as the teacher qualifies welfare benefit as a 'salary' for which recipients have to do something in return. Migrants are thus instructed to take paid or unpaid work to deserve or pay back their 'salary'. This fits into the workfare discourse whereby welfare benefits are transformed from social rights of citizens to conditional payments. The third extract consists of a combination of both discourses as the teacher points out that the goal for welfare recipients is to come out of their welfare dependent position as soon as possible. The benefit is a temporary measure, and the recipients have to show their willingness to work afterwards. As such, welfare benefits are framed as an exception or a privilege rather than a right.

Whereas the teacher is employed by a private agency that offers civic integration courses, he is acting as a state agent, which characterises the neoliberal state as it 'engages more agencies and agents as the proxies of state power' (Clarke, 2004: 36). Remarkably, the teacher adopts the state discourse on this particular welfare benefit quite closely. Below is an extract on how the Dutch government describes the subsistence benefit:

You receive a subsistence benefit (*bijstandsuitkering*)[26] from your municipality as a bridge towards your way to a job ... You are responsible yourself in finding an income through work. You can only receive support from your municipality when that fails. Municipalities may ask for work in return (*tegenprestatie*), such as doing voluntary work.[27]
[Author's translation from Dutch]

Indeed, voluntary work was mentioned and praised by the teacher as a good alternative to paid work if migrants do not manage to find work. It was a way of 'doing something active' and of 'showing your motivation'.

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Migrants were reminded repeatedly that they needed to be active in order to 'wake up' their CVs' which were sleeping right now. This metaphor is representative of the second line of argument the teacher used which consisted of characterising the migrants as individuals who were doing nothing and 'standing still'. Here is a selection of excerpts from this discourse:

'You just have to find normal paid work again. Because now, it is quiet. Nothing happens.'
'There is one guarantee: no progress if you stand still.'
'You have to move yourself, to take steps, to display initiative. Otherwise, you will never get there.'
'Standing still is going backwards.'
[Author's translation from Dutch]

These excerpts show how the teacher labels the whole class as standing still and doing nothing. He thus qualifies their conduct as 'bad conduct' and explains the ethical self they should be aspiring to instead, i.e., taking the initiative to find work. According to the teacher, as long as they are 'standing still' and not working, they are actually going backwards. By using this developmental discourse, he tries to tell migrants that taking the initiative is the only means of moving forward. The 'developmental understanding' of individuals and populations places parts of the population at a lower developmental level as people who need to be instructed on how to go forward (Hindess, 2001). Only after an extended period of discipline can they act upon themselves and conduct their own conduct (Rose, 1999; Hindess, 2001).

This particular teacher also used himself as an example of 'good conduct' to illustrate his argument on the citizen-worker ideal. After losing his job in the IT sector and not succeeding in finding a job in his area despite numerous applications during the time he was receiving unemployment benefit, he took his current job as a civic integration course teacher, which is not even closely related to his former job experience. He described himself as 'someone who does not wait and likes to do something'. As such, he was contrasting his pro-active attitude with the passive attitude of the migrants.

Yet, were the migrants as passive as the teacher portrays them? The following dialogue between the teacher and migrants[28] during the societal participation class reveals that they do not passively agree with the content of his discourse, and that they are not refusing to work as he claims:

Teacher: If you receive money from society, you must do something in return. You must do everything to come off the dole.
Migrant 1: I have worked thirty years, paid taxes. The law doesn't make sense.
Teacher: The law does make sense. It is not normal to obtain welfare benefits. We are a social country. That is why we have a social service. But we will try to get our own money.

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Migrant 2: Small [sic. young] people can also get no jobs. How should we? It [sic. this course] costs money right? In the past, ten people in the greenhouse [sic. horticulture], now two people in a greenhouse. How people find work?
Teacher: Will you give up then?
Migrant 2: I am tired. Difficult. Very strict in The Hague.
Migrant 3: No good Dutch, no experience. Even no voluntary work. Me angry.
Teacher: You have to begin somewhere. If you sit still, then you get no chances.
Migrant 4: Why the municipality no factory for people with welfare benefits? I have three illness ... Give work, I tomorrow go.
Teacher: You are not helpless. Everyone can always do something. It is not the impossibilities that should be looked at but possibilities.

[Author's translation from Dutch]

This conversation was the first attempt of migrants to react to the teacher who had been lecturing up until this point in the course. However, it was remarkable that the teacher was not really in a dialogue with the migrants as he stuck authoritatively to his own arguments in response to the alternative interpretations offered by migrants. Although the respondents made analyses which countered his arguments, he dismissed these arguments by defending the current laws and practice in an impersonal language which raised these laws above any discussion and above the realities faced by migrants.

The first argument put forward by the teacher, of doing something in return for your benefit, was responded to by migrant 1, a sixty-two-year-old man, who remarked that he had been working all his life and paying his taxes. He saw this benefit as a right he was entitled to as a result, and claims that the law is not correct. The teacher responded in turn by defending the law and the Dutch social system ('We are a social country') whilst arguing that it is nevertheless 'not normal' to obtain benefits as everyone should earn their own income. Whilst defending Dutch law, the teacher reverted to 'we', which created a distance between him as the defender of the Dutch system and 'them' the migrants as possible abusers of the system.

Migrant 2, another man in his late fifties or early sixties, reacted to the argument on the need to pay back by finding work by referring to the labour-market conditions whereby less workers were employed for the same work (he used to do), and even young workers had trouble finding work. The teacher dismissed this argument by qualifying this attitude as giving up. Migrant 2 defends himself by saying he is tired, and that he found it very difficult. He also complains that The Hague municipality was very strict. As such, he, on the one hand, demanded empathy for his old age and condition and, on the other hand, pointed out the unfair situation which arose due to the fact that municipalities had been authorised to implement different measures that match their city's needs.[29]

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Migrant 3, a young woman in her thirties who had migrated to the Netherlands more recently, joined Migrant 2 in his argument by saying that she had not even been able to get voluntary work as her Dutch was evaluated as insufficient and her work experience in her country of origin did not count as relevant. Whereas Migrant 3 expressed her frustration in the face of this reality, the teacher replied again with his argument about having to start somewhere and not sitting still. As such, regardless of the fact that they were not actually sitting still and trying to find jobs, he did not acknowledge any of the migrants' structural difficulties in actually finding a job.

Migrant 4, a man in his fifties, questioned why the municipality did not provide a factory for welfare recipients, so that people like him who would like to work but cannot find a job would get a chance to work. Yet, the teacher was not receptive to this welfare-to-work alternative either, which he interpreted, presumably together with the arguments of the preceding migrants, as one of suggesting that one had no chances of finding work. His answer was again a general statement ('Everyone can do something') which was followed up by a claim that 'it is what one can do that counts, not what one cannot do'. The latter was a claim which he formulated in the passive voice, which made it difficult to determine on whose behalf he was speaking. Presumably, he was either referring to Dutch employers or the Dutch society. In both cases, he distanced himself from the accounts of the migrants who referred to the problems they faced in finding paid and unpaid employment. As such, his approach ignored the extra barriers migrants faced in the Dutch labour market, such as discrimination and the undervaluing of the skills and experience they have previously obtained in their country of origin (Ivanescu and Suvarierol, 2013).

It is striking how the teacher sustained his discourse, dismissed any structural arguments and refrained from showing any empathy with the migrants' situation despite the fact that he himself had also been a victim of the economic crisis and lost his job as a fifty-plus employee (a group which has particular difficulty in finding work in the current Dutch job market). By taking the moral high ground of an exemplary citizen-worker, he also masked the precarious position of civic integration teachers who have to settle for flexible contracts and low pay following the marketisation of civic integration courses (Tonkens, 2008).

The hierarchy he created between his position and that of the migrants is based on the axis of welfare dependency vs. labour market participation, and he reduced unemployment to a matter of individual effort.

How were the migrants experiencing this course? During the break, I spoke to them while the teacher was away. They told me that the social participation class consists of hearing this same story over and over again every week. Some of them expressed their hope of getting paid or unpaid work so that they could avoid this course. As they expressed in their interaction with the teacher, especially the older migrants who had a long working history in the Netherlands, they were

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wary of the current market conditions whereby older employees were not desired and the flexible work arrangements that dominated their previous work field was making jobs precarious and unattractive. Nevertheless, that they were still willing to search for ways of participating could be interpreted either as success of the teacher's authoritative strategy or as a strategy of the migrants to avoid neoliberal indoctrination.

6. Conclusion

The neoliberal workfare state expects its citizens to be citizen-workers. Within this social policy paradigm, welfare benefits become temporary privileges instead of rights. In line with this conceptualisation, those who receive welfare benefits are placed under the supervision of the reintegration bureaux whose mandate is to discipline welfare dependents to become active and participate in the labour market. The state uses street-level agents, who are nowadays employed by private companies, to enforce these workfare policies. The face of contemporary social policies is therefore best seen in the words and deeds of these street-level bureaucrats.

This article has focused on policies aimed at a particularly problematised subgroup of welfare subjects in Western European states – migrants. Migrants' reliance on welfare benefits has been framed as a lack of integration, leading states to introduce measures to limit access to welfare benefits for new migrants (Oliver, 2013) as well as civic integration programmes to promote the desired norms and behaviours from citizens. The Netherlands is one of the countries that has the most elaborate pre-integration and integration programmes for migrants, which involve the teaching of practical skills such as looking for work, alongside the teaching of the Dutch language, history, norms, and values. The foregoing analysis has zoomed in specifically on the parts of this civic integration programme relating to the topics of self-reliance and employment in order to reveal how the responsibilising and disciplining logics of workfare and integration policies merge.

The Dutch government has adopted a preventive pedagogical strategy through its pre-integration programme. Even before migrants set foot in the Netherlands, they are informed through an official pre-integration film that it is their own responsibility to succeed in the Netherlands. It is made clear that the ultimate path to integration is through achieving self-reliance. Being a citizen-worker is presented as the ultimate path to integration and an important pillar of Dutch identity. Once migrants arrive in the Netherlands, they commit themselves to fulfilling the terms of the Dutch civic integration contract. The contract not only responsibilises migrants but also disciplines them through its content and organisation, so that they will act as responsible citizens and conduct their conduct after the course as well.

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An interesting feature of the process of disciplining the migrants is that this task has been transferred to private course providers, which tend to be reintegration bureaux, a factor that contributes to framing and approaching migrants as (potential) welfare subjects. As the analysis of the societal participation class has shown, the course teacher totally adopts the state ideology and becomes one of its dispersed agents. While defending neoliberal state policies, he dismisses the difficulties migrants face in the Dutch labour market and reframes them as a lack of self-confidence and willingness to work. The structural problems migrants face in the Dutch labour market, such as discrimination and scarcity of jobs, are normalised, dismissed or accounted for as personal failure to take action.

Even though this article has focused on the case of the migrants, workfare arrangements are not specific to this group. The current Dutch Cabinet has made it obligatory for all citizens receiving subsistence benefits to deliver a service in return, determined by the implementing municipality. These services may include physical jobs such as cleaning the streets, or care work such as helping in homes for elderly citizens. Though activation and participation policies have been in place since the 2000s, the Dutch are now officially saying their final goodbyes to the welfare state. Interestingly, the government has delegated the task of announcing this shift to King Willem-Alexander, who declared during his first annual appearance before parliament as a King, that 'The classical welfare state is slowly but surely evolving into a "participatory society" ... one, that is, where citizens will be expected to take care of themselves, or create civil-society solutions for problems such as retiree welfare.'[30] As such, the 'participatory state' gradually transfers all its social tasks to citizens, who are not only expected to care for themselves but also for each other.

What this article has in particular demonstrated by providing an in-depth analysis of the interactions between workfare bureaucrats and citizens is that the dissolving of the welfare state not only has material consequences, but also immaterial ones: It is the human face of social government and policy that disappears with the words and deeds of case workers. These street-level bureaucrats become the authoritative faces of government who treat welfare subjects without empathy. Paradoxically, they tend to be precarious citizen-workers of the neoliberal state themselves. Like the Dutch course teacher in our case study, workfare case managers elsewhere also 'make modest wages in a job with few guarantees, and a nontrivial number have previously received welfare themselves' (Soss *et al.*, 2011: 222). As such, these private state agents close their eyes to the 'social suffering' that welfare subjects endure and contribute to the 'the social damage inflicted in late capitalist societies on the least powerful' (Frost and Hoggett, 2008: 440). Whether this is a good basis to inculcate the citizenship values the state professes is highly questionable, but, probably, the neoliberal paternalist state does not care as long as the citizens comply and fulfill its policy

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targets. Whether these policies still deserve the qualification of 'social' policy is another issue.

Notes

1 Civic integration contracts are not specific to the Dutch context. France applies the same principle, where new migrants also need to sign the Contract of Reception and Integration (*Contrat d'accueil et d'intégration*, or CAI) (See Van Houdt *et al.*, 2011).
2 Until 2006, Dutch municipalities were obliged to outsource welfare services. Since then, municipalities can choose to deliver these services or outsource them to private parties (see Mascini *et al.*, 2012).
3 Interview at the Integration & *Rechtstaat* Unit of the Ministry of Interior Affairs, 23 September 2011, The Hague, the Netherlands.
4 Ibid.
5 Integratienota Donner.
6 http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-en-publicaties/kamerstukken/2013/02/19/kamerbrief-agenda-integratie.html (accessed on 10 June 2013)
7 *Naar Nederland*, 2005, Den Haag: Ministerie van Justitie.
8 The actual content of the package was prepared by a consultancy firm, CINOP, and produced by a film company Odyssee Producties, although commissioned and supervised by the Dutch Ministry of Justice.
9 *Nederlands aan het werk. Inburgeren: daar gaan we werk van maken.*, 2007, Rotterdam, ITpreneurs Nederland B.V.
10 See http://www.nahw.nl/referenties/klanten/ (accessed on 11 January 2012)
11 Note that the strategy of letting migrants speak to migrants conceals the fact that what is being pronounced is government ideology.
12 *Naar Nederland,* 2005, Introduction.
13 Ibid., Employment and Income.
14 Ibid.
15 Ibid.
16 *Inburgering getoetst. Advies over het niveau van het inburgeringsexamen in het buitenland*, 2004, Den Haag, Adviescommissie normering inburgerinseisen, Ministerie voor Vreemdelingenzaken en Integratie, p. 20.
17 The last chapter includes practical and procedural information about how to take the integration exam.
18 *Naar Nederland*, 2005, Employment and Income.
19 Interview with former local council member, 3 October 2011, Dordrecht, the Netherlands.
20 *Naar Nederland*, 2005, Employment and income.
21 *Nederlands aan het werk. Inburgeren: daar gaan we werk van maken.*, 2007.
22 Interview with manager at Capabel Taal, Den Haag, The Netherlands, 26 October 2011.
23 Interview at Blik op Werk, Utrecht, the Netherlands, 10 November 2011.
24 Interview at Capabel Taal, Utrecht, the Netherlands, 6 October 2011.
25 Ibid.
26 Subsistence benefit is a last resort welfare benefit that is given to individuals that do not have the right to any other unemployment-related benefits. It is meant for those who otherwise cannot afford their minimum subsistence.
27 http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/bijstand/algemene-bijstand (accessed on 24 April 2012)

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28 This conversation has been translated by remaining faithful to the language use of migrants so as to reflect their level of Dutch. Where the text is incomprehensible, clarifications have been added between brackets.

29 http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/bijstand/algemene-bijstand (accessed on 24 April 2012)

30 Martijn Steinglas, 'King's speech to parliament heralds end of Dutch welfare state', *Financial Times*, 17 September 2013.

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