

Annual Report 2022

Enter: The Hub

This is a [three-year project](#) (2020-2023) to develop a hub to support refugee-entrepreneurs. The project has a transnational framework with partners from The Netherlands, France, Germany and Ireland. In spring 2021 a prototype hub was tested in France, with all partners providing input and being present for the evaluation. All other partners will roll out their hub based on French prototype in 2021- 2022.

In The Netherlands the main partner is Newest Art Organization (NAO). The World Makers provides expertise on systemic change, organises workshops for a community of creative entrepreneurs with a refugee-background, as well as roundtable meeting with support organizations on collaboration.

Workshops for refugee-artists

We organized a series of workshops on subsidies: how grant institutions work, how to write proposals and how to put together a budget. The workshops were developed and given by [Merel Schrijvers](#).

Conference on refugee-entrepreneurship

Newest Art Organization and The World Makers organised the conference as part of the 'Enter to Transform'. Lynn Zebeda from former Dr Monk helped us design the format and joined as facilitator.

The conference offered an opportunity to discuss the challenges and opportunities for newcomer-entrepreneurs, and to hear what support programs and organisations, newcomer-entrepreneurs and other stakeholders image such a hub to be, and what the priorities are.

Also, newcomer-entrepreneurship offers us the opportunity to question the values of our current economic system, and imagine what the future of entrepreneurship can look like.

The conference included presentations and a panel by various experts. Because attendants also had their own expertise to offer, we included interactive exercises to promote conversation and exchange.

1. Theme of the conference: reframing and researching unspoken assumptions

In the conference we looked at reframes. A frame (of reference) is a complex schema of unquestioned beliefs, values and so on that we use when inferring meaning. If any part of that frame is changed (hence 'reframing'), then the meaning that is inferred may change.

To reframe, we need to step back from what is being said and done and consider the frame, or 'lens' through which this reality is being created. We need to become aware of the unspoken assumptions, including beliefs and schema that are being used. Then we consider alternative lenses, effectively saying 'Let's look at it another way.' We do this by eg standing in another frame and describing what you see, changing attributes of the frame to reverse meaning or selecting and ignore aspects of words, actions and frame to emphasise and downplay various elements.

Core beliefs to be reframed:

- We waste resources by not coordinating workshops & trainings for refugee-entrepreneurs
- We are focused on training of technical aspects (not emotional wellbeing)
- Vulnerable entrepreneurs are not sufficiently supported

- The (art) work of refugee-entrepreneurs has to fit in Dutch culture
- As organizations we need to compete for funding and beneficiaries, it's about the survival of the organization
- Success is defined by everybody who is not a newcomer
- We need to create environments in which newcomers can develop themselves to their full potential.
- We need to support newcomer-entrepreneurs

2. Speakers and set-up

Speaker [Bright Richards](#) talked about his journey as refugee-entrepreneur in the Netherlands. International Hub-partners presented the work in their respective countries. The panel included:

- Rachel Janiuk, Head department of entrepreneur support of the Municipality Amsterdam
- Femke Bartels, Director from THNK School for Creative Leadership
- Mohammed Alassar, a successful Syrian entrepreneur in Amsterdam
- Karin Nijhoff, researcher on refugee-entrepreneurship from the Hogeschool The Hague
- Paul Leistra from the Landelijk Network of Sociaal Cooperatief Ondernemerschap (LANSCO)

We made sure that the format of the conference was democratic, so that attendees could offer their point of view through exercises such as the soft shoe shuffle. In the conference space we displayed illustrations by artist [Yazan Maksoud](#) which showed key issues refugees-entrepreneurs experienced on their journey.



3. A vision for the future: reframed beliefs

In the future there will be a hub with a central coordination and guiding point from where newcomer-entrepreneurs can be referred to suitable programs. There will be transnational connections with programs in other countries. Starting international entrepreneurs support each other.

The hub will have a holistic approach: organisations can share offices and information to co-create. The hub can share offices and information to co-create. There will be one duplicated program with shared learning. The support will be not organised by bureaucratic categories ('refugee', 'migrant'...), but by needs. There will be pluridisciplinary workforces (research, advocacy ...). Newcomers themselves have a ownership of the files about them and can share this with organisations. The hub will have a central research group to be aware of the diverse needs of refugee-entrepreneurs. It's relevant to meet with clients: see them as people, with different needs, dreams, see them in holistic perspective.

The Hub will have a central information point for newcomers, including a website where all the info is gathered, a platform with experiences and reviews by entrepreneurs, like a newcomers Wikipedia.

The Hub will have an advisory board of newcomers, academics, municipality and support programs. Programs will be devised in co-creation.

The Hub will provide a connection and referrals to more than support programs, such as social services, child care and community centres, providing support. The Hub will be a network of networks, where various programs and services connect.

The trainings offer space to exchange points of view. There are creative, experience-based exercises, prototyping etc. The trainings helps people deal with setbacks and 'failure'. There are community evenings to build horizontal relations between participants. The trainings work towards the dream of each participant, tailor-made, providing tools and exercises. It's not just about becoming a professional, but also about putting down roots, finding community.

We use art to make a difference. There is a space for diverse ideas of what is Dutch culture. We are not bound by geographic boundaries. Where Dutch art and culture used to be determined by our common history, it is not inspired by our common future. The diversity and new shapes of Dutch culture is not threatening, but comforting.

We focus on the strengths and skills of refugee-entrepreneurs and have faith in what they can accomplish. The ecosystem supporting them is aware of the diverse needs, and recognizes the value different points of view can bring. They have access to information and tools to develop their business. Investors are interested in social enterprises, and support entrepreneurs where ROI takes a bit longer. Vulnerable entrepreneurs have access to support networks and (financial, social and cultural) resources.

We strive for a world without 'beneficiaries', where support organizations are superfluous. We may think that the funds are limited, but in fact, the work to be done is unlimited. As organisations we build on each others' work to deliver more impact. All support organisations have their angle, their strength. Beneficiaries are not limited to legal status, but to the need they have.

Support organisations are aware they complement each other. We can rely on each others' resources and work. We value all expertise. We trust one another. We share expertise and ask for input, on organisational and individual level. We recognise expertise looks different but all valuable and necessary. Together we have more funding, more impact. We have put in place a collaborative framework and governance. Beneficiaries reap the benefit of this.

We are aware that entrepreneurship is not the only option for newcomers, it can be one step on their path. Newcomers are not necessarily 'vulnerable'. They are resilient. They have potential. They can help and support each other. One way to do this is through collective enterprises, social cooperatives. Newcomers add value to society by employing people, providing services, products, art. Newcomers are society (so that whole thing of 'Newcomers don't add value to society' is a fallacy.) Our 'support' system throws up so many obstacles that newcomers are kept from adding value. Newcomers have a big impact on society. Newcomers add important experience and expertise. They are capable of adapting to new circumstances, which fits the entrepreneurial spirit. An entrepreneurial mindset is valuable for all. Everybody should pursue his/ her dream.

It's not up to us to decide what the best place is for newcomers to develop themselves to their full potential. Newcomer need to find the environment that fits them. As to success/ failure: support organisations are not focussed just on organisational success, but on the impact they make collaboratively. Success may mean they are no longer necessary. Success is defined by the beneficiaries. Success is no longer defined in the short-term (did you finish a program?), but combines short and long-term perspectives. If a beneficiary 'fails' in one program, it may just mean that (s)he is more successful in another program, and organisations are eager to refer people to the right program that fits them. Newcomers work in support organisations, in decision-making positions.

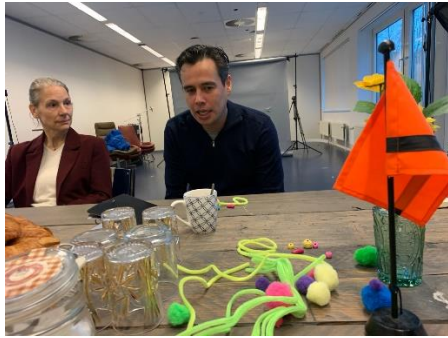
Both success and failure are recognised as a pathway to benefit all stakeholders to achieve a longterm vision. Newcomers define success on their terms (if newcomers want to define success, they can). We adopt evaluation methods for the long-term, qualitative, together with funders. Multiple pathways to success are possible (not just the one path offered by our program). Success/ failure can be defined differently by newcomers. Success/ failure include many temporal ranges. Stakeholders should collaborate to create definitions of failure/ success.

Roundtable with funders

In December we organized a roundtable for funders together with Mahalla Art and Kultur and Buddy Film Foundation. Present were the Fonds Podiumkunsten, the Prins Claus Fund, the Filmfonds and HiWork. Specific difficulties for refugee-artists are brought up:

- They often don't have a formal education: when you come from Eritrea, you have learned filming or acting by doing it, not at a school, and you don't have a degree. Ann mentions that they have done preliminary research into a skills passport for people with an informal education: experts in the field check a person's expertise and this is captured in a skills passport, so employers have a clear idea on what people are capable of. Buddy Film Foundation already started with a basic form of a skills passport. The World Makers also engages new people in textile and design by working with them for one or two days to see what they can do instead of just relying on a resume. It gives a clearer idea of people's skill level, and it is lowkey and little risk.
- Writing a proposal is very complex (not only for refugee-artists, by the way). Amarte Foundation was mentioned as a good practice example of accessible application procedure: they have a video pitching application process, which is helping applicants not so keen on writing.

- Refugees don't have a portfolio of work in the Netherlands and don't always have access to their portfolio from their country of origin. Hence, what works very well are small projects, with a small stake, where people can prove their skills and build up a portfolio with eg short films and other work. This is what both Buddy Film Foundation and The World Makers do: getting artists together to develop work together, during which refugee creatives learn how the Dutch professional scene works, while making work to start a portfolio. Hence, it's helpful to support artist organisations in the creation of new work.
- Hence, funders who provide small amounts for mini-projects for refugee-creatives provide a great first step.
- It is hard for refugee-freelancers to work inbetween benefits and on assignment as here the most administrative problems arise. This is the phase depicted in bureaucrazy gorge. And creative refugees stay in this phase longer, because of the specific way assignments of creatives are structured: instead of steadily building more income (eg catering company where you get more and more assignments), working as a creative balances periods at work and without work. Organisations try to help refugees specifically during this period. Ann mentions that they are working on setting up a social cooperative for people on benefits who want to start a business. A social cooperative which shapes a bubble around entrepreneurs specifically in the period of moving from benefits to standing on your own feet, so that vulnerable entrepreneurs are protected from bureaucratic complications. One example, mentioned by Tim is Pangea Social Cooperative. There is also LANSCO, het Landelijk Netwerk voor Sociaal Cooperatief Ondernemerschap (www.lansco.nl).
- Another issue is that refugee-creatives on benefits who receive funding while on benefits will have their benefits reduced with the exact amount of funding received. Hence, they are still not able to use the funding for their work. A solution has to be found for this, maybe through the organisations receiving the funding and buying materials?
- Can we set up incubators (New Producers Academy, New Script Writers Academy) where different minority groups are mentored.
- Sometimes refugee-artists need more time to comply with project requirements because of all kind of complications. We also shortly talked about mental health issues and trauma which sometimes interfere with work obligations in this group.
- Funders would like to develop schemes and regulations to level the playing field.
- In the artistic field network plays an very large role: how can funders help expand network of refugee creatives (internships etc)
- Idea to set up project with funding organisations, support organisations and refugee-artists of different application prototypes and test them, with feedback from all involved on what works well.



Embroidery for Ukraine @Sexyland

We organized attendance at an event organized by Sexyland to fundraise for Ukraine refugees. The artists WMF encouraged to join were former refugees and migrants from Armenia, Syria and Bahrein. They made illustrations and poetry to be sold for charity to support Ukrainians.

