Sounds of Change: Music and its effects on children in Dutch refugee centres

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Abstract

Community music is a way of making music within a group of people, by letting everyone participate in the process in their unique way. Sounds of Change uses community music in order to establish social change in refugee centres. But how do they use social change in order to pursue social change and what social change are they seeking for? This study explores the effects of community music on children in Dutch refugee centres. After conducting semi-structured interviews and participant observation, I suggest that, in order to establish a sense of communal belonging, creativity and connection among the participants of the workshops, a safe space is required. Whenever children feel safe, they dare to share their ideas. A common language is not required for this; music can often speak for itself. Moreover, Sounds of Change equalizes all individuals and embraces cultural diversity, which is considered more common in grassroots and pragmatic practices than in national Dutch multicultural policies.

Key words: Community music, refugees, refugee centre, safe space, belonging, creativity, connection, diversity

Table of contents

I. Introduction

Think of a musical performance, and most likely you will imagine some musicians performing on a stage, with people listening and being silent in the audience. Scholars have shown that listening to such music can bring along different goals: from self-awareness to arousal and mood regulation and social relatedness (Schäfer, 2016:7, 9; Schäfer, Sedlmeier, Städtler & Huron, 2013:3). However, people usually go to musical performances for the "purely aesthetic contemplation" of music and in order to attend a "musical artwork" (Wald-Fuhrmann et al., 2021:4). But what happens when the audience gets involved in the musical happening and actually gets to participate instead of just watch and listen, and by doing that become equally important to the performer(s)? What effects might it have for a participant to be part of a musical activity? Does it differ for people with different backgrounds, histories and experiences? These are the questions that I have examined during my fieldwork about community music in refugee centres among the Netherlands.

An organization that is invested in inviting people to participate in making music together is Sounds of Change. Founded in 2017 by Lucas Dols, this organization puts its focus on the power of music in order to improve the quality of life where it is needed. The organization reaches out to people who live in challenging surroundings; the work of Sounds of Change takes place in refugee camps and marginalized communities in Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Turkey, Iraq, Palestine and the Netherlands. The aim of Sounds of Change is to train people from the country itself into becoming *Changemakers* (workshop leaders) through the use of music, in order to stimulate creativity, expression, strengthening coping mechanisms, empowerment among people and achieving social change. They train people from the country itself, because they argue that those people know the language and habits of the community best and are better equipped to work withing their own communities. This leads to communities

becoming sustainable and independent from Sounds of Change. Workshop leaders are trained to create music together with a group of people and let all members participate.

"Music changes the world, because it changes people". This is what Sounds of Change stands for. Sounds of Change sees music as a way of bonding people and a powerful tool to express yourself in a safe way. How does bonding people through music look like in practice? Through the creation of a safe space which invites for shared creativity, reaching a sense of communal belonging is what is desired. How is this sense of belonging established? Through connecting people within a safe space, Sounds of Change hopes to achieve social change. Building strong communities with members who feel that they are part of society is argued to be a way of achieving positive change, in which the individual's well-being is focused on. So, what exactly is the social change Sounds of Change looks for? How does this vary for people with different backgrounds? In refugee centres, people have unique experiences and stories, which gave me a valuable opportunity to study the effects of community music on people with different backgrounds. The questions asked in this paragraph come together in my main research question: How does Sounds of Change use community music to promote social changes in Dutch refugee centres?

1.1 Community music

The concept that Sounds of Change puts into practice is described as community music. Community music practices are a way of social action, which in its turn can promote social change (Boeskov, 2019:5). Community music uses music to remove the gap between musicians and listeners and stimulates participation from the listeners. It is an active process between musician(s) (or music leader(s)/facilitators) and listeners and involves participation from both sides (Higgins, 2012:3). It is not based on a kind of dichotomy between the musician on stage and the silenced audience, but it emphasizes "people, participation, context, equality of

opportunity, and diversity" (Higgins, 2012:3). Community music is argued to be beneficial because, according to Boeskov, it commits to "social justice, inclusion, cultural democracy and social transformation" of marginalized groups and contributes to "positive relations to [the] self and the surrounding world (2019:6). Community music opens up to all kinds of genres and diversities of music, and includes performing, creating and improvising (Veblen, 2007:2). It aims to take place in communities in which people are usually not able to participate in musical activities (Higgins, 2012:53). It should be accessible for everyone and the social and personal well-being of the participants are essential (Veblen, 2007:2). Sounds of Change brings community music into refugee centres. Often there are little to no musical activities happening at these sites. People from all ages are welcome to participate in the musical workshops.

However, the notion of community can, as it assumes a kind of communality within a group, become a problem in relation to the notion of pluralism (Higgins, 2012:136). Therefore, the notion of community, as described by Lefebvre, should be seen as a social and spatial process in which people interact to create a social space (Walsh & High, 1999:266). The question in my research is how a 'community' is created through the process of making music together, with a group of people from different countries, with different histories and backgrounds. How are pre-existing cultural ideas about music and nationality shaping the music making process? Every participant in Sounds of Change workshops has their own background, which underlines the importance of diversity within a group. Therefore, the 'community' in community music, as Higgins delineates, should be considered as an endorsement of common aspirations towards making music despite differences in class, gender, cultural, economic and political backgrounds (2012:136). These common aspirations and the interactions between the people are what makes a community. Bithell delineates a similar meaning to 'community' in community music. To her, community stands for a group of people

with a communal endeavour, in which social and individual health reclamation are stimulated, and where friendship and support can be the outcome (2014:295, 296).

Having this in mind, it raises the question on how, and if, Sounds of Change reaches this sense of communal belonging and the creation of a community. People in the refugee centres as well as the workshop leaders are coming from very different backgrounds and have very different experiences. How does Sounds of Change achieve this communal belonging, despite these differences? How does it affect or create relationships between individuals and the group? How does it situate the community it seeks to create?

1.2 Community music in refugee centres

While Bithell wrote about community music among amateur choir singers and Higgins about the development of community music in general, there is little research on community music in refugee centres to date, especially related to children in refugee centres, and more specifically related to groups of children who do not know each other yet.

Overall, there are more than 26 million refugees in the world (The United Nations Refugee Agency, [UNHCR], 2021). This enormous group includes individuals from many different countries who were forced to leave their country (Jespersen & Vuust, 2012:206). Refugees often have a history of prolonged and repeated traumatic incidents, including war, ethnic cleansing and insecurity (UNHCR, 2013). According to UNHCR, this results in the presence of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) among 39 to 100% of the refugees (2002:233), which arises from "geographical and cultural displacement and trauma experienced both in the country of origin, en route and during relocation and resettlement" (Marsh, 2016:61).

Music can be a tool in helping to express traumatic experiences (Degmečić, Požgain & Filaković, 2005:288). Studies by Koelsch have shown that music strongly affects and changes

activity in the brain areas which are connected to emotional regulation (2014:175, 178), as well as that listening to music can help reducing stress and increasing emotional responses such as joy, calmness and peacefulness (2014:173). Moreover, Koelsch describes that participating in a musical activity can emerge "the sense of a communal 'we'" (2014:174). Musical activities among refugees showed that the activities can help in creating a sense of belonging and empowerment, stimulate non-verbal communication where verbal communication is limited and contribute to stress relief and integration (Marsh, 2016:61). Music has been emphasized as an important role it plays in "promoting the well-being of refugees" (Tahri, 2016:102).

Based on the above literature, I hypothesized that community music can help in creating a sense of belonging as well as stimulating the well-being of refugees. Moreover, does diversity among the backgrounds of the participants play a role in achieving this sense of belonging?

1.3 Workshop leaders of the Academy

I have examined who the workshop leaders of the Academy were by conducting interviews with questions on their daily lives, backgrounds and motives for participating. Bringing community music to refugee centres is what workshop leaders from Sounds of Change are implementing. They are trained according to the approach of Sounds of Change. As mentioned in Veblen, practitioners of community music often highlight the power of music that brings people together, and how it can provide for a sense of an individual as well as a collective identity (2007:2). To bring out this identity, workshop leaders are taught to use creative music processes in their communities. 'Creative music processes' relate to the theory of 'creative collaborative music practices' by Renshaw (2011). This theory is about exploring new possibilities through creative imagination, in which creativity is seen as a shared process, not as a personal one, and which is stimulated by other people (Renshaw, 2011:17). In the musical workshops of Sounds of Change, creativity is searched in everything; from making instruments

from random materials in the room to improvising a certain rhythm on the spot, and by combining those and interacting with each other creating new musical patterns as a group.

Creative music processes set priority to the imagination of the individual as well as the group (Renshaw, 2011:17). Renshaw argues that creative music making gives energy and constructs a sense of belonging (2011:17); something that people might have lost during a period of conflict in their country. Moreover, Renshaw contends that collaboration in the group is encouraged, as it opens up to and makes space for creative and innovative ideas (2011:7, 18, 19). Achieving shared creativity seems important for the creation of the feeling of communal belonging. Therefore, I have explored how the workshop leaders make space and stimulate creativity. What did shared creativity look like and how is it established among a group of people with very different backgrounds and experiences? Moreover, I have examined how the workshop leaders are bridging the diversity of backgrounds and experiences of the participants.

The creative music processes used by Sounds of Change are all about improvising and composing music in a safe space, which is pursued to be created within the refugee centres. According to Renshaw, in order to achieve a shared creativity, a safe space is required (2011:23, 70). Creating a safe space is important for members to be able to dare to share, to take risks, to make mistakes and to be vulnerable in the group, and all this without being judged. Renshaw argues how, within a safe space, shared creativity is about the flow of energy in a group and the interaction and the shared trust within a group (Renshaw, 2011:19). A safe space might help strengthen communities in areas of conflict as well as for people who had to flee from an area of conflict. Sounds of Change recognizes the potential of individuals and the group as an important value; every person taking part can contribute something to the process in their own way. Workshop leaders gain tools and skills to lead a workshop, but, evenly important, are also flexible in adapting their workshops in the moment to the atmosphere and needs of the group. To let participants be as creative as they want, I have examined how the

workshop leaders establish the creation of a safe space. Moreover, how is the safe space experienced by refugees and what does 'safe' mean for people who come from very unsafe places?

1.4 Fieldwork

A characteristic element of community music, according to Higgins, is that the practitioners of community music are "skilled, music leaders, who facilitate group musicmaking experiences in environments that do not have set curricula" (2012:4). The workshop leaders are taught to become these practitioners of community music. They are instructed according to the Sounds of Change approach to become these practitioners. For my fieldwork I have followed workshop leaders from the Sounds of Change Academy, as they learned how to use this approach. This Academy was a new initiative, in which eight people with a variety of backgrounds, including musicians, non-musicians, status holders, young and older, were trained to become workshop leaders in four weekends from October 2021 until December 2021, according to the Sounds of Change approach. They learned how Sounds of Change argues that the power of music can be used to move people and how music can encourage collaboration within groups.

After the training sessions they have put their learnt skills into practice from January on in different refugee centres in the Netherlands; Almelo, Amersfoort, Delfzijl and Den Helder, where they worked in close contact with people from De Vrolijkheid, an organization that arranges art projects in many refugee centres. I have measured the impact of the Sounds of Change approach on the workshop leaders themselves as well as the impact of their work on the people in the refugee centres. Their musical workshops took place among two groups of children; one group aged 4 until 7, the other group aged 8 until 12. In Delfzijl they had a group aged 12+ as well. I have observed and participated in the workshops and even lead some,

and conducted interviews among the workshop leaders, the employees of the refugee centres and, when possible, asked some questions to the parents of the participants.

1.5 Research question and sub-questions

The capacity of community music and its relation to communal belonging, emotional affect and creativity seems of importance, especially in refugee centres, where people have experienced traumatic events and might not be able express them through words alone. In order to measure the outcome of this, I have explored what the impact of Sounds of Change is in refugee centres. Therefore, my main research question was: How does Sounds of Change use community music to promote social changes in Dutch refugee centres?

Questions that arose about Sounds of Change and their way of working were: what exactly is the Sounds of Change approach? What does the approach produce when put into practice? What kind of social change does Sounds of Change seek to promote? In what way is music seen as encouraging social change?

Workshop leaders of the Academy are the people who are being taught to use the Sounds of Change approach. They have put their work into practice in refugee centres. Who were the workshop leaders of the Sounds of Change Academy? What is their history? How were they trained and how did they become workshop leaders?

Moreover, Sounds of Change seeks to establish social change by creating a safe space in which improvisation and group composition is possible and encouraged. A safe space opens up for daring to take risks without being judged and encourages collaboration within a group. A safe space characterizes itself by the presence of shared trust within a group (Renshaw, 2011:19). How was a safe space created within a group of people with a variety of backgrounds, histories and experiences? How did participants experience the safe space that Sounds of Change aims to create? In what way is a safe space connected to a sense of communal

belonging? How did the participants express their sense of communal belonging? How was cultural diversity among participants taken into account?

Next to a safe space, collaboration in the group was encouraged, as it opens up to and makes space for creative and innovative ideas (Renshaw, 2011:7, 18, 19). Achieving shared creativity seems important for the creation of the feeling of communal belonging. How did participants experience this communal belonging? How did the different backgrounds and experiences of the participants affect the possible process of communal belonging? How did it affect or create relationships between individuals and the group? What did shared creativity look like and how is it established?

II. Theoretical framework

In the theoretical framework I will expand on the effects of music and the hypothesis on community music having an ability in creating a sense of belonging as well as stimulating the well-being of refugees, taking into account the cultural and personal diversity of this group of people and how this might affect the process of community music. Firstly, I will describe the role of music in anthropology in order to give a broad overview of using music for research. Then, I will broadly describe the views of multiculturalism and individualism within Dutch society. I will give examples from healing processes through music used around the world, to set examples of how music can be used as a healing process in refugee centres. Thereafter, I will elaborate on how music can create communities, which entails how communal belonging might be achieved. I will end this chapter by highlighting the already existing literature on community music and how this offered space for my research on the Sounds of Change impact.

2.1 Music in anthropology

Understanding music through an anthropological eye is done mostly through the ethnomusicology discipline (Stokes, 2012:489). Ethnomusicology started in 1885 with an explanation coming from Vienna, the capital of classical music (Stokes, 2012:489). Afterwards, music of Indonesia, the Javanese gamelan, was used to investigate the European understanding of consonance tuning (when a chord does not “wrench” but sounds “clean”). The research concluded that the notion of ‘musical consonance’ could not have a singular explanation (Stokes, 2012:489). This is an example that shows how certain musical terms are understood and used differently in different areas of the world. An anthropological approach to music emphasizes that interpretation of music cannot be done through texts only; it needs

ethnography in order to understand these interpretations and the role of music in society (Stokes, 2012:491).

Musical practices are happening everywhere, and music is seen as a universal behaviour (Bannan, 2018:2). Appreciating and musicmaking is argued that it should be considered as a common feature of human society, not as a universal language, as is often contemplated (Bithell, 2014:50). Ethnomusicologists have shown that although musical practices are happening everywhere, people around the world do not have the same ideas about what music is, means or does; musical aspects do not have the same meaning in different parts of the world (Becker, 2004:73). Though, the fact that a lot of people can come to understand different expressive reactions to different kinds of music indicates some sort of commonality and universality in the relation between music and emotions (Becker, 2004:73). Investigating this through anthropology gives an opportunity to research different interpretations among different groups of people (Stokes, 2012:491). Refugees in refugee centres are coming from different areas of the world, making it a very diverse group of people. Besides, this raises the question of how this cultural diversity is perceived.

2.2 Approaches and mindsets

Multiculturalism and integration are contested concepts in the academic world. Multiculturalism describes integration of immigrants as "cultural diversity and the need for emancipation of groups of varying cultural backgrounds" (Scholten, 2012:99). In the Netherlands, there have been different multicultural policies during the last centuries. Scheffer (2000) argues how these policies are "responsible for the failure to address pressing integration problems" (Scholten, 2012:108), since they do not actually engage in actual integration problems, e.g., "urban segregation, criminality, radicalization and alienation of significant groups within Dutch society" (Scholten, 2012:97). However, local policies seem, in general, to

be more cooperative towards cultural differences than national policies (Scholten, 2012:111). Nonetheless, since the 2000's, it seems that public mindsets towards the presence of migrants have gotten worse in the Netherlands; people have become more negative towards migrants and feel threatened by their presence (Gijsberts & Lubbers, 2009:284). Moreover, migrants feel less accepted (Gijsberts & Lubbers, 2009:285) and have the feeling they are less integrated (Scholten, 2012:114). Scholten (2012) argues how criticism on multicultural policies derives from right-wing populists, which do not give a view of what is actually happening within the Dutch government and society regarding multiculturalism and integration. This is why the focus should be directed towards more grassroots policies, like Sounds of Change, which show a pragmatic practice. How does Sounds of Change undergo the multiculturalist and integrationist approaches in Dutch society?

Additionally, Harkness, Super & Van Tijen (2000) discuss different mindsets on individualism versus collectivism. They compare individualism with a so-called "Western mind", while collectivism corresponds with the "non-Western mind" (2000:23). Kagitçibasi (1996) argues how collectivism implies subordination and interdependence of one's self to the group, whereas individualism suggests independence (Harkness et al., 2000:23). Moreover, according to Kagitçibasi (1996), some societies encompass "close emotional relationships but allow for individual agency" (Harkness et al., 2000:37). This personal agency is indicated as well in the ability to make choices for yourself and take the initiative (Harkness et al., 2000:38). Are differences in mindsets about individualism and collectivism of influence on communal belonging and creativity?

For connection to exist, cooperation between people is necessary. Cooperation between people does not look the same everywhere in the world. It is not considered as universal; something can be contemplated as individual in one culture and as collective in another (De Bony, 2005:13). In the Netherlands, there appears to be a certain freedom of individual

expression (De Bony, 2005:8). This individual expression is considered as a personal opinion which should be reflected as an individual characteristic (De Bony, 2005:9). This goes together with the group respecting each individual (De Bony, 2005:9) in which all opinions are considered as equal (De Bony, 2005:7). How does this work in practice in the mindset of Sounds of Change, a Dutch organization, who work with people coming from non-Western countries?

2.3 Music and healing

Music is, according to Roseman, related to emotions; the duration, pitch tempo, rhythm and melody of music can create "an effective environment of joy or pain" (2008:29). According to John Cage, an American composer and artist, the "final intention of music activities it to gain mental peace" (Degmečić et al., 2005:288). DeNora describes the relation between music and wellbeing as "a paradigm that understands music and musical activity as embodied social practice and understands that practice as responsible for what we come to understand as music's health promoting properties" (2013:6). The fact that music has an emotional power is argued to be partly also because of unconscious processes that are happening to people. The unconscious processes of music happen in a way that it can affect and improve someone's quality of life (DeNora, 2013:4). Music influences people, whether they are aware of it or not; the human body constantly reacts to sound. As Mackenzie explains, "variations in pitch, rhythmic patterns, tempo and volume will affect pulse rate, blood pressure, respiration and the function of certain glands", which will create a mood or physical response (1988:45). Healing through music is used in many cultural surroundings around the world (Koen, 2008), and is central in the healing process of people for many cultures (McMasters, 2015:7). However, understanding healing through music in different cultural practices requires an understanding in cultural music meaning and several belief systems (McMasters, 2015:9). In other words;

differences between cultures should not be overlooked when examining music in relation to healing across cultures (Koen, 2008:12).

The healing processes through music differ over the world. Music has a connection to its own cultural patterns in that it communicates in specific and symbolic ways (McLeod, 1974:111). Shamanism in Siberia, for example, shows how music, through singing, dancing and drumming, can help to build up energy from the community members, to be able to reach the healing spirits, in order to heal someone (Walker, 2003:46, 47). In this case, music is used as a medium in communication in the healing process of a person. In Korea, shamanism is part of the culture. The ritual of shamanism consists of theatrical elements, music and dance (Kshetrimanyum, 2009:25) and is used for healing through supernatural beings (Kshetrimanyum, 2009:17, 19). In East Java, music is used to bring people into a different state of awareness, a state of trance, to heal (Nasuruddin & Ishak, 2015:151). The gamelan, a musical style from Indonesia with mostly percussion instruments, is used to achieve this state (Nasuruddin & Ishak, 2015:153). The state of trance is an elevated state, in which "the healing energy is activated to affect the healing process for psychosomatic maladies as a result of spirit possession or just psychological maladies caused by depression due to social and familial circumstances" (Nasuruddin & Ishak, 2015:151). This healing performance is stimulating and encourages cleansing of the participants' self and to keep the general wellbeing of society (Nasuruddin & Ishak, 2015:151).

Understanding this background in music in relation to healing provides with information that music is used as a tool to reach a person's well-being. Bringing music to refugee centres, as done by Sounds of Change, might therefore have an effect on the wellbeing of refugees. However, the cultural diversity of the research group needs to be taken into account; the refugees in the refugee centres have different backgrounds and experiences. It is important to know how Sounds of Change works with these differences and similarities among

their participants. How do the workshop leaders conduct their workshops, taking into account these different backgrounds? How do people with these different backgrounds respond to and experience the musical workshops?

2.4 Music creating communities

Music can also be described from a communicative perspective. Music can be seen as a form of communication and as a way of intervening into and creating a community, in which a group of people, despite the diversity in backgrounds, have a communal endeavour towards making music (Higgins, 2012:136). As cited in Benson (2010:177), "most listeners experience music, even that which comes to them through earphones, as a kind of communication between themselves and other human beings" (Higgins, 1991:151).

Music as communicating can be done through group music making. Group music making has been argued to be beneficial for social cohesion, shared emotion and lowering stress levels. This instinctive response starts in early childhood and develops throughout someone's life (Bannan, 2018:2). Ehrenreich argues how group music making relates to Turner's *notion of communitas*, an achieved collective state where all differences between people are left behind, in order to merge "through their basic humanity" (Turner, 1995:18), and to Durkheim's *notion of collective effervescence*, the "ritually induced passion or ecstasy that cements social bonds" (Ehrenreich, 2007:2, 3). The notions combined move towards a state in which people simultaneously act in the same action and they collectively experience a certain emotional state (Ehrenreich, 2007:14). It is a heightened feeling and a moment of unity. It unifies a group; it is not just an individual experience (Bithell, 2014:24) and it makes individuals feel stronger (Weiss, 2018:2).

Different ethnomusicologists have researched community music. According to Veblen, community music is a way that can unify a group (2007:2). Community music is open for all

genres and diversities of music, and expressed through musicmaking, performance, creation and improvisation (Veblen, 2007:2). As Veblen discusses, community music can bring people together through music and can stimulate someone's identity (2007:2). According to Stokes, interacting and exchanging music within and between groups is what marks community music (2004:60), and can sometimes do more than spoken language only (Stokes, 2004:67). Thus, community music can possibly bring a sense of communal belonging to people. This is especially important for people who had to flee their country and might have lost their sense of belonging.

Some research has been done to the effects of community music to certain groups of people. Degmečić et al., (2005) for example, describe how it was after the first World War and the second World War that music directly became more related to healing. Community musicians brought music to the hospitals, where veterans were suffering from physical and emotional trauma (Degmečić et al., 2005:290) and it was used to treat PTSD (Peters, 2000:29, 33). Due to the veterans' responses to the music, these musicians were asked to play more frequently. However, it became evident that proper training for the musicians was needed, which resulted in the first music therapy degree program in 1944 (Degmečić et al., 2005:291). Music was seen as a social thing, with interaction and communication. Though, it was discovered that it should make room for personal expression and spontaneity, and it should be accessible and open for everybody (Degmečić et al., 2005:291).

Other scholars have done research to community music as well. Ethnomusicologist Bithell conducted research among amateur community choirs. She investigated the culture of choirs among two developments; the natural voice moment, a network in the United Kingdom of "open-access community choirs, weekend singing workshops, and summer camps", and a transnational network of amateur singers who "participate in multicultural music activity by performing songs from "other" cultures, often travelling to the music's place of origin to learn

directly from singers there" (Bithell, 2014:1). Connections both within the United Kingdom as well as outside, North America, Australia, South Africa and the Republic of Georgia, were made (Bithell, 2014:1).

She examined how singing can reclaim community and asks herself how and why communal singing can comfort and uplift people while the rest of people's lives may be disfigured by pain, loss and disappointment (Bithell, 2014:23). Everywhere around the world, the human voice has been used for self-healing (Aluede, 2012:79), as explained by McMasters (2015) and Koen (2008) in the previous paragraph. Singing together brings people together and does not require a shared background or origin (Putnam, 2000:411). Bithell argues how community music should be brought to people who are often excluded from society (2014:87) and how *the politics of participation* show how music can be socially meaningful (Turino, 2008:1). Politics of participation in singing can achieve social capital, where trust and cooperation are generalized (Bithell, 2014:223). Community music opens up to "participation, accessibility, equal opportunity, empowerment, and enabling individual creativity" (Bithell, 2014:90). Community music in choirs can serve as a bridging function to communal belonging, when people who may not even speak the same language are bonded through music (Bithell, 2014:288). This raises the question whether community music in refugee centres can also achieve this sense of communal belonging and how Sounds of Change seeks to achieve this. Moreover, how does Sounds of Change relate to the politics of participation in Dutch society?

Another study on community music was done by Higgins. He conducted research on the development of community music from the 1960s onwards (Bithell, 2014:26), based on existing literature, and used the United Kingdom as a site for exploration (Higgins, 2012:14) His focus in community music lies on the "active intervention between a music leader or facilitator and participants" (Higgins, 2012:3), in which creative and active participation is encouraged (Higgins, 2012:53, 83). According to Higgins, community music is often "a

response to an unjust situation". He argues how community music practice has "at its heart a commitment to cultural democracy, a call for both action and appropriate intervention, a system of support and respect for the many cultures and communities around the world" (2013: viii). Higgins describes a setting where music was not focused on the quality or the performance. Rather, it was focused on creating a safe space for people in order for them to gain confidence in an environment where nothing was considered a mistake (2012:98). At the same time, social interaction between people was encouraged, as people were to interact with each other in order to create a musical happening (Higgins, 2012:98).

There has been done small amounts of research specifically about refugees and music. Howell, for example, facilitated community music among refugee children in English language schools between the ages of five and sixteen, in which "composing and creating original music material, placing emphasis on student choice and input, creativity, and social interaction" were its main focus (Higgins, 2012:111). At the end of the term, children would perform their compositions to an audience of parents, teachers and students, which gave a feeling of achievement and opportunities, and, above all, a feeling of being ready to move on to a mainstream school (Higgins, 2014:112).

Another study, done by Marsh (2017), was focused on the relation between music and identity construction and social frameworks. She conducted research on the relation between music, play and well-being in the lives of newly arrived refugee and immigrant children in Australia, on which she firstly focused on the effect of musical play on the well-being of refugees at already formed communities, such as in primary schools, family homes and dance groups. She concluded her study with how for refugee children "music, movement, dance and play (…) offer important ways to connect with others, draw comfort, express emotion and develop self-esteem, identity and resilience (2017:70).

In conclusion, different studies have shown the beneficial effects of community music on different groups of people. However, not much research has been done yet on the effects of community music on refugees in refugee centres. That is why my research is focused on the effects of community music specifically within refugee centres. How is community music affecting refugees in refugee centres; a group of people with a variety in backgrounds and experiences? Although outcomes of studies have shown that community music opens up to creativity and communal belonging, there is need for it to be researched in what way these notions are expressed among refugees. Moreover, how do children experience community music? Is background of influence?

III. Methods

3.1 Methodology

During my research I have made use of ethnography. Ethnographic research is a way of studying people in their everyday lives (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). The ethnographer enters a social setting, gets to know the people by participating in their routines, develops relations with the people and observes them during their routines, while writing down notes of what is being observed and experienced (Emerson et al., 1995). Ethnography can offer a way of getting close to someone's experience, and the meaning and thoughts that are given to this experience, as well as how meanings arise to people and how they can change over time (Emerson et al., 1995). Thus, it can provide me with an understanding of people's behaviour (Robben & Sluka, 2012:2). Using ethnography helped me in understanding the diversity of cultural ideas that informed how children and workshop leaders responded to musical activities. It also helped me to understand what the workshops looked like in practice rather than theory.

I have used an inductive approach, which means that a theory is generated out of the research (Bryman, 2016:375). This gave space to producing many ideas, issues, topics and themes (Emerson et al., 1995), based on what the refugees in the refugee centres and the workshop leaders were doing and thinking in the field.

In my research, ethnography has contributed to gaining data on how refugees and workshop leaders have experienced the creation of a safe space and what it meant to them. It also provided me with how a sense of communal belonging was established during the workshops and how the pursuit of this sometimes related to wider goals of diversity and multiculturalism among participants. Moreover, ethnography gave me insight on how creativity was created and how this was done in non-verbal interpersonal communication. Furthermore, ethnography has been useful in understanding how people with different

backgrounds and experiences are involved in the musical activities lead by the workshop leaders. It gave me insight in the extent to which the Sounds of Change approach has impacted the lives in the refugee centres as well as the lives of the workshop leaders. It provided me with experiences, opinions and understandings of the effect of musical activities. I have compiled my data through several qualitative methods. I have made use of fieldnotes, semi-structured interviews and participant observation, which I will discuss below.

Participant observation is a method used to gather data in which the researcher plunges into a social setting for a certain period of time, while the researcher will be observing behaviour, listening to and participating in conversations, asking questions and participating in activities (Bryman, 2016:694). Participant observation gives opportunity to observe behaviour, by being present at the same activities as the participants (Bryman, 2016:493). Participant observation has given me the opportunity to immerse among the participants of my research, which gave me a chance to get to know their opinions, thought processes and behaviour. Moreover, participant observation offers to observe what people say they do and what they actually do, and find out why and how they interpret their actions (Iphofen, 2013:7). The first two workshops at every refugee centre, I was just observing, in order for the participants and everyone else involved to get used to me being there. After that, I started to participate in some activities as a participant. Moreover, due to COVID among one of the workshop leaders in Almelo, I was asked to be a workshop leader for two workshops. I had not thought beforehand that I would give workshops myself. But it contributed to obtaining data in ways not possible by just observing. Being a workshop leader gave opportunities of seeing the responses of the children on my actions up-close as well as it gave me practical information on how to create concepts as a safe space yourself, instead of just observing how other people aim to do that. Because not all behaviour is visible through participant observation, complementing these

observations with (semi-structured) interviews gave me a more wholesome picture of the happenings in the refugee centres (Bryman, 2016:493, 494).

Making fieldnotes is a method I have used throughout the whole process of my fieldwork. Fieldnotes are descriptions and observations that are written down during observations (Emerson et al., 1995). According to Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, fieldnotes are considered the primary source for "deeper appreciation of how field researchers come to grasp and interpret the actions and concerns of others" (2011:117, 118). By making fieldnotes, it helps to remember certain events and limits losing particular details due to memory loss (Emerson et al., 2011:118). Moreover, writing fieldnotes in the moment or soon after the events contributes to a deepening reflection and understanding of certain events (Emerson et al., 2011:119, 124), which makes it possible to understand what has been observed at first, and therefore possible to enable to participate in new ways afterwards (Emerson et al., 2011:126). According to Emerson et al., writing ethnographic fieldnotes is "the primordial textualization that creates a world on the page and, ultimately, shapes the final ethnographic, published text" (2011:131). I have written my fieldnotes during my observations of the workshops. Whenever I was not able or it was not appropriate to make them during the workshops, I wrote them down in the train back home right after.

I have conducted semi-structured interviews with six out of eight workshop leaders, because for two of them it appeared to be impossible to schedule interviews. These interviews happened online via Zoom. Four of the workshop leaders were already finished with all their workshops at the time of the interview, two of them had one workshop left to give. I have also conducted semi-structured interviews with the employees of De Vrolijkheid. These happened during or after a workshop, at the site. When follow-up questions were desired, I contacted the people through either e-mail, WhatsApp, Signal or phone call. A semi-structured interview distinguishes itself from structured or unstructured interviews in a way that it gives the

researcher the opportunity to dive deeper into the reply of a participant, and deviate from the researcher's beforehand written down questions (Bryman, 2016:468, 696). Semi-structured interviews were helpful for my research, because it allowed for the discovery of what was important to the person being interviewed, which made it useful for the inductive research I conducted. In these interviews it was important to be flexible in "varying the order of questions, following up leads, and clearing up inconsistencies" (Bryman, 2016:483), in order to get as much depth as possible. I have, after consent was given to me, recorded the interviews. Afterwards, I transcribed the interviews by using AmberScript and coded them with the use of Atlas. Semi-structured interviews gave me insight in who the workshop leaders were and their reasons for applying for the Academy. It gave me information on how concepts such as a safe space, a sense of communal belonging and the possibility of showing creativity were opened up for during the workshops and how this was done when no communal language was spoken between the workshop leaders and the participants. Lastly, this method gave me a perception of what the workshops had brought the workshop leaders and what it hopefully brought the participants.

Combining these methods gave me an overview as complete as possible on the effects of musical activities of the Sounds of Change Academy in the refugee centres. Doing this amongst four different refugee centres, made it possible to compare diverse happenings in the different refugee centres. It gave me insight in the effects on the participants as well as on the workshop leaders.

3.2 Ethics

The anthropologist's commitment to its research subjects is to respect the human rights, owe its research subjects full disclosure about the research project, and accepts the rights of participants (the right to stay anonymous or completely decline or withdraw from the research

at any time during the period of the research). The informed consent should include "a brief explanation of the research and its relevance for the organization or community, and that participation is voluntary and confidential" (NAPA Ethical Guidelines, 2018). Before the fieldwork started, I have discussed with Lucas, founder of Sounds of Change, and Lidy and Gusta, coordinators of the Sounds of Change Academy, my intentions of my research and what it would entail.

An anthropologist should make its ethical choices thoughtfully and has to be prepared "to make clear the assumptions, facts and issues on which those choices are based" (AAA Code of Ethics, 1998). Being open and transparent about the role as an anthropologist is very important. Findings of the research should be discussed with the stakeholders, and, moreover, findings should be objective, true and not falsified.

An anthropologist needs permission to start any activities. Anthropologists need to be transparent about which methods they use, and choices they have made during their research period and analysis (Dutch Anthropological Association, 2018). From the first moment I met the workshop leaders, I have been very overt about my role as researcher and my purposes. Naturally, I have discussed with Lucas what my role would be during the activities. During the fieldwork, I have done several phone or video calls with Lucas to discuss the results I had found in the meantime.

Conducting research among refugees is associated with many complex ethical challenges (Jacobsen & Landeau, 2003:187). An ethical issue that I was aware could arise in my research was the fact that part of my research group, the refugees in the refugee centres, and some participants of the Academy, who have similar backgrounds, were a marginalized group. They have lived through experiences I cannot even begin to imagine. Moreover, the group I describe as 'refugees' is a rather broad term and includes a very diverse group of people, in which each individual has their own story and background that needs to be taken into

account. In practice, it was not possible to conduct many interviews among refugees, due to COVID-19 and organizational measurements. During the interviews I did conduct among refugees, I had to be aware that some questions were maybe sensitive in regards to their histories, which is in line with the ethical obligation of "do no harm" (AAA Code of Ethics, 2012).

Interviewing people with traumatic experiences required a certain kind of caution. I had decided beforehand to not ask about their history and background specifically, because this might made them feel unsafe; if they felt like bringing it up, that would be fine, but if not, I was not going into that direction. This is in line with creating a sense of confidentiality and trust. I did ask about previously acquired musical experiences, as I felt this was a lowkey way to acquire some knowledge about musical backgrounds. I am aware that some of my concepts used in the research, e.g., safe space and communal belonging, might be triggering for some participants. What is a 'safe space' to someone who comes from a place that is anything but safe? And how can someone who is culturally displaced gain a new sense of communal belonging? I had to make sure that the participants were feeling comfortable in order to go into the direction of talking about these concepts. Therefore, I started the interviews with some small talk and questions about the general thoughts on the musical activities and see from there whether I could continue.

To mitigate my presence, I was firstly present to just observe the workshop leaders and participants. In this way, they got used to me being present at the site. Before the fieldwork started, I had already met the workshop leaders of the Academy and the trainers of Sounds of Change twice, in October and December. When the actual workshops started in January, I already knew all the workshop leaders.

As the musical workshops lead by the workshop leaders took place among three groups of children, one aged 4 until 7, one aged 8 until 12 and one aged 12+, this brought along ethical

concerns that needed to be taken into account. Children are considered one of the most vulnerable groups in research, as they might not have the full potential to understand what they are consenting to (Iphofen, 2013:45, 50). It is important to gain both child's and parental consent for participating in this research. Parents would not be present at the site of the workshops, which made it quite impossible to ask questions to the children nor their parents. Only during some rare occasion where parents would be present, I could ask the parents some quick questions. Another matter I had to take into account was the fact that some children did not speak English or Dutch, which would make it impossible for me to communicate with them. In the one occasion where I could ask two children some questions, the mother who was present translated it for me.

In order to guarantee anonymity, I have used pseudonyms for all workshop leaders and participants. Some employees of De Vrolijkheid preferred a pseudonym as well.

IV. Results

Chapter 1: "There are so many different cultures, but music makes one."

> *October 22nd 2021 – Kloosterbrouwerij Haagsche Broeder Den Haag*
>
> *Tonight, I have met the trainers of Sounds of Change and all the participants of the Sounds of Change Academy. It is a lovely group of people. Some of them speak English, some of them Dutch. While entering the monastery in The Hague, the place where they are staying for this first training weekend, I could immediately feel the nice atmosphere, as if everyone knew each other already for a long time even though it was their very first day of meeting each other. After getting a tour through the monastery, I came back to the participants who were making some music together, using foreign instruments like the 'Ud* [string instrument used to play Middle Eastern music]. *After this, the trainers from Sounds of Change gave a surprise concert for the participants. While they were playing, they made lots of contact with each other through eye contact, as well as contact with the audience through inviting us to sing along with their songs. Afterwards, we drank some beers and I got to talk to all the participants. They made me feel very welcome.*

Above is a snippet from what I wrote down after first meeting the people who were related and connected to the Sounds of Change Academy. I explained to them what my role would be during the Academy and they immediately were very welcoming towards me. What stands out in these fieldnotes is the connection that the trainers made with each other as well as with the audience during their concert. This connection between people is exactly what they are pursuing with their organization.

Before turning to the actual musical workshops and how they seek to effectuate concepts like connection, we have to understand who were leading the workshops, where they took place and who were participating in them. Who were the workshop leaders of the Sounds of Change Academy? Who were the participants of the workshops? In which refugee centres did the

workshops take place? These questions will be answered in this chapter. I describe the backgrounds of the workshop leaders, what they do in their daily life and why they applied for the Sounds of Change Academy. I will give a description of all four refugee centres where the workshops took place. Who are living there? What did the place look like? Moreover, I will give an overview of what the composition of the groups looked like who participated in the workshops.

4.1.1 The workshop leaders

Thirty people applied for the Academy; eight were chosen in the end by the trainers of Sounds of Change, based on number of spots available, personal learning objectives and diversity in background and gender, to take part in the Academy. For this research I conducted interviews with six of them; for two of the workshop leaders, it was not possible to do an interview. I started the interviews with the workshop leaders with a question on what they were doing in their daily lives. I asked this question to be able to create an overview of who the people were that got selected for this Academy. Below are excerpts of the interviews, which took place individually online via Zoom between the 22nd and the 24th of March 2022. The excerpts show what all the workshop leaders were doing in their daily lives at that moment. All names of the workshop leaders are pseudonyms, chosen by the workshop leaders themselves.

Celtic Knight, a nickname chosen by himself, is 30 years old and can play several percussion instruments. He comes from Syria and speaks Arabic, English and a bit of Dutch.

> Celtic Knight: “In my daily life, I wake up kind of early if I have a rehearsal in the theatre, or if I have to go to the conservatory. Later in the day I listen to music. I play music. I study what I think about in the conservatory, about the songs. Sometimes I talk to a friend, to my family in Syria, to a friend who lives here. (…) Listen to music or watch videos about something political, something

about the economy. (…) Every Wednesday I go to school in the morning to give two lessons in school. (…) Sometimes I go to my neighbour. (…)"

Floortje: "(…) What is the theatre show about?"

Celtic Knight: "It is a European project for the newcomers to the European Union. (…) It is a theatrical performance, a mix between dance, acting and I give them live music. (…) All of the script scenario came from our stories."

What stands out in this fragment is that Celtic Knight is himself a migrant and at the same time is involved in a project of welcoming migrants. Projects like these are also in line with the projects that Sounds of Change conducts.

Salma has a migrant background as well. She speaks Arabic, English and Dutch, is 35 years old and comes from Syria.

Salma: "I work as a pedagogical employee in childcare. Next to that, I am also a caregiver for my parents and a yoga teacher for children. I cycle a lot. (…) I like to read, I like to watch series and movies, listen to music and recently also playing music."

Apart from Salma having a connection to music, her daily work involves children. Working with children is also done all the time within the work of Sounds of Change.

Conversely, not all participants had migrant backgrounds. Hans Ultralord, a nickname, was born in the Netherlands, is 29 years old, and recently became a father.

Hans Ultralord: "At the moment I am a staying at home dad. I am also a piano teacher. I play piano, as my hobby. I also play harmonica as a hobby. And I am in a wheelchair. (…) I studied Music at Arts and Entertainment College. (…) I have completed that and then I have just been *freewheeling* through life."

This fragment shows how Hans Ultralord is a teacher, which brings him into contact with children, just like Salma.

Zahara works with children as well. Zahara comes from Ireland and is 30 years old. She can play multiple instruments and improvises on her violin.

> Zahara: "In my daily life I am a teacher. So, three days a week I teach piano, but also general music appreciation and kind of music theory with children. And games. (…) A lot of my work is based on the Kodály method [an approach to music education which believes that music is best taught in group music lessons, emphasizing the use of the social and cultural experience of the child; MasterClass, 2022]. We learn first to sing songs relating to songs to different pitches and high, low, and using your motoric skills and then within the games just always relating it to rhythm in the body. So, walking around, you are clapping, but also little dances that also relate to the form of the piece. So, just kind of intrinsically getting used to music and then putting it on to an instrument. (…) I also started with the Kodály method when I was a kid. (…) So, for one year, we were only doing music appreciation and doing choir and games all together. And then eventually we went to the instruments. (…) I kind of stopped violin when I was 15, but then went on with piano and then ended up going to the Conservatory in Amsterdam. And then I did my master's in The Hague in teaching according to the Kodály method."

What stands out in this excerpt, is the fact that Zahara herself is trained by the Kodaly method, which she now also uses in her daily work. This method underscores the value of collaboration, expressiveness and creativity. These aspects all come back in the approach of Sounds of Change as well.

Where Zahara helps younger children in expressing themselves through music, so too does Mariska help people to express themselves, but then within elderly care. Mariska is 33 years old, she speaks Dutch and is currently working as a music therapist.

> Mariska: "I have studied music therapy and I am currently working as a music therapist within elderly care. (…) I like doing this, although I am actually a bit in doubt, especially since the training of Sounds of Change, if I still want to work within elderly care, or if I want to work more with young people or children. Before Sounds of Change I was already thinking about that, but I think that feeling only intensified because of what I experienced with the Academy."

This fragment shows how Mariska is already involved with helping people through music, which is, evidently, emphasized in the work of Sounds of Change.

Helping people with personal growth through creative ways is something that Julia aspires to do. Julia is 33 years old, speaks Dutch and has always been interested in working within the cultural sector.

> Julia: "At the moment I am not working; I quit my job last year. Normally I worked in the cultural sector. In the past years I was in charge of the courses and the course programs. Before that I always worked as a producer in the cultural sector. (…) I resigned because I wanted to create space for myself to break new ground. One of which, what I would like to do, is work closer to people than I did. I spent a lot of time behind a computer, but what I actually want to do is using creative ways, such as music or writing, to guide people in their personal development. (…) How that exactly will take shape, I don't know yet. (…) I don't have a professional musical background. I have studied theology and Dutch language. I accidentally ended up in the cultural sector, as a producer. I have always been making music myself, and been creative in all kinds of ways. (…) So [I was very happy] when I found out there was something like being a producer, which I could combine with a discipline that I really enjoyed, the cultural sector, which always already was interested to me."

What stands out in this excerpt, is Julia's strive for working to "guide people in their personal development" using creative ways. Sounds of Change aims to do the exact same thing. Apart from all the links within the individual's daily life and the philosophy of Sounds of Change, it

showed that the majority of the workshop leaders were professionally trained in music. However, this was not a prerequisite to participate in the Academy; some were not musically trained. Nevertheless, they did have a connection to music. Another thing that stands out, is that the participants of the Academy are all doing social jobs; all of them are involved with working with several groups of people, varying from being a piano teacher to giving yoga classes to children. The social aspect of their job is very much in line with the what Sounds of Change emphasizes as well.

Now that we have a clearer view of what the participants do in their daily life, we move on to the question of how they first heard about Sounds of Change. Zahara and Hans Ultralord both heard about it from friends of them.

> Zahara: "Via a friend of mine. (…) He was doing a kind of community project then and got into contact with people from Sounds of Change. (…) And I was going to do the course before this Academy pilot, and then it kind of developed into the course that it is now. So, I was still kind of in the loop. (…) But just because of COVID, I think they had to keep postponing."

> Hans Ultralord: "My girlfriend knows Lucas from Knowmads, which is a kind of hippie business school, and she saw him working on Sounds of Change. And when she saw the [Academy] course, she was like "That is really fun and really something for you", so then I applied."

Some learned through friend networks about the work of Sounds of Change. However, others had more personal reasons. Celtic Knight heard about it when he himself was a resident in a refugee centre in the Netherlands.

> Celtic knight: “When I came to the Netherlands, I was hearing in the camps about Sounds of Change.”

Celtic Knight came from Syria when he arrived in a refugee centre in the Netherlands. Salma has a history with Syria as well. She came across Sounds of Change through social media.

> Salma: “I came across Sounds of Change by chance on Facebook. I saw something and thought “Hey, that is interesting, what is this” and it appealed to me right away, because the video that was shared at that time was also in Lebanon and since the war in Syria was of course still going on at the time, the cheerfulness that splashed from it spoke to me. Happy children that do not own a lot, but were participating in a happy way. I was completely impressed with the work they did. So, I kept on following them (…) and then there was this post with “We are looking for people who we can train in The Netherlands”, I thought for just two seconds and applied for it.”

Both Celtic Knight and Salma have very personal reasons for knowing Sounds of Change. Others found Sounds of Change through a link with music therapy. Mariska found it through her music therapy studies, while Julia was considering to study music therapy.

> Mariska: “My music therapy studies organized work field days. (…) In these annual conferences, Lucas and some others came to speak about Sounds of Change, and what they did through the use of music. And that really appealed to me when they spoke about it.”

> Julia: “I ended up with Sounds of Change via Sander [one of the trainers at Sounds of Change and also a music therapist]. I asked him a couple of times if he wanted to inform me about music therapy, because I was considering studying it, from the idea of wanting to work closer to people, from a creative point of view. He told me stuff about it and at a certain moment he said “We are organizing

> an Academy, maybe it is something for you", then I was like "But I am not a professional musician", on which he replied with "That is not necessary". So, then I signed up."

This again shows how the workshop leaders came from all sorts of directions and how they were drawn towards the Sounds of Change Academy. It shows a variety in backgrounds with the participants and a variety in how they got to know Sounds of Change.

Knowing Sounds of Change is one thing, but applying for the Sounds of Change Academy is another step. All workshop leaders had their different reasons to sign up for the Academy. It could be what was needed in their life at that moment, or what they were not sure of yet, and needed a final clarification for. The next excerpts show the answer on the questions "What was your reason for applying for the Sounds of Change Academy?" and "What appealed to you about the Academy?". This first excerpt is from the interview with Celtic Knight.

> Celtic Knight: "Using music in a different way. Not like just playing music in a performance - I sit on the stage and I play music to people and clap for me. Using music in another way and by performing in a theatrical way. How can I use my way to give the workshop, the activities? I like this. And also, that Sounds of Change, it gives mostly the workshops to people who really came from war or bad situations. And I know, how important it is to draw a smile on the faces, especially for the people who suffer from the memories of war. Yes, because I am one of them."

This excerpt shows a very personal motive of wanting to participate in the Academy. Celtic Knight knows how it is to live in the refugee centres. He has seen it from the inside, and knows how important it is to make people smile in these places. The UNHCR has shown how refugees often have a history of extended and repeated traumatic incidents (2013). Research has presented how music can be a tool in helping to express traumas (Degmečić et al., 2005:288),

which is one of the reasons why Sounds of Change brings music to areas of conflict or to people who have experienced this.

Another reason for wanting to apply for the Academy was the creation of connection between people. Both Salma and Mariska were drawn to the Academy for, among others, this reason.

> Salma: “The fact of being trained by people with so much experience and passion (…) On the website and those videos, I saw a lot of passion for what they were doing. And of course, the purpose; through music creating so much connection between people. And then also the great thing that it is not only aimed at, for example, children with difficulties, but that is also for children in schools, adults, young people. It was so broad and it was also beautifully described that they also want to learn from us, so it was very open.”
>
> Floortje: “Learning from you as in from both sides, so you from them, and they [the trainers from Sounds of Change] from you too?”
>
> Salma: “Exactly. It was a learning process as well for them as for the people who signed up for it.”

> Mariska: “The international part [spoke to me] and using music more as a sort of community music therapy, that always interested me during my studies as well, instead of individual treatment sessions. (…) It came across very well and it also involved practice. I also found the selection very good,, because then you really get to know each other and “Do we really suit each other?”, which is also quite a threshold that you have to cross, at least for myself. It also appealed to me because I think Sounds of Change actually is music therapy. Maybe that is because of my background, that I see a lot of resemblance, but they present it in a different way. They do it very much from within the community and very much about increasing the resilience and the connection and interaction between people and I think that is really great. That just resonates very much with what I really want to do, but for which I did not have the tools yet on how to do it exactly.”

Creating connection between groups of people through music is seen as stimulating the social cohesion (Bannan, 2018:2). Moreover, community music can unify a group (Bithell, 2014:24; Veblen, 2007:2) and bring people together (Veblen, 2007:2). In Chapter 3 I will look into how this worked out in practice and what issues the specific background and experiences of the people in question raised regarding it.

For Zahara and Hans Ultralord, a reason to apply was, among other reasons, working with community groups.

> Zahara: "The work that they do, like working in communities, but also just like using music to help people. I just started feeling that, also in my work, I mean, giving music individually to somebody is beautiful, but also, I think there is so much power in working with a group and you can learn so much in that dynamic as well. And then with all the stuff going on with the world now, it is just complete chaos. So, it is nice to think that like, okay, even on a small scale, you can try to help people that way. Help people [who are] more in need."

> Hans Ultralord: "I thought it would be great fun to work with people, to work in a community surrounding, to be able to contribute and also just to learn how to give workshops. That seemed like a super fun tool to be able to do. And the vibe really appealed to me as well. My feeling was like "Yeah, I want to do this" and when I got there [the intake interview] it just intensified. I was really like "Wow, this is so cool, this is so cool". So that was really nice and I was really happy with that."

Making community music with groups of people entails interacting and exchanging music within and between groups (Stokes, 2004:60). Sounds of Change is very much focused on interaction between people within their workshops.

For Julia, the Academy came at a good time in her life, since it was exactly what she wanted to find out for herself; how to use creative ways to allow people to develop and express themselves?

> Julia: “It is of course eminently what was in line with what I wanted to find out for myself. Using creative ways, in this case music, to allow people to develop personally, but also letting people being able to express themselves, whether children or adults. And what I had seen of them, how they worked, spoke to me very much. And also, when it comes to safe space. (…) I once did a course year in haptonomy, so I was busy with body-oriented things, also with myself. I find something there, in seeing how they work, I can express that in the work. That you can use your sensors very much and use your intuition to work in groups. (…) Something as simple as a check in and check out, that appeals to me very much. That you really make contact, first with yourself, then with each other as a basis, and then build from there. It is something very simple, I just find it very interesting and important to make contact with people from that way.”

Developing and expressing through music are some of the aims of Sounds of Change. Apart from music being used for expressing traumatic experiences (Degmečić et al., 2005:288), it was also researched how music can sometimes do more than spoken language only (Stokes, 2004:67), and can be expressed through musicmaking, performance, creation and improvisation (Veblen, 2007:2).

These excerpts showed how all participants of the Academy had an interest in working with other people and creating things together. It all seemed to come from a desire to help groups of people through the use of music, to contribute in their process of connecting with themselves. “That you really make contact, first with yourself, then with each other as a basis, and then build from there”, from the excerpt with Julia, shows that in order to be able to contribute to the personal development of others, it also seems important to be in contact with yourself. Practitioners of community music often argue how music can bring people together (Veblen, 2007:2). How did it look like in practice to bring people together through music? What did this do to a possible presence of sense of communal belonging? In what way was there sought for connection within and between people? These questions will be examined in the next chapters.

The eight participants were paired up and each pair was assigned to a different refugee centre. For six weeks, each pair would give one musical workshop per week. About the process of pairing up the workshop leaders, I spoke to Mariska during my follow-up questions in May 2022 and with Salma during the online interview in March 2022. With Mariska I met via Signal, and she replied to my questions via voice notes. Firstly, I asked her how the process took place, on which she replied the following.

> Mariska: "It was decided by the trainers, based on the characters of people, and which would complement to which. Also, part of it was a practical decision; which days were available to people and which location would be achievable."

Being paired up with someone made me wonder how this process was experienced by the workshop leaders and if they thought it affected the outcome of the workshops. I asked these questions to Mariska and Salma, on which they replied with the following answers.

> Mariska: "For me it was nice to do it with someone. It gives courage to go together, instead of being alone. You learn a lot from each other. During the selection [of participants - at the very beginning of the Academy] it was already indicated that the workshops would take place in pairs. That was something that really appealed to me. You learn much more from it, you can reflect on it together, than when you are alone."
>
> Floortje: "Do you think the pairing up decision would have a different outcome of the workshops?"
>
> Mariska: "What we have seen in the refugee centres, that children starting to feel safer, and opening up more, that would not have been different with any other person from the Academy, I think. I think everyone had the same mindset and the same qualities to accomplish that with children. Maybe I can tell you more about my personal process, because I think each personal process was different in this. In the beginning I had some disagreements with Ian about our collaboration considering giving space to the other and taking space for your own ideas. (…) Sometimes I felt like my ideas

were not taken seriously (…) and that made me feel angry, mostly, with myself. (…) We had a very good talk about that, and tried to do it differently for the last two remaining workshops. (…) I also think being paired up with a man or woman matters to me. I think I can feel the sense of equality easier with women. These are small things that could change the dynamic. But again: these things did not matter for the outcome for the children and teenagers, I think."

Salma: "The fact that I got to work with Julia was a present for me. Really nice. Very safe and we were both very excited. We were both also very committed to it. We really prepared, talked to each other on the phone and reflected on it. We took it very seriously. I am very grateful for that and I think it had a big part on the feeling of safety within a group."

What stands out in this excerpt, firstly, is the fact of doing the workshops together in pairs gives some sort of courage. Salma describes is as "giving courage to each other", whereas Salma describes it as it feeling "very safe". Secondly, the fact that Mariska thinks that whichever pair of workshop leaders was brought together, the outcome for the participants would have stayed the same; for participants to be able to feel safe and open up during the workshops. For personal feeling, however, you do not always know whether the combination of workshop leaders works out perfectly. Nevertheless, all workshop leaders who applied for the Academy seemed to have a common ground for applying for the Academy; working with groups of people and aim for connection. It is worthy to see that the effect on the children will not likely be affected by the formation of the workshop leader's pairs.

4.1.2 The refugee centres

Now that we know who the participants of the Sounds of Change Academy were, what their reasons for joining the Academy were, and how this resonates to the philosophy of Sounds of Change, we move on to the different refugee centres. In order to give a better overview of

understanding how the workshops took place and who the participants were, it is important to firstly know how the refugee centres looked like. I will discuss all four refugee centres and their specific conditions which stood out to me. Then I will also describe who is living in these refugee centres and who the participants were that took part in the workshops.

Sounds of Change works, mostly, with people in refugee centres and marginalized communities. This happens in six countries; Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Westbank, North Iraq and the Netherlands. Most of the projects that are happening in the Netherlands are mainly focused on the facilitation of workshops for (corporate) companies. In this way, these enable the work in the Middle East financially.

My fieldwork with the Sounds of Change Academy was carried out in four different refugee centres in the Netherlands; Almelo, Amersfoort, Delfzijl and Den Helder. These refugee centres were chosen by Sounds of Change, because, in consultation with De Vrolijkheid, it appeared that not many activities were happening at these centres.

Refugee centre Almelo

My first day of attending the musical workshops happened during the second week of January 2022, on the 12th of January to be exact, in Almelo. Quite a travel from The Hague, but, since it was the very first workshop, I could use the time in the train to prepare on what I was mostly going to focus on during my observations. I arrived there before the workshop leaders, which gave me some time to chat with some of the employees from De Vrolijkheid and Centraal Orgaan voor Asielzoekers (COA). They explained some things about the refugee centre; how it was an overflow refugee centre for Ter Apel, the refugee centre in the Netherlands where all refugees first arrive when they enter the country. After half an hour, the workshop leaders Sofia and Celtic Knight arrived. Because it was the first time, their coach, one of the trainers from Sounds of Change, was present as well.

Huize Alexandra, the name of this centre, used to be a custodial institution for girls with severe behavioural problems. Since I did not have the chance to see more of this building than the entrance, the hallway to the workshop space and the workshop space itself, I did not know how the rest of the refugee centre looked like. That is why I asked Gertie, program coordinator of De Vrolijkheid at this centre.

> Gertie: "The COA tried to perk up the isolation cells by providing the doors with door-sized stickers of stock photos of nature. Furthermore, part of the fences had been removed. But many windows could not open, the corridors were narrow and the rooms very small."

This excerpt shows the living conditions of the residents of this refugee centre. The families would sleep in the actual cells of the building. What does it do to refugees who left a place of danger and are forced to sleep in former cells? I argue that this may lead to an increase in stress and emotional responses. Research by Marsh has shown how music can be a tool to, among other things, contribute to stress relief and integration (2016:61). Moreover, studies by Koelsch have shown how music can affect the part in the brain which is connected to emotional regulation (2014:175, 178), as well as how music can help to reduce stress and increase emotions as joy, calmness and peacefulness (2014:173). That is why doing musical workshops in this refugee centre is of utmost importance, as it strives to contribute to more positive emotions among refugees. Apart from these circumstances, I questioned what happened inside the centre from the moment it opened up until now. I conducted an interview with Gertie in February 2022, at the end of the fifth workshop. I asked her if she could give a description of the happenings in this refugee centre.

> Gertie: "It [Huize Alexandra] opened in September [2021]. Then, a lot of people came at once. They were all *pre-pollers* [people who just arrived in the Netherlands and were not yet in the procedure

> of asylum application]. The residents did not get any money yet, so meals had to be delivered. The whole life in the refugee centre was about distributing the food at the right moment. After that, people wanted to move internally. Turkish people wanted to be close to other Turkish people, so a lot of movement within the refugee centre was the result of this and slowly everyone started to bond. Employees from the COA were saying "There is no cleaner refugee centre than this one", because the residents did not have anything to do besides cleaning. In January, the COA arranged that the residents could start cooking their own meals, in order for the residents to get back some autonomy. At some moment it got quite crowded, also because the rooms are all very small and the halls are very narrow. And now, the refugee centre is getting empty again and has to be completely empty on the 31st of March [2022]. The COA is trying to move the residents in the holiday. That is why they have started already now."
>
> Floortje: "Where are the people going?"
>
> Gertie: "A lot of different refugee centres. I heard a woman who really wanted to go to her friend in refugee centre Wageningen, and that COA succeeded in placing her there. (…) They are looking per family where to relocate the people. (…) And that has to do with which refugee centre has places left."

One thing that stands out in this excerpt, is the fact that these refugees were residents at this location for just a couple of months. Before they got a chance to completely settle down at that location, they had to move to other refugee centres all over the country. As it states in the excerpt that "everyone started to bond", it raises a question of how the relocation affected the people from the refugee centre who had become friends with each other and children who had gone to the same school over these months, with the fact that they would be separated from one another again. As Marsh mentioned, "geographical and cultural displacement and trauma experienced both in country of origin, en route and during relocation and resettlement" can be a prerequisite for the development of PTSD among a big percentage of refugees (2016:61). The COA tried to, if possible, put residents with a shared background (e.g., country, language,

gender or family composition) together when organizing the relocation. As the second part of the excerpt mentions, this seemed possible in some cases. Since frequent displacement seems common among refugees, it might raise a question on the need and extra attention for creating connectivity among these groups of people.

Another thing that strikes as important from this excerpt, is when Gertie mentions "Turkish people wanted to be close to other Turkish people". This concerns grouping by nationality. I spoke to an employee of COA about this as well, in February 2022, who was present during one of the workshops. I asked her about the nationalities in this refugee centre. She said that most of the people were Turkish or Arabic and how these two groups would live separately from each other. She concluded with "Most of the time these two groups are like camps against each other, but the children [from both camps] come together during these workshops". Seeing them working together as one group was considered a special thing. It shows how music can bring people together and how it can provide for a sense of collective identity (Veblen, 2007:2) as well as how it can strive for sensing a communal 'we' (Koelsch, 2014:174).

Gertie explained that the refugee centre would be closed and demolished in April 2022 and this ground would be used for housing. The agreement about this refugee centre between the municipality of Almelo and the COA got expired and there was no support in the municipal council to extend this agreement. However, after the follow-up questions I asked Gertie in May 2022 via email, it appeared that since there were no concrete housing plans yet and all residents were already relocated, the refugee centre became a municipal shelter for Ukrainian refugees from the end of March 2022 on.

The next excerpt is from my fieldnotes on the last workshop in refugee centre Almelo.

February 23rd 2022 – Refugee centre Almelo

Today is the last workshop in this refugee centre. Celtic Knight can't be here, so Sofia has asked me to be a workshop leader, just like last week. We don't know which children will be there, because we don't know who already had to leave the building. We have prepared some small activities, but mainly just want to go with the flow and the needs of the children. We have put a circle of crayons on the ground where we sit around, while Sofia plays a small steel drum and I play ukulele. The first girl comes inside and sits next to me. She immediately starts drawing on a piece of paper while humming to the music. She draws a big red heart and writes everyone's names [Sofia's, mine and the employees of De Vrolijkheid and COA] *inside the heart. (…) More children come in and slowly Sofia and I start playing the welcome song. The children start to sing with us. (…) After the workshop, the very first girl comes back with two small shells and gives them to Sofia and me as a present before she leaves the workshop space.*

Who was that little girl drawing the heart? The girl was present at almost all the workshops. The very first workshop, she immediately seemed to feel very comfortable around Sofia and would stay close to her the whole time. Who were the other children that joined the workshops? And who else lived in this refugee centre? Apart from understanding how this refugee centre looked like, it is also important to know who was living there and who the participants were. The following excerpt is from the interview I conducted with Gertie and the follow-up questions, where she tells me about the people who live in this centre.

Gertie: "There are 250 people in this refugee centre. In the other building [another refugee centre right next to this one] are 350 people located. (…) Most of the children here [in this building, Huize Alexandra] are Turkish and Arabic, sometimes there was this Spanish speaking girl, but most of them here are Turkish and Arabic. (…) Part of the refugees from the refugee centre are *stempelaars* - they stay with host families or relatives, but they have to present themselves weekly at the refugee centre. (…) Refugees can't take a paid job and if they are not yet a status holder [a refugee with a

> residence permit], they can only participate to a limited extent in integration courses outside the refugee centre. But if they have the financial means, they are free to travel within our borders."

A thing that stands out in this excerpt is the fact that refugees are free to travel, but probably do not always have the financial means for that. How does it affect refugees who cannot go outside the refugee centre, and are stuck in an actual former prison? Since it was not possible to conduct interviews with refugees from this centre, this falls out of the scope of this research, but is recommended for further research.

The workshops in this refugee centre were originally planned to happen in two times, one for the younger children (from four until eight years old) and one for the older children (above eight years old). In practice, sometimes a younger or older sibling would join the workshop. The number of children would decrease each week after the third workshop on, due to the fact that families were already being relocated to other refugee centres. The biggest group in the beginning had 16 participants, and the final workshop had 6 participants. Most of the children would come back every week, if possible. Some of the children already knew each other, because they were going to the same school.

Refugee centre Amersfoort

Having done some performances with an orchestra at this refugee centre, I already knew how it looked like. Often when we were there, many children would play outside, since there are two big playgrounds. There is a lot of green as well. I conducted an interview with Alex, program coordinator of De Vrolijkheid at this refugee centre, on the 10th of February 2022, in which I asked some questions about the refugee centre. The interview took place in the hallway right behind the workshop space, in which one girl was singing some karaoke together with the workshop leaders after the workshop was already finished.

> Alex: "Between 300 and 400 people are living here. (…) I think 75% of these people are children, teenagers and young adults up until 27. (…) This is a refugee centre especially for families. It is also an *uitzetlocatie*, which means that we are the last 'station' before people are deported back to their country of origin, or that they end up being status holder anyway, and get to integrate in the Netherlands. I notice myself that the latter option is the one that only happens. (…) I have never, in the period that I am working here, noticed that a family had to go back to their country of origin, or at least I have never heard or seen it."

An important part of this excerpt is that this location is the last location for refugees before they might be deported back to their country of origin. Even though Alex has never seen it happen, it is still a possibility. I was wondering how this might affected the residents living there. Does it have any impact? To know more about this, I asked follow-up questions to Alex via WhatsApp in May 2022. He answered the following:

> Alex: "This certainly has an impact. It causes restlessness and despondency. Not wanting to participate in social activities, because "it makes no sense", is something that is often said here. (…) The amount of time people are staying here differs a lot, but I think people are staying here for at least a year."

Even though people might have the feeling that participating in social activities did not make any sense, many children showed up for the workshops, which is meaningful since Alex mentioned that not many people want to partake in activities in general. So, who were the children that participated in the workshops? Firstly, I asked Alex as well as Eline, intern at De Vrolijkheid, online via Zoom, about the different nationalities at the centre.

> Alex: "I know there are people from Syria, Iraq, Iran and Georgia. But I don't know all of it."

> Eline: “People are constantly moving, but at the moment, I think 300 people are here. They come from everywhere. From the Middle-East. I think also Eastern Europe, and a few from Asia, and one or two families from Africa.”

This variety in nationalities was also seen in the workshops. Some of the children of the group did not speak English or Dutch. In this case, Salma could speak Arabic and could communicate with these children whenever necessary. Eline mentioned that three brothers, estimated aged between 10 and 13, who came almost every week to the workshops, were very happy that Arabic was spoken during the workshops, because it made them feel understood. They felt freer to join the workshops because of that. On my question if the children already knew each other outside of the Sounds of Change workshops, she responded with “Almost everyone knows each other by face in this refugee centre. They see each other every day, or at least they see each other walking outside. Almost everyone knows each other, but they only play outside with children their own age.” In the workshops of Sounds of Change in Amersfoort, all ages were welcome and there were no strict age groups. Thus, children from different age groups would be together in one group for joining the workshop.

Refugee centre Delfzijl

The first workshop in Delfzijl took place on the 16th of January 2022. Delfzijl is a small town in the very north of the country, 40 minutes with the train from Groningen. The train trip going here took about four hours, which gave plenty of time to prepare the workshop. Several people had told me that, because this place is so far from everything, not many activities were happening there. Every week before the start of the workshops, there would be lunch. We would eat and talk together with the workshop leaders and the employees from De Vrolijkheid and COA and the residents who were volunteering with this project. This refugee centre looks like a small village, with houses made from brick stones and a playground for children in the

middle. I did an interview with both Afsaneh, program coordinator of De Vrolijkheid, and Züleyxa, resident of this refugee centre, at the same time, in between two workshops. I asked them firstly if they could tell me something about the refugee centre.

> Züleyxa: "This refugee centre is for 700 people. This refugee centre is not to its full capacity yet. But we are working on it. We have been open for about two months now. From November we have been opened. (…) Children have limited daily activities here."

This refugee centre has people from many nationalities, but the participants were mainly from Afghanistan, Iran and Syria. In this refugee centre it was someone from the COA, together with Züleyxa, who would pick up the children every week for the workshops. Afsaneh told me, after some follow-up questions through e-mail in June 2022, that it did not matter who would gather the children, as long as it was a familiar face. Due to COVID-19 measurements, the houses were divided into three different groups, which were assigned each to one of the workshops of the first three weeks, so that not too many people would come together in one space at the same time. The last three workshops would be for all children who wanted to come. The final workshop was a huge event, in which parents were also invited, and in which six people from different countries made food specific from their country.

The workshops in this refugee centre were divided into two groups, one for children until twelve years old, and one for children above twelve years old. Beforehand, it was not discussed to do workshops for the older age group. Luckily, the activities from Sounds of Change are adjustable to many age groups. The first group would have around 20 participants each week, the second group differed from 6 to 12 children each week. Lots of children came together with their siblings. Some children could not speak English or Dutch, so lots of it had to be done through non-verbal communication.

Refugee centre Den Helder

Back in 2016, I did a performance with the Ricciotti Ensemble in this refugee centre, so I already knew what the centre looked like. The building is an oval-shaped building with a lot of grey. It used to be called 'Rijksinrichting voor jeugdigen de Doggershoek', which translates to 'Government facility for young people de Doggershoek', which basically is a juvenile detention centre or youth prison, up until 2014, after which it was used as a refugee centre. I could not find out whether the residents staying at this used to be prison had any effect on them.

On the way back in the train after the first workshop, I spoke to Berend, program coordinator of De Vrolijkheid in this refugee centre. I asked him if he could tell me something about the refugee centre.

> Berend: "It is a refugee centre with lots of nationalities. Currently there are about 500 people living here, of which approximately 70 are children. A lot of children speak Dutch in this refugee centre, but a lot of parents do not."

In this refugee centre, a lot of activities are organized. There are judo classes, art classes, computer lessons, and more. The workshops of Sounds of Change would frequently happen after the judo class. To gather the children for the workshops, we, the workshop leaders, employees of De Vrolijkheid and me, would walk through the building while making music. Children could join and get an instrument and join the parade of music. Then, the parade would go to the workshop space, where the workshop would start.

Unfortunately, it was not possible to get more information about this refugee centre. I had to miss some of the workshops, because of COVID and cancelled trains. Moreover, it was not possible to schedule an interview with the employees of this centre.

We now have a better overview of who the workshop leaders were and how they ended up with Sounds of Change. Some have a similar history as the participants. Some have a professional musical background, whereas others do not. But, all of the workshop leaders joined for a reason of wanting to help people through music. We also now know how the refugee centres looked like. Two of the centres were prisons before they were turned into refugee centres. Unfortunately, I could not examine whether this had any effect on the residents. When looking across the centres, we see that there is significant national diversity, with some nationalities not often mixing. Moreover, due to people being moved on, in some centres people are demotivated to make connections. But what is necessary in the first place to establish connection between people? Moreover, how can the structure of the workshops contribute to that? These questions will be examined in the next chapter.

4.2.1 Construction of the workshops

Now that we know who the workshop leaders of the Sounds of Change Academy and the participants of the workshop leaders were, as well as how the refugee centres where the workshops took place looked like, we move on to the actual musical workshops. How did these workshops look like? What was the structure of the workshops and how did this work out in practice? Salma explained how the method of Sounds of Change has “A clear structure, which contributes to letting the children feel safe. It is also very open and flexible; you can grasp what is necessary at that specific moment”. For Salma a key principle guiding the workshop structure was safety. However, safety was not the only issue. Before turning to safety, then, let’s examine how the workshops were structured.

The Sounds of Change approach uses the power of music to achieve goals such as developing emotional awareness, facilitating a space for improvisation and composition, working together and expressing oneself (www.soundsofchange.org). In order to achieve goals like this, Sounds of Change designed a method of six steps to use during musical workshops. How is this method from Sounds of Change structured and how does it look like in practice? The following excerpts, from the interviews I conducted via Zoom, will show how some of the workshop leaders give a description to the method that Sounds of Change developed and uses.

> Salma: “In my daily work I work according to lots of methods, but what I notice is that a lot of methods which are aimed at children, are thought of from a theoretical basis, while the method of Sounds of Change has originated from a practical basis. They [the trainers from Sounds of Change] were trying it and thought “oh, let’s do it in this way”. (…) That is how I would describe it; it developed from practice, and not the other way around [from theory].”

Salma described how the method arose from a practical point of view. Other workshop leaders described the method as based on connection, as shown in the next excerpts from Zahara and Julia.

> Zahara: "I think it differs because it is really based on connecting. I think that the ground source layer is more like that (…) I think that is the base layer; getting this trust. And then, you know, things can come from that. So, you can develop your musicality, but along with that, something else is being developed. I think it is not just based on music, it is more based on people-to-people connection and really trying to get everybody to have their role in the group."

> Julia: "Sounds of Change is much more about other things - it is not at all about learning music or making music, it is about establishing this connection. (…) I don't have other methods to compare this method with."

Connection is key in these excerpts. Research by Benson has shown how most people who listen to music experience this as a "kind of communication between themselves and other human beings" (2010:177). Giving workshops should go together with gaining trust from the participants and, therefore, creating connection and collaboration. It is all about the connection between the two workshop leaders, between the workshop leaders and the children, and between the children themselves. Connection seems to be the goal, which is accomplished through the use of music and collaborating with each other. It is important to note how music is used during the workshops, and not as something to work towards to, as Hans Ultralord explains.

> Hans Ultralord: "You are giving workshops *through* music. I think the short description would be; through the use of very simple tools, creating beautiful things which can go from super simple to very complex and everything in between. (…) I do not know how this method would distinguish

> itself from others, but for me this method is very obtainable. It is their goal to create a safe space and they have clearly put that down. And I think it is very magical to be able to shape it like that through the different steps."

"You are giving workshops *through* music" is a quote that stands out. This is an essential part in the description of the method. During my research, people have told me several times how Sounds of Change uses music as a *tool* in their workshops, and not as an *outcome*. The outcome of the workshops is not to work towards a final musical recital, but it is to achieve a certain freedom of expression of who you are and collaboration and connection between people, which will be discussed in the next chapter. Mariska compared the way the workshops are shaped to music therapy, the field where she works in.

> Mariska: "What Sounds of Change does is, in my opinion, the ultimate music therapy, because you attune very much to the participants, but at the same time it contains a clear structure. (…) It is not just offering certain activities. It has a clear purpose. And at the same time, it has the power that every participant has its own unique contribution. (…) It is really about the collaboration."

I wanted to know more about the method being "the ultimate music therapy". In June 2022, I asked Mariska some follow-up questions via Signal about this. She explained to me how during her study she was already interested in the concept of 'community music therapy'.

> Mariska: "Community music therapy is the conscious use of musical interventions for the benefit of the community. It is music therapy, but with the focus on the broader cultural social context. That was visible in pretty much everything from Sounds of Change. The way it was used emphasized the social aspect; listening to each other, giving and taking space, making yourself heard, interaction, playfulness, although there were also functional aspects; such as improving concentration.

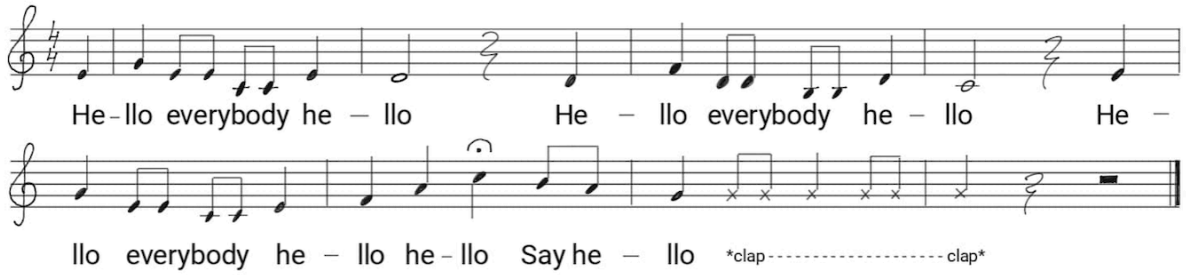
> Everything was aimed at making and strengthening connections. That is what community music therapy is all about."

Community music therapy seems very much based on this overarching goal of creating connection between people. To accomplish concepts like connection and collaboration, some strategies are necessary. Because of that, Sounds of Change works according to a method, which the workshop leaders can follow and hold onto while they are giving the workshops. The method consists of six steps. The first step of the method is the check in, as Salma and Zahara explained.

> Salma: "We start with a check in. This is the moment of seeing each other. Sometimes it is about practicing names or hearing each other's names. Sometimes, depending on how well you know the group, you can ask how the children are. It is about everyone getting the feeling of being seen and heard and I think this is a sacred moment. It is very important, because it sets the tone for the rest of the workshop. If you listen carefully to each other at that moment and learn to respect each other's opinions and what is on someone's mind at that moment, then you set a good foundation for the rest of the workshop."

> Zahara: "So the check in (…) is really all about grounding yourself in the group. Getting to know everybody. Everybody says how they are doing, maybe. You are already starting with something that is contacting the individual, but allowing the group to know how you feel."

The main point from a check-in is for each person to be seen by the group. To set this up, the workshops would start with a welcome song. Different welcome songs were used, but the most frequent one was the following:



This song was sung by the workshop leaders in Almelo, Amersfoort and Delfzijl, while the children would enter the workshop space. The music would already start before the children entered. The workshop leaders would usually accompany the song with a ukulele or guitar and some sort of percussion instrument. Without saying anything, the children would join in with the singing and clapping. Starting each workshop with this same song, provided a sense of structure for the children. After some time, the workshop leaders would initiate a circle where everyone would sit on the ground. The welcome song would continue, but the *everybody* in the song would be replaced by the children's names. Each child got to say their name and everybody would sing the song with that name in it. This would go on until all children had said their names. At other times, diverse languages were integrated, by replacing the *hello* of the song by 'hello' in the native language of the child. In this way, it was possible for children who did not speak the same language to bond through music (Bithell, 2014:288). Through incorporating individual names and adding their own language, connection and collaboration was encouraged. When I attended the workshops, I could see children smiling when it was their turn to say something.

While allowing for linguistic diversity might have assisted with bridging cultural diversity, sometimes the very act of singing might have provoked anxiety due to cultural differences. This might be because of the different understandings of musical aspects around the world (Becker, 2004:73). On one occasion during a workshop, an enthusiastic child, around nine years old, became suddenly quite quiet when it was his time to say his name out loud

during the welcome song. He did not want to say his name or for it to be sung by the other children during the song. After the song he, and almost all other children, soon left the workshop, because apparently it was dinner time. Although it was not possible to find out why he did not want his name to be used in the song, Lucas told me that, from his experience in working in refugee centres in the Middle East, music can be *haram* [forbidden] in some cultures. It might be this, in combination with the individual focus, which made the boy feel uncomfortable or unsafe at that moment in the workshop which made him want to leave the workshop.

After the check in, it is time for step two. Salma explained during her interview what the second step entails.

> Salma: "After the check in, it is time for a warming up. This is about warming up your body, moving happily on the music, which can be done through different ways. Which you have observed during our workshops of course."

Different ways were used for this second step in the workshop. The freeze game [a game in which the workshop leaders play music while the children dance; when the music stops, the children have to stand still completely] was an all-time favourite. Children could come up with ideas on how to move to the music – as a certain animal or with a certain movement (e.g., walking backwards, sideways or skipping). It was a way of showing that all ideas were welcome and nothing was too crazy.

After the warming up comes skills, which Salma talked about during her interview.

> Salma: "Then the next step is practicing skills. That can be a lot of things. It can be a song, it can be learning a rhythm, it can be using certain musical instruments."

An example for this step was the introduction of *boomwhackers* [colourful plastic tubes with different lengths, each one going together with a certain pitch in the C major scale, which make sound if you hit it against something]. These instruments were very easy to use. Practicing a skill could already be just learning how to use this instrument. Another exercise would be *passing the clap*, an exercise which can start very easily and can, but not necessarily has to, develop to something more advanced. This exercise requires a circle in which children clap their hands once and pass the clap onto the child next to them, making it go around to everyone in the circle. The challenge is to keep the rhythm even. Here again, collaboration between participants becomes visible; the exercise would not work if the participants would not work together. It corresponds with the argument of Renshaw, in which he argues how collaboration in musical processes are encouraged, as it gives space to the creation of new ideas by the participants (2011:7, 18, 19). The exercise could expand to *passing the sound*, through the use of boomwhackers, or any instrument, or vary in dynamics or rhythms, in which the ideas of the participants were more than welcome.

After the third step of learning skills, it is time for creation. Salma and Julia both elaborated on that during their interviews.

> Salma: "After the step of skills comes creation. This can be very simple. For example, giving turns to the children in letting them create their own rhythm. This already is creation. But it can also be writing a song together. It can be different each time."

> Julia: "It can start, for example, with *call and response* or *mirroring* [someone creates something, a movement or a rhythm, the others repeat] and going around the circle, letting each child take the lead."

Creativity, more thoroughly discussed in Chapter 3 of the results section, is something that the children were invited to in this step of the method. Creativity prioritizes the imagination of the participants and can give energy as well as contributing to a sense of belonging (Renshaw, 2011:17). Again, an important aspect of this step is making the children feel like everything they do is good, and nothing is wrong. Through methods like call and response and mirroring, when a group is repeating the sound or movement you made, however small or big, children get to experiment with their ideas. The workshop leaders always start with giving examples, in order for the children to get an idea of things they can think about.

Creation is followed by step five; reflection, which Salma, Hans Ultralord and Julia talked about during their interviews.

> Salma: "After creation comes reflection. Reflection can be about presenting what you have learned to the others."

> Hans Ultralord: "We always tried a bit of reflection, just by asking "Did you like it [this workshop]?" and the answer could be thumbs up, middle or down."

> Julia: "We did not always do this, but showing each other what you have made during a workshop, or just reflecting how the workshop was [are examples of this]. We did not always do this, because some of the children were very small. But just the question "What did you think of today?" or "What did you like most?" [is a way of reflection]."

These excerpts show the different possible ways of incorporating reflection into the workshop. By asking a question such as "What did you like most?", children were appointed to think for themselves, which allowed them to have their own opinions and give feedback to the workshop leaders. They did not have to follow the opinion of their friend or sibling. Again, this would

only work if the child felt safe and free to answer what they thought. Another thing that stands out is that the reflection part is not always relying on language skills, as explained by Hans Ultralord. Whenever there was no common language, an easy thumbs up or down was initiated, which I thought was understood by the children.

The last step of the method is the check-out. Salma and Hans Ultralord elaborated on this.

> Salma: "Then there is the check out. That can be about "How was today?" or something like that. Again, this is an important moment, to close the workshop together and telling the children that the workshop is finished, and that they are welcome to come next time."

> Hans Ultralord: "For closing the workshop, we were taught to end it together as a group. For example, we would all put our hands together [in the middle of the circle] and shout something together."

Telling the children that they can come next time and what they can expect in the next workshop is a way of gaining trust from the children. Salma discussed how keeping promises invites for a feeling of mutual trust between the workshop leaders and the participants. Moreover, ending a workshop together invites for the sense of being part of a group, which can stimulate the sense of communal belonging. But more on communal belonging in Chapter 3 of the results section.

The abovementioned excerpts show how the method of Sounds of Change is in one way a clear structured method, but at the same time how it can deviate from this structure and still work out in a proper way, what Salma already mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. It is comparable to jazz; a musical genre in which collaboration and creativity among musicians and a sense of structure of the music open up to improvisations (Anderson, 2018). The

outcomes of the workshop were also dependent on the moment itself and the participants that were present. Something could work one week, and not at all the week after. This asked for a huge sense of flexibility among the workshop leaders. Fortunately, the structure for the workshops made it possible to diverge into other activities or change the order of them. Hans Ultralord and Celtic Knight discussed this during their interviews.

> Hans Ultralord: "I learned a lot from it, also the fast switching. You make a plan, and then the whole plan suddenly cannot be used, and you have to do something completely different."

> Celtic Knight: "Before we start the workshop, we have a kind of plan. But [you have to think about] what if they [the children] don't understand this, what do they think, what do we have to do. Then, we do this and this."

Both excerpts show how the workshop leaders have to be flexible in order to lead the workshop. Constant reflection on how the group reacts to you is necessary. Whereas Renshaw discusses how community music strives for creative imagination among participants (2011:17), the creative imagination seems also necessary in a way of creative flexibility for the workshop leaders; to be able to have an overview and to switch to other ideas whenever the participants require this.

4.2.2 The creation of a safe space

When talking about the structure of the method, workshop leaders often mentioned safe space as well. How can the structure of the workshops contribute to a feeling of safety for participants? Below is a description of one girl in refugee centre Amersfoort, which shows the development of this girl related to a feeling of safety.

January 20th 2022 – Refugee centre Amersfoort

Today is the second workshop in this refugee centre. A girl, a bit older than the others, comes in for the first time with her eyes fixed on the ground. Her name is Kianna. She does not dare to look into other people's eyes, nor does she dare to move to the music.

February 3rd 2022 – Refugee centre Amersfoort

Kianna and one other girl are already present for the workshop. We are waiting for the other children to join. While we wait and talk, it becomes clear that Kianna loves to sing. She dares to sing a song, accompanied by Eline on guitar, for all of us. During the freeze game she dares to move a bit. With the mirroring exercise, she dares to do some call and response. During the check out, she points out that she liked the exercise with the boomwhackers the most.

February 10th 2022 – Refugee centre Amersfoort

Today it is the last day for Kianna in the refugee centre, after many years, since a house was found for her and her family. She is not joining the workshop, but comes afterwards for her last music lesson. She usually sings karaoke in these lessons. Today she wants to sing karaoke for us [Julia, Salma, Alex, Eline and me]. *There is a beamer which shows the text and there is a microphone, and she sings three songs in total, while all of us listen to her.*

These excerpts from my fieldnotes are an example of the development of one girl in a refugee centre during three workshops. In the beginning, she did not dare to look into someone's eyes, say something out loud or move to the music, while a couple of weeks later she dared to sing songs for a group of people and looked them in the eyes. I argue that this may be a result of her feeling safe surrounded by the people she now knows. As discussed before, a safe space is necessary and important to establish in order for participants to be able to dare to express themselves and their thoughts and ideas. It is about daring to be vulnerable in a group without being judged by other participants. Participants need to feel like they can take risks and make

mistakes (Renshaw, 2011:23, 70), because there is a presence of shared trust within the group (Renshaw, 2011:19), which can contribute to gaining confidence of people (Higgins, 2012:98). The example of Kianna shows how she gained enough confidence within three weeks to be able to sing in public.

Another example is from another child in refugee centre Amersfoort; Laura. After the six weeks workshops, I spoke to Eline, intern at De Vrolijkheid, who described Laura as a very quiet girl, before the Sounds of Change workshops had started off. However, Laura was the very first girl who joined the workshops rather enthusiastically. Right after the first workshop she kept coming back by herself asking if the workshop leaders could do more musical activities with her. She would not give ground, even though the extra activities were just with her, surrounded by adults only. During the second workshop, where lots of children were present for the first time, she recognized the song that was taught to her at the first workshop. She dared to demonstrate the song in front of the whole group of 15 children. The fact that she was described as usually a shy girl, while being able to reveal herself in such a short period of time during the workshops, says something about how quickly she felt safe to be able to express herself.

Thus, the achievement of the creation of a safe space during a musical workshop seems almost a requirement for the workshop leaders to establish. Zahara underlines that as well in her interview by saying "Okay, what does this group require in a safe space to be able to express. (…) I think that is the base layer, just like getting this trust.". The creative music processes used in their workshops are all focused on improvising and composing music in a safe space. This space is a space in which participants can "share their experiences, power and hope, securely, which brings another extra layer to the musical result" (https://www.soundsofchange.org/mission). But the concept of 'safe space' can mean different things to different people. We cannot assume that we know in advance what a safe space is,

although Renshaw frequently mentions some indicators; the presence of shared trust (2011:19), collaboration (2011:7, 18, 19) and a space free of judgment (2011:22). Since 'safe space' can be quite broad, it is important to understand how the workshop leaders describe a safe space. What does a safe space look like according to them? The following excerpts show how Julia, Mariska and Salma described a safe space during their interviews.

> Julia: "The safe space is of course very much part of the method of Sounds of Change, but weirdly enough, it is not something I actively have been trying to create. In the preparations of the musical workshops as well, we have not been actively thinking about this. (…) I experienced it as something that, together with the contact between me and Salma was something that went without saying and came naturally, just as making contact with the children came naturally as well. (…) I did try my best to remember all the names. And also, maybe by repeating exercises, so that the children knew kind of what would come."

> Mariska: "For me a safe space is a space in which you can say 'yes' and 'no', and in which both are completely fine. Actually, it is a space where you can be completely yourself."

> Salma: "We did the freeze game and there was this girl who started laughing very loudly. It made me think how to make sure it won't be disruptive, but stays enjoyable, and how to give her a little stage for this moment. That is when I said "When the music stops, we all start laughing very loudly". She was completely glowing [for following her idea], like "Wow, she has seen me". So, yes, these small things are important. Seeing children. Quite difficult to explain."

Several aspects of this excerpt are of importance. First, Sounds of Change gives great value to the creation of a safe space by incorporating it in their method. They see it as a condition in order for participants to accomplish creation and innovative ideas. Second, safe space is not something that can be achieved through a simple manual. Sometimes it is also more about the

feeling of safety than which tools are used to actually create it. At the same time, it is exactly this what makes it difficult to give words to how to create a safe space. While observing the workshops, or giving them myself, I have noticed that creating a safe space goes together with gaining trust and making the children feel comfortable and at ease. That is how Salma managed to create a balance between this one girl who she gave attention at that moment and the rest of the group.

Although the concept of a safe space can be a bit vague, there are, according to the workshop leaders, some steps that can be taken that contribute to creating a safe space. During the last training weekend in December, Salma and Julia were talking about ideas on how to achieve a safe space through putting up art on walls. Children could draw what they wanted during the check in and their drawing would be taped onto the wall, which they actually put into practice during one of their workshops. Putting posters to create a safe space, in order for people to feel comfortable, has also been done in other settings, for example, in Blais-McPherson and Abrams' study (2019) on inclusivity and diversity in sexual health care services. Other practical steps that were taken in order to create a safe space are shown in the following excerpts from the interviews with Hans Ultralord and Zahara.

> Hans Ultralord: "I have given six workshops now, and I still find it quite difficult to establish. Especially in a refugee centre like Den Helder, where everyone is constantly walking in and out of the workshop space. But there are, I think, some rules for creating a safe space. Making a circle is just sacred. As long as everyone stays in the circle, it is possible to create beautiful things within this circle. (…) The more the children are going along with being in the space and being in the now, the more a safe space becomes important. Outside of this circle is where their traumas or problems are. But within the circle it is just about the now and the musical game you are playing at that specific moment. I think one of the key components is definitely this circle."

> Zahara: “Already the environment can help. (…) You can create this nice atmosphere in the room already. You can put pictures up on the wall or it depends on what room you are in already. But usually, in the Sounds of Change workshops, they put a flower or something monumental in the middle just to show like “Okay, here is the middle of the circle and we have created this nice space and you can look at this and we welcome you here". I think already that makes people feel included that they are invited in to the room. And also, the aspect of having a circle is already something that just naturally creates this nice group dynamic as well.”

Both of these excerpts show the importance of using a circle during the workshops. In fact, almost all the activities during the workshops happened in a circle. Being in a circle automatically brings a group together. By making a circle, you create a space which is delineated within the wider space. Is it possible to create a circle of safe space within a refugee centre where people might experience distress because they do not know whether they might be deported to their country of origin, like in refugee centre Amersfoort? For some children it took a bit longer to join the circle – they would, in the first place, wait outside of it to see what the musical exercise would be. After a while, they would join the circle. Sometimes it would encourage younger children to join the circle if their older sibling would join as well.

Creating a safe space can also be looked at from a personal point of view, which is shown by the following excerpts of the interview with Celtic Knight and Salma.

> Celtic Knight: “Actually inside me I have to create this optimistic or positive energy. And I try to let it out of me. In my movements. And if I talk to a child, to not just stand there, but be a bit closer, play a bit of music, say something in Arabic, or to speak sometimes [some words] in Dutch. In a pure way. In this case, they [the children] can understand me and they can understand us [the workshop leaders].”

> Salma: “I think just being there is very important, really being there with your attention. Listening. Letting the children go if they want to leave. (…) There are so many things that you do, but just very simple, subtle things. If you make eye contact, if you look angry or not. If something happens that was not according to plan, how you address the children. Is it in a loving way or very strict? Your whole body is involved, your body language, your voice, your eye contact, the space.”

Celtic Knight and Salma talk about how the workshop leader conducts the workshop and what subtle things can be done to ensure safety. This can have a language aspect, as Celtic Knight mentions, or the body language of the workshop leader, as Salma talks about.

Thus, how do the components of the method of Sounds of Change and need to ensure safety work together? The excerpts visible in this chapter showed that a safe space can be created through many different approaches. Establishing a safe space is thoroughly embedded in the method of Sounds of Change, because it is considered as a sacred condition to construct during workshops. It appeared that a safe space is created through both conscious and subconscious ways. There is no specific way in which this creation has to be done and it is also dependent on many factors in the moment itself, from a personal feeling of the workshop leaders to consciously creating a circle to get all participants involved. It is mostly about noticing the needs of the participants at that specific moment. The creation of a safe space is foremost a result of the concurrence of circumstances. Different games were used to promote a safe space, in which gaining trust from the participants and connecting with them were of utmost importance. A safe space motivates children to express their ideas and thoughts during the workshop. In short, a safe space is necessary in order for other aspects to be established. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: “Music is for the whole world, not just for a specific country”

> Kevyn: “It does not matter if they [the children] know each other or they don’t know each other. But in this workshop, they can meet each other. They can be good friends. (…) I hope that COVID finishes soon. Then we can have a bigger group and more time.”

This is an excerpt from an interview I did on the 20th of February 2022, during a workshop in refugee centre Delfzijl, with Kevyn, a resident of this refugee centre, while his younger sister was joining the workshop. The excerpt is an answer on the question “Do the children know each other?”. I asked this question, because in the refugee centre there are many children, all with different backgrounds and stories. I was interested in the extent to which the children already knew each other, or did not, and how a new sense of being part of a group can be constructed amongst these children during the workshops.

Listening to and performing music can be seen as a way of creating a community and is often looked at as a kind of communication between yourself and others (Benson, 2010:177). Communicating through music is possible when making music in groups, with the result of unifying a group (Bithell, 2014:24; Veblen, 2007:2). I will discuss how the interpersonal communication looked like during the workshops. What happened if the workshop leaders did not speak the same language as the children? Hereafter, I will discuss how creativity among the children was established. Moreover, was a sense of communal belonging established during the workshops? If yes, how was it created? I will conclude this chapter with personal notes on what the workshop leaders took out of the Academy into their daily lives and what they hope for the children to take from it. These questions will be looked at in the first part of this chapter. This chapter will show what community music can possibly establish during workshops in the refugee centres and how this can be linked to multiculturalism and individualism within Dutch society.

4.3.1 Non-verbal interpersonal communication

Stokes has argued how community music can sometimes do more than spoken language only (2004:67). According to Bithell, music can even serve as an overarching function to a sense of communal belonging, even with people who do not speak the same language, but who are bonded through music (2014:288). In the workshops I attended, it was not always possible for the workshop leaders and the participants to speak the same language or to understand each other through verbal language only. That is why I asked how the workshop leaders communicated with children when they did not speak the same language.

> Mariska: "Yes, non-verbally. Sometimes also in English, because there were not many children who could speak Dutch. Sometimes there were some older children who translated for the younger ones, but a lot of times also not and then they would just participate anyway. Sometimes we left out some exercises on purpose, because you really have to explain things [verbally] in them. So, when that verbal aspect was necessary, we just didn't do that. I think non-verbally [works] a lot with body language. I think we are used to communicating through verbal language a lot, because it is an easy way of communicating, but there are many things you can do through body language, by showing with your body, or because music speaks for itself, that words are not necessary. So, you can do a lot with children, which makes it even more fun, because you do not have to explain many things [just show them], and you are very actively involved with the children."

This fragment shows deliberate adjustment to the linguistic situation; activities that needed verbal communication were left out, whenever this communication was not possible. Julia noticed as well how it was not necessary to speak a common language.

> Julia: "That is very nice of the Sounds of Change method, that we have learned to work non-verbally. So, I have noticed several times that it is not necessary at all to speak a common language. We could have worked a lot more non-verbally, (…) but the moments when I could not make myself

> understood to some children, I did not experience that as a problem at all. (…) You don't need a lot of words to be able to do something with each other, (…) that you just don't say anything, that you don't talk a lot, so that you do a lot in a theatrical way. I like using my body to make something clear. I would like to learn more about that. I think there is still a lot to learn there. [However], sometimes with the check-in, if you are asking questions there, you are using language obviously. (…) With a check-in it is nice to actually hear the child literally."

Just like Julia, Zahara and Hans Ultralord also made use of communicating through their body. Not speaking the same language was not experienced as a problem, because it appeared to be possible to communicate through body language, while children also imitate others quickly and by that understand the activity.

> Zahara: "I think in the group, there were usually children who would speak Dutch or English, so in that case, you could ask somebody else to translate. But, a lot of it is body language. And even if you say like, thumbs up or middle or down, you can offer something. I think presence is a lot already. Or eye contact. Children also know when somebody is really there for them. It could be hand contact. Things like that. (…) [You] bring them all together through music, so that they don't have to speak the same language."

> Hans Ultralord: "Sometimes the children would act as translators. And in other cases, it is really just making it clear with hands and feet, or we point to the clock and then from 12 to 6, instead of saying "Hey, we have got half an hour". And also, I think it's kind of *monkey see monkey do*. So, if those children see the other children doing something, they understand quickly what to do. And also looking in the eyes a lot and let them participate. And mirroring."

As these excerpt show, a lot of the communication happened non-verbally, because it was not always possible to speak the same language. Marsh (2016:61) has shown how musical activities

can stimulate non-verbal communication where verbal communication is limited. Using the body is a way of communicating. Showing things to children, which they repeat in their turn, also called 'mirroring', is a way to communicate non-verbally. I could observe how quickly children learnt to understand the concept of 'mirroring', without it being explained through verbal words. Non-verbal communication also allows the workshops to be open for all children and big groups, as explained by Eline during her online interview.

> Eline: "It is very easy to translate the workshops to a very large group of children. By applying non-verbal communication in workshops and also creating something out of nothing. So, actually, if we did not have the suitcase full of instruments, for example, valuable musical activities could still be happening here, which are very accessible for everyone."

Another way of interpersonal communication was explained through seeing music as the language. Gertie saw it as: "I think they [the children] can enjoy it [the workshops] a lot and the idea of communicating through music.". Celtic Knight explained it as follows:

> Celtic Knight: "Because the workshop, it is not about philosophy or history or something geographical, it is about music. And music is like an international language. So, maybe it is hard for me to speak German, for example. But because I listen to German music, I can kind of play something rhythmic with them, even if I don't speak the language exactly. Actually, it helps us. Because we are not in like a Dutch course, or German course, or Arabic course [but in a musical one]. Sometimes I have to speak actually, when I feel that they really don't understand. (…) In this case I have to explain to let them understand. Otherwise, it's going to be very embarrassing. For them and for us. Maybe they were like "Okay, we can't understand this. This is not a comfort zone for us. You know; I have to leave."

A musical workshop of Sounds of Change contains a diversity of people. With the workshops, Sounds of Change seeks to include everyone and therefore is in line with the description Scholten gives to integration of immigrants; the "need for emancipation of groups of varying cultural backgrounds" (2012:99). Although national Dutch policies seem to move more towards an assimilation policy, local policy practices, like Sounds of Change, seem to have more pragmatic ways to allow for cultural differences (Uitermark, Rossi & Van Houtum, 2005). Moreover, I consider the common language that was spoken here to be the language of music. Music is seen as universal behaviour, and musical practices are happening all over the world (Bannan, 2018:2). Even though people have different meanings to different aspects of music all over the world and that is why, according to Bithell, music should not be seen as a universal language, but rather a common feature of human society (2014:50), some sort of commonality between music and emotions among people over the world has been suggested (Becker, 2004:73). This commonality becomes visible in the next excerpt, from a very short interview I conducted in refugee centre Delfzijl, with a mother of one of the participants, where she describes how the workshops are possible "to do without words".

> Mother of participating girl: "These places are important places, there are a lot of feelings out there. They can connect with others in the workshops. They can meet other cultures. There are not a lot of Spanish speaking people here. Through these workshops it is possible to interact with other cultures. Because it is also possible to do it without words. Afterwards she is feeling happy and calm."

Here, as well, you can see how parents saw their children connect with others, even though they did not speak the same language. Bonding through music becomes possible when there is no common language (Bithell, 2014:288). Now that we know through which ways a sense of communal belonging can be constructed, even without speaking the same verbal language, it is time to move on to what these indicators can do to the sense of creativity among the children.

4.3.2 Creativity

A safe space and a sense of communal belonging can create opportunities for children to be creative. 'Being creative' in the workshops can vary among many things. Creating a (very easy) certain rhythm, for example, is already creativity. Step four of the method of Sounds of Change is about creation. The vignette below illustrates the way in which creativity was encouraged, during a workshop in Amersfoort.

> *During the fourth workshop in Amersfoort, on the 10th of February, the workshop leaders Julia and Salma organized a workshop of making instruments together. They started the workshop how they would do normally; going around the circle in which everyone got to say their name in the welcome song. After that, Salma gave everyone little fragrance sachets, which everyone smelled and got to say what they thought it smelled like. It appeared to be the smell of lemon, which, according to Salma, is a smell that gives you energy and has a positive impact on your mood. This energy and positivity were what was needed for this workshop. After a quick warm-up, it was time for the creative part of the workshop. Salma asked a question "What makes a sound in this space, but is not a musical instrument?", which at first confused the children a little, because "Sounds are only made by instruments, right?". Until one boy came across a sound through softly beating the table leg. Then, all children were starting to find sounds everywhere; the doors, the tables, everywhere. Actually, "Anything can be an instrument" is what they discovered. After this, all children went outside with a big bucket to gather materials from outside which they could use for making their own instruments. After ten minutes all children came back. Salma and Julia gathered materials for this workshop; buckets, out-of-date rice, nuts and couscous and lots of tape, to provide to the children to help in their process of making instruments from materials. Lots of instruments were made; drum sets from buckets with little twigs as drum sticks, shakers with rice, whistles out of tubes, and much more.*

This fourth workshop in Amersfoort was arranged for making instruments. I asked Salma and Julia what they remembered mostly from this workshop.

> Salma: “The fact that we taught them to use material that is completely free, that they can also drum on a bucket, that they could play trumpet through a straw, just making more possible.”

> Julia: “With the three brothers, how they independently worked with a lot of focus on making their instruments. That is very nice to see. That they totally got what the activity was about. That they completely set free their creativity, by making string instruments, for example.”

Observing and participating in this workshop was for me seeing the ultimate expression of creativity among children. As Bithell already mentioned, community music can enable individual creativity (2014:90), which became visible during this workshop. The children seemed very enthusiastic about making instruments. Some children came up with ideas which I would have never thought of. At the end of the workshop, everybody sat down in a circle and showed each other one by one all the instruments they made. All of their self-made instruments would be used during the musical activities of the two remaining workshops. When asking follow-up questions to Salma in June 2022, she explained to me how in Arabic cultures children are often not seen as full-fledged. It is therefore part of the culture to not have much materialistic stuff for them, e.g., crayons, pencils, or instruments. Moreover, when fled from a country, these things are considered a luxury. The more valuable it seemed to show how to make instruments from any material.

Renshaw argues how collaboration in a group is encouraged, because it opens up to creative and innovative ideas (2011:7, 18, 19). Creativity is seen as a shared process (Renshaw, 2011:17), which relates to the need for communal belonging. At the same time, there is space for individual imagination (Renshaw, 2011:17). Through which other ways were children challenged to be creative?

> Julia: “That there is always a creative part in it, that they make something themselves. For example, starting with call-and-response and then moving towards creating something, by going around the circle, or that a child gets to lead an activity, or ideas of the children that we implement in the workshop right away. That they [the children] really contribute. (…) In the workshop there is a focus on children creating something themselves. That is a really important part of the whole method. So, that you really encourage them to take the lead or bring something into the group themselves. (…) We had one session in which we literally asked the children “What do you want to do today?”. Then, we took over the ideas of the children. So, by taking them seriously we invite them indirectly to come up with their ideas, or that we stimulate them to bring something to the group.”

Really involving the children in the workshops, in which they can also shape the workshops seemed to help in order for the children to show creativity. Whenever they felt the freedom to experiment, they could come up with their ideas and tell them to the group. This is also an indicator of community music, according to Veblen; to create and improvise in all genres and diversities of music (2007:2). Creativity among children also goes together with them feelings safe. When they dare to create their own ideas, children feel seen by the whole group, as shown in the following excerpt.

> Zahara: “There is the creative process and so you can do like a little composition together. (…) With a creative exercise I think it’s really important that you give a child freedom to do their thing, like not to direct in a way that is imposing but also, really be there and listen and allow for something new to come up. I think within an exercise that allows for creativity, that is your job anyway as a facilitator; to have that space in yourself and allow them [the children] to express. I think it really depends on the game and the creative exercise and the facilitator. Because if you are too directive, then there is no chance somebody is going to be able to create. (…) And it’s nice because, in the game where you pass the rhythm, you can create your own rhythm. And it’s nice when they see their peers doing it as well. And then some people are way too shy to create their own rhythm. But

> eventually throughout the weeks you can see it happening. And I think it's also a nice reinforcement; when you do your own creation, you have the whole group copying. So, you feel validated like "Oh my, I did this, and the whole group has heard and they're responding". So, it's also the group; it's not just the facilitator listening. Everybody's listening."

Zahara talks about the interplay of structure and freedom. According to her, a child needs "freedom to do their thing", which can provide for the child to find oneself in the group. However, this individual independence in considered a "Western" treat (Harkness et al., 2000:23), while all participants are from non-Western countries. How is this taken into account during the workshops? For Sounds of Change, recognizing the potential of individuals is an important value. According to them, each person can contribute in their own way. In Dutch society, individual expression (De Bony, 2005:8) and respect for this expression by the group is existent (De Bony, 2005:9). In order for children to feel comfortable for showing their idea, it is important that they see enough examples, which Mariska and Salma talked about.

> Mariska: "Some children are a little hesitant at the beginning. When you [the workshop leader] show an idea you have, and after, when they get the opportunity to bring in their own ideas, then they already have this example of you. (…) With things like call-and-response and mirroring, that you go around the whole circle of children, and that everyone gets to suggest their own idea."

> Salma: "You can give turns to the children, that each one of them plays a short rhythm. That is already a creation. (…) Giving a lot of examples. First all the workshop leaders and other present grown-ups take turns and only after that you give turns to the children. They already have seen some examples and can think "Oh, it can also be something very stupid". Just clapping or stamping twice is already good."

By first letting all grown-ups show their ideas, you create some examples for the children. All these excerpts show how the workshop leaders create a safe space and when this is created, children feel free to show their ideas and creativity. This was also observed by Eline, which she described as “To be able to create something out of nothing”, as well as by Gertie, which she described as follows:

> Gertie: “I think they can enjoy the fact of (…) thinking of your own musical games and that you can be a part of that and you are mentioned personally. (…) The first time is of course a little bit tensive. Then slowly they get this feeling of safety and there are of course the recurring elements of the workshop. Then they can really participate, by, for example, starting a certain song. You could see them grow. They slowly became more and more owner of the workshops. (…) That they quickly understand things, and make it their own. So today, for example, when they joined in for the song and started playing on an instrument, while that wasn’t asked by the workshop leaders, but they just understood right away. (…) That was a bit difficult at the beginning, but those things are going better now. And their own input. I think they were more certain about that today than they were in the beginning. Because it's always like “Just do anything”, and in the beginning you see them questioning “What should I do?”, but today you really saw “Okay, everything is fine”.”

Again, it shows how the creation of a safe space can be evolved into the creativity of the children. “I think they were more certain” shows how children got confidence when the weeks of workshops were passing. They were sure about their own input, because the workshop leaders made clear that every idea the children had was fine, which gave a feeling of safety.

4.3.3 Communal belonging

The ‘community’ is seen as very important in the approach of Sounds of Change. A sense of communal belonging cannot be achieved without the presence of connection between everyone involved in the workshops. As already briefly mentioned in Chapter two, connection was

frequently something that was strived for by the workshop leaders during the workshops. “Finding the resilience and the connection, and enlarge the interaction between people”, is how Mariska explained the connection in the workshops during our Zoom interview. “It is about the collaboration between me and the people in front of me.” Julia, Zahara and Salma explained it as the following during their online interviews:

> Julia: “We did activities with a bit more commitment to each other. That you are really part of something bigger, namely, a big group of children. So, the music is used to touch something bigger, that is to say, the connection with each other and that connection within yourself and that you are invited to give expression to yourself. (…) And even more because these children are in a more tough situation than the average child.”

> Zahara: “It’s really based on connection. (…) I think it’s not just based on music, it’s more based on people-to-people connection and really trying to get everybody to have their role in the group.”

> Salma: “We already told each other; our goal is not for the activity to succeed. Our goal is that the children have a good time, that a great atmosphere is established and that there is lots of connection between the children. And I think we have succeeded in that; the children kept coming back each week.”

As you can see in these excerpts, connection between children had an important part in the workshops. Gertie also mentioned how “They [the children] are connected through the songs that they know together.” Although Marsh argued how music and musical play among refugee children can establish a way of connecting with others (2017:70), her research was conducted among populations centred around common institutions, such as primary schools and family homes. How is a connection established among refugee children in refugee centres who do not necessarily know each other, but are participating together in a workshop?

Creating a sense of communal belonging was sometimes done through obvious ways. For example, sitting in a circle was of huge importance. Already sitting in a circle creates a community in some way, which is explained by Julia in the following excerpt:

> Julia: "It is funny to see how little you have to do to make children interact with each other. It is not at all about giving a big introduction about yourself or shake hands with each other, you just sit in a group and then you are together. It just goes naturally for these children, like "Okay we are sitting in a circle, so now we are going to do something together". So, actually sitting in a group or a circle is almost sufficient already. And then indeed by going around the circle asking everyone's name, all singing the same song, I think that is already enough."

Sitting in a circle is a way of including everyone. However, in Almelo there were two children who did not want to sit on the ground. Later, it appeared that their mothers did not want them to, as the ground is "dirty and can make you sick". Seeing how musical aspects are interpreted differently over the world (Becker, 2004:73), so can cultural interpretations. I do not know whether this was for cultural or personal reasons, but it is something to keep in mind when working with children with different backgrounds.

Apart from sitting in a circle, more things can be done in order to create the possibility of a sense of communal belonging. In the following excerpts, you can see what Mariska and Julia did in their workshops, in order to try to create this sense.

> Mariska: "What also helps is to get to know the children and think in that way. What do they like? What appeals to them? Is it more the physical games, or the games with rhythm? Is it making music together, or singing together? You know, getting to know them and apply that (…). Keeping the variety [of the activities] in the workshop. That also keeps the group together more."

> Julia: "That ideas of the group are brought into the group, that we [the workshop leaders] take over. (…) Showing to each other what you have made with each other. (…) I think that we had some recognizable elements, which gave some recognition to the children like "Oh yes, this is what we do on these days"."

Levelling with the children and asking for their ideas are ways of equalizing the group. This is important in community music, as it is a way of dissolving the dichotomy of musicians and audience (Higgins, 2012:3), or in this case, workshop leaders and participants. It shows how collaboration within a group, can open up for new ideas (Renshaw, 2011:7, 18, 19). Sometimes, workshop leaders tried to connect the children through activities such as *pass the clap*, explained in Chapter two. Collaboration and involvement of the whole group was necessary in order for this activity to work. This game could be extended into passing the clap *to* someone, who was not necessarily next to you in the circle, by making eye contact. Here again, everyone had to be involved. At the same time, looking into someone's eye is favourable for creating connection between participants.

A game that was done in Almelo, in order to encourage a sense of communal belonging, was the *freeze game* with numbers. Children had to walk or dance around and every time the music stopped, one of the workshop leaders would say one, two or three, in which each number was connected to a certain movement. One was a handshake with the person closest to you, two was to jump in the air and three was holding hands and make a circle as fast as possible with everyone. So, two out of three actions involved physical contact. Even though there were children from different backgrounds present, physical contact between sexes did not seem to be a problem. All children would work together with everyone. I observed this exercise to be nice especially for children who came alone to the workshop. While they would start the workshop shy while looking to the ground, with this exercise they dared to look into other

children's eyes and smiled to them. Some children came together, either with siblings or with friends, but the children who came alone were in this way invited to really be part of the group.

But how was this sense of communal belonging in refugee centre Almelo, where people were going to be relocated to other refugee centres? How was that for the children, who went to the same school for several months, and would be separated once again? I did not really get an answer on this question, since it was not possible to interview parents or to get consent for interviewing their children. Talking to Gertie gave me some clarity about this while actually asking another question to her:

> Floortje: "Do you think it is worrisome for the children that we have been here now for six weeks, and then suddenly it stops? Is that a problem, do you think?"
> Gertie: "No, because it always goes like this. We [employees of refugee centres] always say "Nothing is more changeable than a refugee centre". You just have to be so flexible as a resident, that if you stand in front of a door with your bags, people might tell you to "go back, because it [the original plan] is off"."

I do not know whether the residents already knew that they would be relocated just months after their first arrival in Almelo, but I argue how it could cause extra distress among the residents. Marsh mentioned in her article how many refugees experience trauma from, among other things, being displaced during their flee from their country of origin as well as their time "*en route* and during relocation and resettlement" (2016:61). Being displaced multiple times in the country of residence might contribute to an enlarging sense of distress and maybe even trauma. I am questioning if this had an effect on the sense of communal belonging during these workshops among the children in refugee centre Almelo, which is outside the scope of this research, but does call for elaboration in future research.

Consequently, to which extent did a sense of communal belonging actually emerge? Since it was not possible to hear from the children themselves, due to restrictions, it is hard to know whether the sense of belonging definitely emerged. However, some examples might give a more thorough overview. This excerpt from the interview with resident Züleyxa and De Vrolijkheid's employee Afsaneh shows what they observed with the children.

> Züleyxa: "Children have very limited daily activities here. But making music, this project, makes them very happy. It is something new for them. They know each other more because of this. They want to do fun things together. (…) It makes friendship. Every child comes from another country, there are many different cultures and stories. But music makes one. I find this the most beautiful part. (…) Yes, and a positive feeling. I am a resident here. In general, you don't see people smiling here often, because of their history. But when we talk to the children about this musical project, they smile, they say "Oh music, we will play music". It gives people a positive feeling. Children as well as their parents. If the child is happy, then the parents are happy as well."
>
> Afsaneh: "Having fun. Making contact with each other. Coming out of their isolation, especially the children with [a] disability."

This part demonstrates how music makes people happy and positive. This is a confirmation of what Boeskov already stated, namely that community music encourages positive relations towards the self (2019:6). It also shows how it evolved into friendship, which is what Bithell discussed in her study; friendship and support being the outcome of community music (2014:295, 296).

The creation of the sense of communal belonging sometimes takes some time to arise and is also dependent on a lot of external factors. For example, in refugee centre Den Helder, where not every week the same group of children would join. This is shown in the next excerpt from the interview I did with Zahara.

> Zahara: “In our refugee centre, it was quite chaotic, because the groups changed a lot. But then, some children came back and I felt that when they came back, they were more eager to get involved. (…) And then also it was just kind of an interesting dynamic within the workshops, sort of like how people got involved, (…). A previous session they didn’t get involved at all, and then they suddenly came and started enjoying it. For instance, there was one boy in the group and when he was with a whole group of other boys, it was too cool to stay in the workshop. But when he came alone, he was really the most involved in the workshop. (…) It was beautiful that everybody was doing their thing. They wanted to be there and they were adding something and they felt like they had a place there. That was beautiful.”

This excerpt shows how some children slowly get used to being in the workshop and how they might find their place in it. In refugee centre Delfzijl, there was another example of how this sense of communal belonging development was observed by Afsaneh. Below is a fragment from my fieldnotes about this example.

> *Afsaneh told me about one boy, who is always present during both workshops of Sounds of Change, even though he only joins the second workshop, for the older children. He has autism and always walks outside facing the ground. He does not talk to his peers or plays with them. He never goes to any of the activities that De Vrolijkheid organizes. However, since the workshops of Sounds of Change, he has been meeting other children outside and plays with them. He looks forward to the workshops, and is already glancing through the windows during the first workshop for the younger children, awaiting his turn. He laughs while doing the activities, talks to the other children and even makes some jokes. He makes eye contact with his peers as well as with the workshop leaders and joins in on all the musical games.*

This example shows another way of the development of communal belonging among one of the participants of the workshops. This example is consistent with the study by Marsh, in which she found that musical activities among refugees can contribute to a sense of belonging and

integration (2016:61). For this boy, the workshops were a way of coming into contact with and communicating to others. Benson has described this as one of the ways in which music can be seen; as a form of communication and a way of intervening with other people (2010:177).

For creating a sense of communal belonging, it is also of importance to see the individual. Veblen mentions how practitioners of community music highlight the power of music and how it can bring people together, but at the same time how it can provide for a collective identity as well as an individual identity (2007:2). It made me wonder how the workshop leaders gave each child individual attention, while they were working within a group. I asked it to them, while conducting the online interviews.

> Hans Ultralord: "I try very much for the children to make them able to show themselves to the group. Especially when mirroring you, so we do this with everyone, and then see who wants to do it [take the lead]. I always try to see whether someone can capture their moment to shine. So, I try to shed some light on that side of them. To approach them in that way, so also in a playful way."

> Julia: "Yes, I find that quite difficult sometimes, because the groups were often quite big. I also think this is why it is not always possible to do so. But within the group we always did things like passing things in the circle, so every child gets their turn. That is something that was always present in the workshops, so the attention focuses on one child, and the whole group focuses on that child. (…) We did a lot of things of course, and sometimes the child just blends in with the group. (…)."

> Salma: "It is one of my strengths to be able to keep an overview. If I look to a group, I notice which child might need a little bit more attention than the others. I sit next to this child or put a hand on the shoulder."

> Mariska: "[Going around the group with the exercises and giving everyone turns] is a way of encouraging the social cohesion within the group. That they really feel together (…) and that they

> learn to feel safe, also with each other, but at the same time also make that unique contribution of their own. That they feel like they dare to do that. Yes really, the power that every person has their own unique contribution. (…) Being with the two of you [two workshop leaders], where one of you keeps an eye on the whole group, whereas the other can focus more on the individual, or the other way around."

Something that stands out in these excerpts, is the fact that the workshop leaders tried to see the individual within the group. Even though that was not always an easy thing to do, some of the activities were designed to support this. Already at the start of the workshop, during the welcome song, attention was paid to the individual, in a way that all children would listen to this individual's name. This is in line with Renshaw's vision on creative music processes, in which he argues how these processes, also used by workshop leaders, are prioritizing the imagination of the group as well as the imagination of the individual, which arguably contributes to a sense of belonging (2011:17).

Thus, every child was invited to be part of the group during the workshops. The children in the refugee centres all had very different backgrounds. A mother of two girls who joined the workshop could answer some of my questions about this after the last workshop in Delfzijl.

> Mother and children: "They are meeting new cultures and new children. Their favourite games were *boom tsjik* [a game with a shake egg and chopsticks, where each object is connected to a certain sound], or actually everything. They are learning cultural rhythms from other cultures."

Here again it gives an example of how different cultures come together during these workshops. Higgins already discussed how the practice of community music can be a system of "support and respect for the many cultures and communities around the world" (2013:viii). Different cultures come together and become one big group in which each culture is equal to another.

I wondered to which extent the workshop leaders took the different backgrounds of the participants into account when preparing their workshops and when executing their workshops.

> Julia: "I have not thought of their different backgrounds at all. Because if you are within a group like this, and also what is beautiful about being in a circle, is that everyone is equal. And in the exercises we do together, there is just an equality in how you relate to each other, so the different backgrounds didn't really play a role as far as I'm concerned. Of course, the language sometimes, but not even that. So, as far as I'm concerned, those [the differences in backgrounds] were neutralized, if you work with each other in a group that way."

According to Julia, different backgrounds did not play any part in the workshops; they disappear when working in a group like this. Mariska did pay a little bit of attention to the different backgrounds.

> Mariska: "We did pay a bit of attention to this, in the sense that with the songs, children got to say what 'Hello' or 'Good bye' was in their language. So that everyone could show their language. I think we really emphasized their identity or something like that and then did it all together. So that it doesn't just stay with that one person, but again with the whole group. (…) We also tried to sing songs that they knew."

The attention to the different backgrounds was done in a way of trying to include everyone even more within the group. Hans Ultralord gave a description from his own perspective as a workshop leader.

> Hans Ultralord: "I notice that once we are doing the workshop, it does not count at all anymore, then it is gone for me. But when you enter [the refugee centre], I find it just a crazy place to live. Especially if you come as a refugee from a warm country with sun, coming to Den Helder, end of

> the world, in an old prison where it is usually cold and windy. Then, I think "Wow, where do all these people come from, and all those stories of what they have been through", I think a lot about that. But once we have started the workshops, that is just gone."

For Hans Ultralord, the differences in histories disappear whenever the workshop would start. An important thing that seems to stand out in these excerpts, is the fact that during the workshops the participants became one big group, in which the different backgrounds did not matter, which hints at a sense of collectivism. However, some children do seem to notice the differences in backgrounds. Celtic Knight gave an example of a child who came to him to ask something in Arabic. The Syrian girl had asked why there were Turkish children in the workshop, while most of the other children were Syrian, on which he answered:

> Celtic Knight: "I told her: "No, this workshop is not [only] for Syrian children, this workshop is for the children who live in the camp. (…) If it is just for Syrian people, why do we speak Dutch? Why do we speak English? (…) It's for all children. (…) They [the children] have to know that the Netherlands has a lot of nationalities. (…) We have to accept the others. Maybe in Syria, we didn't use to deal with people from Surinam or people from Turkey. But here, we have to live together. We have to respect each other. We know maybe everyone has their mentality, or religion. But all of us, we live under the law. We have to understand and respect and accept each other."

This example raises the question of how the workshop sought to bring the children together as one group. It highlights a point of tension between the noticeable feeling of differences between children acknowledged by this girl and the desire of Celtic Knight to overcome this. Moreover, how does this example link to Dutch multiculturalism? Although the Dutch multicultural public policy seemed to have moved to the background (Scholten, 2012:103), and changed more into an assimilation policy (Scholten, 2012:105), grassroot and local policies are argued to have more "resilient practices in accommodating cultural differences" (Uitermark et al., 2005).

Some experts have adverted the "resilient multiculturalist practices existing on the local level" (Scholten, 2012:113). Sounds of Change seems to be one of these resilient practices, with a Dutch mindset of respecting the individual (De Bony, 2005:9) and treating everyone as equal (De Bony, 2005:7). However, these differences can give tension on certain occasions. The tension that Celtic Knight mentioned is also talked about by Kevyn, who I interviewed during a workshop where his sister joined.

> Kevyn: "I think that is the best part; in this workshop, you are just playing with them, and we are trying to make them friends. But the bad part of the child I saw here [outside of the workshops, in the refugee centre]. They are afraid of each other, they say "Hey, I have black skin, he is not the same as us, go away" or "Your nationality is different, you are not the same as us, go away". (…) This is not good. We are all humans. That is the good part in the activities [from these workshops]. From every nationality, from everywhere, we have children here. So, they can be friends with each other."

These two excerpts raise questions on whether children are actually aware of the differences in background. However, research by Putnam has showed how people could be brought together by singing together, where it was not required to have a shared background (2000:411). Bithell, as well, studied how singing could reclaim for a sense of community and concluded how community music in choirs could connect people (2014:288). It raises the question of the extent to which, in refugee centres where people come from all sorts of places, the connection and bringing people together can be established, when different mindsets are at stake. Afsaneh and Züleyxa also gave me an example of a boy who was helping out before and during the workshops and how the workshops affected him.

> Züleyxa: “We have another teenager. He is from Iran, under 18 and is mostly in his room. He has been here for two months. He didn’t want to do anything, but now he wanted to volunteer with this project. He wants to be here every week. That is also an advantage of this project. He knows more people from his own age now. (…) He told me he wants to fight for his life and go to school. (…) This project makes us all live under the same roof.”
>
> Afsaneh: “It offers a future perspective for their life, I think. He is also not going to talk only about the sad stories. Of course, we should also tell and express those, but not only. Other things too.”
>
> Züleyxa: “He feels that someone gives him a helping hand. And, we say, music is for the whole world, not just for a particular country. That is an advantage for me, this project.”

Establishing a sense of future perspective to someone through musical workshops is a result of high importance. It connects to one of the goals of Sounds of Change; using music to achieve social change. As Boeskov explained, community music uses music as social action, which can promote social change (2019: 5). It brough a change of mindset to this boy, which hopefully will help him in his future life.

4.3.4 Take away

Seeing all the results of what the musical workshops could do to the children, made me wonder what the workshops had brought the workshop leaders themselves. What would they take out of it to their daily lives?

> Mariska: “When I was small, I had this kind of dream. In my head it always visualizes as a circle dance, in which everyone is in a circle and does folk dancing together. Something that synchronizes, in which you are really present with each other and where you respond to each other. (…) What Sounds of Change does really resonate with my soul, what I want to do and what I long for. I really got the tools for actually doing it. (…) Also, by going to the refugee centres, and living this experience by just trying it out, with the two of you, and experience how it works, and what works

> and what does not, you learn from it and see many beautiful things. It is also kind of in a closed community within Sounds of Change, with the trainers and workshop leaders, which made it feel very safe with each other. We had good interaction with each other, and we dared to be vulnerable, which created a connection within us. It gave me confidence. (…) Also, it has given me a vision what it can mean to people and what you can expect, whenever you do stuff like this."

Mariska introductory excerpt is a dream of connection between people, which is actually exactly what Sounds of Change does. For Salma it brought her confirmation of what she wants to do with her life.

> Salma: "We learnt a lot and we got a lot of confidence into what we are able to do. For me it was a confirmation of "I should do something, does not matter what, as long as it is about creating connecting between people, then I am at the right place." What I also learnt from the Academy is that I can try out a lot of things, that I don't have to be able to master everything before I try it. That's totally fine. So actually, the same as what the children hopefully learned, that it's fine if it doesn't work out at first, that you can just try. If you really want to find something you like, you have to try a lot before you get there."

Salma talked in her interview about her take away of the possibility of trying things out, even though you do not know beforehand if you are able to do them, which she also hopes that the children took away from the workshop. This shows how the effects of the workshops can be reciprocal. This connects as well to one of her reasons for joining the Academy, described in chapter 1, which stated "It [the description of the Academy] was also beautifully described that they also want to learn from us, so it was very open.". It shows how the learning process is reciprocal here as well, but this time between workshop leaders and trainers of Sounds of Change. Julia, Zahara and Hans Ultralord explained how it affected their lives.

Julia: “That everything I come up with is totally fine. There is a lot of power and truth in working with intuition. I can trust on that much more. I experienced that several times in the workshops, that if I trust on that and if I work from there, things arise from there. And also, it’s very easy to get along well, that very little is needed to make it go well [in a group].”

Zahara: “I think I’m less involved with myself in a way of what I have to do as a musician in order to be a musician, I guess. In order to have concerts, practicing everything, in general, I was just feeling a little bit more egocentric before, which is quite lonely. Like “what do I do with my field?”. And I have always had this impression that whenever I actually use music to help people, it’s been so heart-warming. And that’s where I feel like I belong. And then I think doing this course, it’s all about this, it’s all about the group, it’s all about your role in a group. And for me, I think in daily life in general, I’m kind of appreciating more and more connecting and the beauty of trust and actually being there as well. And also, it’s just so amazing to see how music can be music, it can be art, it can be a lot of different things, but just how it has such a powerful effect. It’s really heart-warming for me. (…) I think my mind has broadened.”

Hans Ultralord: “I think the way I communicate with children, how I indicate things clearly and how I can bring structure to such a workshop. Sometimes, I found that very difficult. I learned a lot from it, also to be able to switch very fast; you make a plan and then the whole plan is cancelled and then something completely different happens. And I think communicating with children, because I never really felt like I was really good with kids. I found it very tensive to talk to kids. (…) Now I have that feeling a lot less, (…) so I can now communicate much easier with kids, which makes it easier to give a workshop or at least better. I think I take that to my daily life.”

Whereas Julia feels like she can trust herself more, Zahara has experienced it as an extended view on her life and Hans Ultralord felt like his communication skills with children had improved. Celtic Knight had double feelings about his experience.

> Celtic Knight: "It gave me something emotional. It reminds me to that time when I was in the refugee centre when I went to the musical [activity] for the first time and when I tried to express and introduce myself to the Dutch people, with, for example, "Okay, I am from Syria and I play music and let me play music." And I was very excited to introduce myself and to affirm my personality, and [the thought of] "I can do this". I was happy that I [could] give this workshop to the children and I tried to fill their time with something positive, but I was also a bit sad about that. About that period that I was in the *azc* when I came and I was new here and not feeling very safe and something new and I left my country. It was like mixed emotions. That's about something emotional. About the experience; I experienced myself as a workshop leader that now I know more how to deal with children. (…) Now I can better plan for a workshop, because I experienced it."

On the one hand it made Celtic Knight emotional, because it reminded him of his time in the refugee centre, but on the other hand he was happy to being able to give workshops here and bring happiness. It is wonderful to see how the workshops did not only have its effects on the participants, but on the workshop leaders as well. What stands out is the concept of connection. Connection with yourself, connection with other workshop leaders or creating connection between other people. Connection is key in these workshops, because it opens up to collaboration, which opens up for creative imagination (Renshaw, 2011:17).

Connection is something that was strived for during the workshops. This can be achieved through multiple games in which collaboration and involvement were necessary. Collaboration within a group can unfold new ideas (Renshaw, 2011:7, 18, 19) and open up for creativity. In order for creativity to come out during workshops, children needed to feel safe and included. For inclusion, it was not necessary for everyone to speak a common language. The workshops are shaped to make it able to "do it without words". This resulted in interaction and connection with other children, which can possibly lead to the sense of communal belonging. However, children seemed to be aware of their differences in backgrounds. This is where Sounds of

Change, as a local policy, tries to focus on: the acceptance of cultural diversity. Each person is welcome and treated as equal (De Bony, 2005:7), which is typical for a “Western” mindset, where individualism goes together with independence (Harkness et al., 2000:23). Nonetheless, the workshops brought all children together and established friendships between children.

V. Conclusion and discussion

My research has examined how Sounds of Change uses community music to promote social changes in Dutch refugee centres. In order to explore that, I have looked at several aspects during these workshops; connection, collaboration, a sense of communal belonging, the creation of a safe space, creativity and non-verbal communication. While doing that, I have kept in mind constantly how the participants as well as the workshop leaders all have different backgrounds and histories, as well as how diversity and multiculturalism are perceived within Dutch society.

All abovementioned aspects seemed to be linked to one another. The overarching concept that needed to be created and present is the feeling of a safe space. If a child did not feel safe, there was no possibility for them to express in a creative way or to connect with other children. Shared trust within a group made space for the feeling of safety (Renshaw, 2011:19). The structure of the method of Sounds of Change provided a sense of safety as well; children would know more or less what to expect when participating in the workshops.

It has shown how community music can bring people together, in which collective identity is as important as individual identity (Veblen, 2007:2). By recognizing all individuals and letting them contribute each in their own unique way, creative collaborative music practices can exist. These processes explore the creative imagination, which is seen as a shared process and stimulated by others (Renshaw, 2011:17). In the Netherlands, individualism is seen as a way of individual expression (De Bony, 2005:8), which goes together with the group respecting the individual (De Bony, 2005:9) and equalizing everyone (De Bony, 2005:7), which is constructed during the workshops. Moreover, collaboration within a group was necessary at times, in order for the musical games to work out.

This research has made clear how a common verbal language within a group is not a prerequisite in order for workshops to work. As one of the mothers of a participant mentioned "Through these workshops it is possible to interact with other cultures, because it is possible to do it without words." Music is a powerful tool to bond when there is no common language (Bithell, 2014:288), and community music can unify a group of people (Veblen, 2007:2).

Other outcomes were friendships among children outside of the workshops and a general feeling of happiness. Although some children seemed to be aware of their different backgrounds, this did not result in less collaboration or connection, as far as I could observe. However, not being able to ask them directly raises the question of to which extent the connection can actually be established. Diversity in cultural backgrounds is very much present during workshops of Sounds of Change. This diversity in Dutch society is perceived in different ways; right-wing populists critique the multiculturalist approach, while grassroot, local practices, like Sounds of Change, are embracing cultural diversity (Scholten, 2012).

There are some limitations to this research, which could be elaborated on in future research. Firstly, due to the fact that almost no parents would come to the workshop space, I could not ask for consent for interviewing their children. Conclusions about the sense of communal belonging and feeling safe are therefore based on my observations and interviews with the workshop leaders and employees of De Vrolijkheid. Second, I have not looked whether the different compositions of pairing of the workshop leaders had any effect on the outcomes of this research. Third, the fact that music can be *haram* in some cultures is something that I did not look into. Some research about, for example, music among Jordanian girls (Adely, 2007) and in Iraq (D'Cruz, 2012) has been done and showed how some forms and practices of music are prohibited. How did this affect the children in the refugee centres who came from these countries and participated in the workshops? Fourth, I did not elaborate on the possible outcome of distress on children which might have been caused by an intense six-weeks course

in which the children might get attached to certain people, and then would be left alone after this period. This is what Berlant calls 'cruel optimism', when something "you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing" (Berland, 2011:1). What does it do to the attachment of children? How do they cope with this when the course is over?

Fifthly, knowing more about different habits in cultures would be worthwhile in understanding certain patterns in workshops. For example, talking to Salma during follow-up questions, made it clear how in Arabic cultures it is normalized to have responsibility for a younger sibling, even when the responsible child is still very young.

> Salma: "It is expected to take care of your younger sibling. You have complete responsibility from a very young age, often for parts of the day. It can create nice things, such as being caring, empathetic and less selfish, but the responsibility is taken very seriously, if something happens to the younger child, it is the fault of the older sibling."

Since many participants came from Arabic countries, it would be valuable to dive deeper into knowing different aspects of cultures. These limitations opt for future research for a more thorough knowledge of what community music can establish for children in refugee centres.

I would like to conclude my research with an excerpt from my fieldnotes, in which I shortly describe what happened during the final workshop at refugee centre Amersfoort. It shows how all children were making music together and how a sense of community seemed to be achieved, which is a red threat throughout this research.

> *March 3rd 2022 - Refugee centre Amersfoort*
>
> *Today is the last workshop in this refugee centre. It is spring holiday and the sun is shining. The workshop leaders start the workshop, like always, with a music parade outside to gather the*

children. Salma takes a box of instruments outside, so that all children can join with some percussion instrument. I see a little boy who does not dare to come close. I walk towards him and asks if he wants to join. He grabs my hand and together we walk back to the group, where I give him a small percussion instrument and he happily starts to join. After some musicmaking together, we all go back inside and sit in a circle. There are 18 children joining today, and some other children come and go. We start with the favourite musical activities of the children - everyone can say what they liked best out of all the workshops. Then, the self-made instruments are gathered and every child gets a kazoo [a small instrument which makes a buzzing sound if you sing into it]. *We go outside to walk around the refugee centre while everyone is making music together. One of the children comes to me and asks if we come back the next week. When I tell her "No, this was the last time", she responds with "Will you remember me and will you remember my name? Then I will also remember you", on which I reply with "Of course I will remember you".*

VI. References

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