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A ticket to mobility? Naturalisation and subsequent migration of refugees after obtaining asylum in the Netherlands

Marloes de Hoon^{a,b}, Maarten Vink^a and Hans Schmeets^{a,b}

^aDepartment of Political Science, Maastricht University, Maastricht, The Netherlands; ^bStatistics Netherlands, Heerlen, The Netherlands

ABSTRACT

Research on migrants to European countries commonly assumes that with naturalisation, migrants' futures are closely linked to the receiving country. However, from a transnational perspective, citizenship acquisition does not necessarily lead to permanent settlement. Apart from the right to stay in the country, citizenship provides for extensive mobility rights and the freedom to settle elsewhere. This mobility premium may be particularly acute for refugees, and previous research indeed shows that EU citizenship is key in their international movement. Yet, knowledge of the demography, socio-economic profile and scale of subsequent movement of new citizens of refugee background is limited. We therefore test the 'naturalisation-as-a-ticket-to-mobility' thesis for a large and heterogeneous group of refugees who received asylum in the Netherlands. Based on longitudinal data, we follow an entire cohort of refugees registered in the Dutch municipal registers between 1995 and 1999 ($N=60,218$) over a period of almost two decades. We examine for whom and under which conditions naturalisation results in subsequent international migration. Results from Cox models reveal that citizenship acquisition is generally associated with settlement in the Netherlands. However, for refugees receiving welfare benefits and those with a 'weak passport' prior to naturalisation, Dutch citizenship increases the likelihood of subsequent migration.

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Introduction

Today more people than ever before are living in exile, having fled their region of origin (UNHCR 2016). The 'durable solutions' for refugees that have received most attention by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) are resettlement of asylum seekers, return after a period of temporary protection, and long-term settlement in the country of asylum (Bloemraad, Korteweg, and Yurdakul 2008; Ott 2011). Accordingly, research into refugee policies and integration into the host country generally assumes sedentarism (Bloch 2002; Valenta and Bunar 2010). From this perspective, refugees will seek to

CONTACT Marloes de Hoon  m.dehoon@maastrichtuniversity.nl

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become formal citizens of the asylum country and are expected to stay in their new country once they have obtained citizenship, as this offers them security in terms of residency and social and political rights (Nunn et al. 2016). This sedentarist assumption resonates with the idea that naturalisation is a fundamental part, or even the most advanced result, of an integration process that is confined to a particular country (Bloemraad, Korteweg, and Yurdakul 2008; Hainmueller, Hangartner, and Pietrantuono 2017).

Reality, however, shows that refugees do not always achieve or even pursue long-term residence in the asylum country, nor do they see opportunities to return to their country of origin in the medium term (e.g. Leerkes, Galloway, and Kromhout 2011). A growing body of research has demonstrated that refugees who have found protection within the European Union (EU) have in the course of time relocated to other countries within the EU or beyond (Lindley and Van Hear 2007; van Liempt 2011a; Ahrens, Kelly, and van Liempt 2016; Kelly and Hedman 2016; Mas Giralt 2016). These empirical contributions have taken a transnational perspective in studying the lives of migrants (Vertovec 1999), demonstrating the multiple attachments that people maintain across national borders after having fled their homeland. Instead of finding a new 'home' within the boundaries of the asylum country, some decide to continue their migration trajectories with another international relocation (Ahrens, Kelly, and van Liempt 2016; Mas Giralt 2016). This paper aims at increasing our knowledge concerning the migration trajectories of refugees who obtained asylum in the Netherlands, focusing particularly on the role of host country citizenship.

When applying a mobility perspective, alternative meanings of host country citizenship become apparent. Aside from securing refugees' residence status, the passport of a new country simultaneously increases international mobility opportunities (Mau 2010). This leaves us with a puzzling picture of citizenship acquisition. From one theoretical angle, newly acquired citizenship is associated with 'staying', while from a different viewpoint it facilitates new migratory projects (termed 'citizenship to go' by Della Puppa and Sredanovic 2017).

Attention to newly acquired citizenship as a key source in international relocations has grown (Ahrens, Kelly, and van Liempt 2016; Mas Giralt 2016; Della Puppa and Sredanovic 2017; Ramos 2017; Finotelli, La Barbera, and Echeverría 2018). These studies reveal the manifold and multidimensional reasons for onward movement of specific migrant populations. Yet, a large-scale comparison is missing, and little is known about the demography, origins and socio-economic profile of refugees who remain mobile versus those who stay in the asylum country for longer periods.

We address this gap by examining for whom and under which conditions host country citizenship results in subsequent international migration, as opposed to permanent settlement in the country of asylum. Micro-level longitudinal data allow us to follow all refugees who obtained asylum in the Netherlands in the late nineties ($N = 60,218$). We follow this cohort over a period of 12–16 years, starting five years after registration with the municipality. Based on Cox proportional hazard models, we analyse the rate of international migration for asylum migrants from very diverse origins and with varying socio-demographic characteristics. While we find that a Dutch passport is generally negatively associated with subsequent migration, some are more likely than others to continue their migration trajectories after acquiring Dutch citizenship. The 'retaining' role of a passport is particularly strong for refugees who found employment and those who held a relatively 'strong passport' prior to naturalisation. By contrast, naturalisation results in a higher

subsequent migration rate among refugees who received welfare benefits and among those who were in possession of a 'weak passport' prior to naturalisation.

Theoretical underpinnings, state of the art, and hypotheses

The mobility paradigm and refugees

This paper rests on contributions that have taken a mobility lens in studying international migration. This implies an understanding of migration trajectories as open spatio-temporal processes with a strong transformative dimension (Schapendonk et al. 2018). We underline that migration trajectories are not predetermined or linear and often consist of multiple journeys in various directions (e.g. Jeffery and Murison 2011; Schapendonk and Steel 2014; van Geel and Mazzucato 2018). Possible turns and twists in the trajectory can be interpreted as responses to aspirations or changing opportunity structures in various localities (Mas Giralt 2016). In line with this understanding, we use the term *subsequent migration* to refer to international migration of refugees from the country of asylum to another country. Acknowledging the contingent nature of different types of international migration, *subsequent migration* in this paper refers to both migration towards origin countries (*return migration*) and migration to a third country within Europe or beyond (*onward migration*). Our aim is to contribute to the quantitative research body pertaining to the dynamics of migration, in which onward migration has so far been largely dismissed (exceptions include Nekby 2006; Toma and Castagnone 2015; Kelly and Hedman 2016).

There is, however, an emerging body of literature concerned with onward migration. These studies predominantly deal with intra-EU mobility of migrants (e.g. Toma and Castagnone 2015; Della Puppa and King 2018) or refugees (van Liempt 2011a, 2011b; Kelly 2013; Stewart and Mulvey 2014; Sim 2015). The terms 'onward migration' and 'intra-EU mobility' are inevitably related to growing analytical debates concerning the nexus of internal and international migration (King and Skeldon 2010; Riccio 2016), and the mobility versus migration binary. A focus on international migration in this paper arises from our interest in the role of formal citizenship acquisition, providing rights relating to transnational rather than national (or: internal) migration practices. In the context of free mobility that the 'EU free movement regime' nowadays provides, moves between two EU countries are mostly labelled as *mobility* or internal migration. Although we agree that a clear analytical distinction between migration and mobility is inherently difficult and at times trivial (Heil et al. 2017; King and Skeldon 2010), we use the term subsequent migration – referring to *international* migration both within the EU and to other (third) countries for the purpose of both consistency and clarity.

Onward migration, as opposed to return migration, is partly conceptualised as the outcome of a predefined strategy to migrate again, before refugees 'just ended up' in the country of asylum that was not necessarily their intended destination (van Liempt 2011a). Alternatively, it can be interpreted as a reactive strategy, a way to address dissatisfaction with the outcome of the initial migration process (Paul 2011; van Liempt 2011a, 2011b; Toma and Castagnone 2015; Ahrens, Kelly, and van Liempt 2016; Mas Giralt 2016; Ramos 2017). The latter body of research emphasises both the changeable aspirations of migrants as well as the role of contextual factors (e.g. the economic and political situation in the asylum country) in shaping mobility outcomes.

Although an analytical distinction between refugees and voluntary migrants may not seem directly meaningful or relevant when studying migrants' reasons to migrate again, a number of unique features of refugees are important if we are to understand subsequent migration. Firstly, persistent instability in the country of origin generally makes for low return rates of migrants with a refugee background (Kibreab 2003; Klinthäll 2007), but it may have the opposite effect on onward migration. Second, within the EU, the application of the Dublin Regulation restricts where refugees may present their asylum requests and hence limits their choice regarding the country of settlement. Moving on to another country in the EU could therefore be part of a predefined strategy, which is manifested once their legal status is stabilised (van Liempt 2011a; Ahrens, Kelly, and van Liempt 2016). Lastly, refugees generally occupy socially and economically disadvantaged positions in various European countries (see De Vroome and Van Tubergen 2010 on refugees in the Netherlands), which may encourage their onward migration. The key factors hampering refugees' economic integration include health problems and the long period spent in reception centres awaiting a decision on their asylum claims (e.g. Bakker, Dagevos, and Engbersen 2014). In addition, feelings of isolation, especially among refugees dispersed to rural locations, in combination with increasing anti-immigrant sentiments in public and political debates, lead to feelings of not 'fitting in' and possible onward migration as an outcome of experienced exclusion (van Liempt 2011a; Ahrens, Kelly, and van Liempt 2016).

Strategic citizenship

Traditionally, citizenship is considered a legal status that binds individuals to nation states (Bauböck 1994). Consequently, the likelihood migrants forsake the country that has granted them citizenship is generally expected to be small (Kuhlenkasper and Steinhardt 2012). In many migrant-receiving countries, citizenship is considered something that migrants 'earn' by demonstrating cultural knowledge and language proficiency. In addition to this idea of rewarding successful integration, formal citizenship is considered a means of fostering socio-economic and legal incorporation into the host country (e.g. Peters, Vink, and Schmeets 2018). For refugees specifically, citizenship and rights to settlement are key structural factors of integration (Bloch 2000, 78). For many, despite the protection that residence status provides, only possession of a host country passport puts an end to feelings of insecurity and uncertainty (Stewart and Mulvey 2014). Moreover, refugees believe that citizenship is foundational to their being viewed as equals by others in their new home country (Ager and Strang 2008). Following these considerations, our general hypothesis reads: Naturalisation of refugees decreases the likelihood to that they will leave their country of acquired citizenship (hypothesis 1a).

The idea that host country citizenship results in permanent settlement is, however, not straightforward. Apart from achieving much-desired security, acquisition of formal citizenship also increases mobility rights beyond the borders of the host country (Mau 2010). The activation of mobility privileges inherent to the host country passport has led scholars to speak of 'strategic' or 'instrumental' citizenship (Finotelli, La Barbera, and Echeverría 2018; Harpaz and Mateos 2018). For young people with a refugee background in Australia, mobility is one of the most important aspects of citizenship (Nunn et al. 2016). The mobility that citizenship provides is arguably even more relevant in the European context, where a national passport at the same time functions as an EU

passport. In addition to guaranteed re-entry after a stay abroad, a passport provides the right to move to, reside in or work in any part of the EU. This additional set of rights can be highly valuable for nationals of non-EU countries. Research conducted in Italy identified a group of non-EU migrants (Bangladeshis) who pursue Italian naturalisation in order to move to other parts of Europe, in particular to London (Della Puppa and Sredanovic 2017). Similarly, migrants from outside the EU report a higher intention to move on if there is an opportunity to move legally (Ortensi and Barbiano di Belgiojoso 2018). Following these studies, the alternative hypothesis of this paper is that naturalisation of refugees *increases* the likelihood that they leave their country of acquired citizenship (hypothesis 1b).

Putting down roots?

Scholars have shown interest in the selective nature of subsequent migration by both refugee populations and migrants in general. Questions along the lines of ‘who leaves?’ are widely covered in economic migration literature, where no explicit distinction is made between refugees and voluntary migrants (Borjas and Bratsberg 1996; Dustmann 1999; Nekby 2006). Empirical work revolving around economic factors in migration decisions indicates that migrants leaving the receiving country are generally found at both ends of the income distribution (Dustmann 2003; Bijwaard and Wahba 2014). The return to country of origin by migrants at the bottom of the income distribution is interpreted in terms of ‘integration failure’, while for other migrants, returning home reflects successful accumulation of resources (for a theoretical discussion see De Haas and Fokkema 2011).

The picture for refugees points to a ‘negative selection’ in terms of economic position, rather than a u-shaped pattern. In Sweden, a positive association was found between unemployment and onward migration, in particular for migrants with high levels of education (Nekby 2006; Kelly and Hedman 2016). For Iranian refugees in Sweden, onward migration to countries such as the UK and Canada can be interpreted as a response to barriers they encountered in their search for meaningful work in Sweden (Kelly and Hedman 2016). Labour market inactivity and discrimination were among the most important drivers of onward migration for non-EU residents in Italy (Ortensi and Barbiano di Belgiojoso 2018), for refugees from Somalia in the Netherlands (van Liempt 2011a), and for Iranians who landed in Sweden (Kelly and Hedman 2016). A negative selection on occupational qualifications was also found for Senegalese who initially migrated to France, Italy and Spain (Toma and Castagnone 2015). Dissatisfaction with the outcomes of the initial migration process was moreover found among migrants of Nigerian and Somalian descent who moved from Germany and the Netherlands to the United Kingdom (Ahrens, Kelly, and van Liempt 2016).

One general conclusion that can be drawn from these case-studies is that unlike the onward mobility and return migration from Northern countries practised by well-off and less migrants (Nekby 2006, 277; Takenaka 2007), subsequent migration of asylum migrants in particular does not reveal a ‘positive selection’ in terms of economic position. We thus expect the likelihood of subsequent migration to be higher among refugees with a marginal socio-economic position than for those who found formal employment in the host country (hypothesis 2).

Citizenship as compensatory mobility capital

In the previous section, we argued that economic marginalisation constitutes a reason for refugees to seek opportunities beyond the borders of their host country. Echoing the work of Moret (2017), the concept of ‘mobility capital’ in our study refers to capital that can be mobilised either to achieve territorial, social and economic stability, or to move across borders in search of upward social mobility (Ramos 2017, 3; see also Della Puppa 2018). When onward mobility is a reactive strategy (triggered by economic hardship), economic and social forms of mobility capital will most probably be insufficiently available and will therefore need to be compensated by other forms of mobility capital. Key here is the legal capital that a host country passport represents. Onward movement may also be part of a long-standing strategy to settle in a preferred destination country. In these cases of anticipated onward migration, a host country passport plays an equally important role in fulfilling aspirations of onward mobility. What follows is the expectation that for refugees without formal employment in the country of residence, possession of a host country passport increases the likelihood of onward international migration (hypothesis 3).

Previous research shows that the intention to migrate again is most prevalent among migrants originating from politically unstable countries (Ortensi and Barbiano di Belgiojoso 2018). In addition, empirical evidence in the Norwegian case suggests that the propensity to leave the host country after naturalisation is particularly high among migrants from low-income source countries (Bratsberg and Raaum 2011). As refugees generally come from countries that are characterised by both armed conflict, and political and economic instability, onward movement is expected to be common among members of this group in particular. We expect that whether refugees mobilise their newly acquired citizenship for migration purposes will depend on the ‘value’ of their previous citizenship. Given the ‘global hierarchy’ of citizenship (see Harpaz 2018), freedom of movement differs considerably between groups of refugees and, by consequence, the new mobility privileges that naturalisation yields are likely to vary. Refugees who possess or have been in possession of a nationality with high external value – that is, nationalities that provide a high degree of travel and settlement freedom (‘strong passport’) – are expected to be less interested in the mobility capital that a Dutch passport brings than those who hold a ‘weak passport’. We hypothesise that for refugees from countries with ‘weak’ passports, in terms of the mobility rights and opportunities for visa-free travel they confer there is a stronger likelihood that host country citizenship will lead to *subsequent migration* of refugees (hypothesis 4).

Context, data and methods

Even before the recent peak in the worldwide movement of displaced persons, a large number of people were seeking international refuge. In the 1990s people from various parts of the world were seeking asylum in neighbouring countries, but also in more distant regions, including Europe. In 1994 over 52,000 asylum applications were filed in the Netherlands. Whereas the group of applicants in the early nineties consisted largely of Bosnians and refugees from other parts of the former Yugoslavia, those who arrived in the second half of this decade were diverse in terms of origins, with substantial numbers from Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, Somalia, Sudan, the former Soviet Union, and, to a lesser extent, from China, Turkey, Angola, and other countries.

Most of the asylum applicants in the Netherlands arrived just after the introduction of the *Voorwaardelijk Vergunning tot Verblijf* (VVTV; temporary residence permit) as part of the New Aliens Act of 1994. Within this legal framework, applications at the time result in a residence permit when a person is recognised as a refugee according to the 1951 UN Convention, or when they are recognised on humanitarian grounds.¹ Successful applicants face annual renewals of their VVTV for a period of up to three years. After having successfully completed an obligatory ‘integration programme’ and an uninterrupted period of five years legal residence in the Netherlands, refugees are in principle eligible for naturalisation.² Contrary to most other migrants, refugees are exempted from the requirement to renounce their prior citizenship. Provided that the country of origin allows for dual citizenship, asylum migrants in the Netherlands may therefore hold two passports.

Employing register data

To analyse the post-procedural migration of refugees in the Netherlands, we make use of register data derived from the System of Social-statistical Datasets (SSD) (Bakker, Van Rooijen, and Van Toor 2014). This database covers all people who officially reside in the Netherlands and are compulsorily registered in one of the Dutch municipalities. Using additional registration records from the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (*Immigratie – en Naturalisatiedienst*, IND), we identified asylum migrants based on the motive of their residence application. We selected all migrants who registered at the IND with ‘asylum’ as their main migration motive. We followed asylum migrants who were first registered in the years 1995–1999 and stayed in the country at least for five years, allowing us to capture a period of 12 (cohort 1999) to 16 (cohort 1995) years. The sample includes both the initial applicants and asylum migrants who joined their family member within a period of one year (reunited family members or *nareizigers* in Dutch).

The longitudinal character of our research design is crucial, as migration plans will usually only start to develop after a few years of residence and result in actual international movement after a substantial period. Second, register data allow for a comparison of several sub-groups of refugees within a highly diverse population. This heterogeneity not only allows for comparison between refugees at different stages of their lives, but also between refugees who diverge in terms of diaspora networks and cultural and geographical distance from the Netherlands. Lastly, selectivity issues are minimised as our data cover *the entire cohort* of registered migrants who applied for asylum, excluding only those who left the Netherlands within a period of five years after municipal registration. This is another main advantage of register data over other data sources (e.g. survey data), given that selective response is likely correlated with cross-border mobility.

A crucial and unique asset of our data is that it contains information concerning emigration from the Netherlands. If residents decide to leave the Netherlands for a period of over three months, they are expected to deregister with the municipality. Information regarding the when and where of their departures are kept in the municipal registers, albeit with exception of people who do not report their emigration to the local government. We therefore deduce an additional category of emigration based on removals from the registers after authorities have ascertained that asylum migrants are no longer residents of their recorded address.³

We include only refugees who were registered at a private residential address at some point during the observation period, indicating they were in possession of a residence permit. We exclude those who stayed exclusively in asylum reception centres. Asylum applicants who were deregistered directly from a reception centre ($N = 2,307$) were presumably compelled to leave and are also therefore excluded from our sample. We filter out asylum migrants who moved to a private residential address but did not get their temporary (annual) residence permits renewed by starting the observation period three years after registration. We only follow asylum migrants who were of age at this point in time, meaning at least 15 years old in the year of registration. Our sample thus consists of 60,218 individuals (for descriptive statistics see Table A1 in the annex).

By the end of the observation period, 35.9% of our refugee population had engaged in subsequent migration (see also Table 1). We have plotted the cumulative incidence of subsequent migration over time by means of the Kaplan-Meier method (Figure 1).

The destination country is known for about half of the refugees who left the Netherlands. Within this category of registered emigrations, return appears less common than onward migration (see Table A2 in the annex for a differentiation by country of origin). Registered onward migration occurred more than twice as often as registered return, comprising 13.2% and 4.8% of the total sample respectively. Both percentages form the lower bounds of the actual return and onward migration flows, as the third group (destination unknown) is made up of both returnees and onward movers and comprises 17.9% of the sample.

Empirical strategy

We use Cox proportional hazard models to examine the occurrence of subsequent migration. Event history models of this type are well suited to examine both the timing and occurrence of subsequent migration, allowing for the inclusion of both time-variant and time-invariant covariates (Cox 1972). Event history modelling is also an advantageous strategy because it takes into account the censoring of observations, unlike comparable methods that are common in similar research designs (e.g. logit regression). The proportional hazard assumption underlying this semi-parametric model was tested for all covariates. In cases of clear violation of the proportionality assumption, we stratified the model by the non-proportional variables. To test our theoretical expectations about the conditions under which naturalisation likely results in subsequent migration, we added two sets of interactions in separate model specifications.

Table 1. Subsequent migration and naturalisation outcomes, 31-12-2015.

| | % | N |
|---|-------|--------|
| Registered residency in the Netherlands | 64.1 | 38,589 |
| Subsequent migration | 35.9 | 21,629 |
| Onward migration | 13.2 | 7,958 |
| Return migration | 4.8 | 2,919 |
| Unknown destination | 17.9 | 10,752 |
| Naturalisation | | |
| No Dutch citizenship | 18.4 | 11,056 |
| Dutch citizenship | 81.6 | 49,162 |
| Total | 100.0 | 60,218 |

Source: Statistics Netherlands.

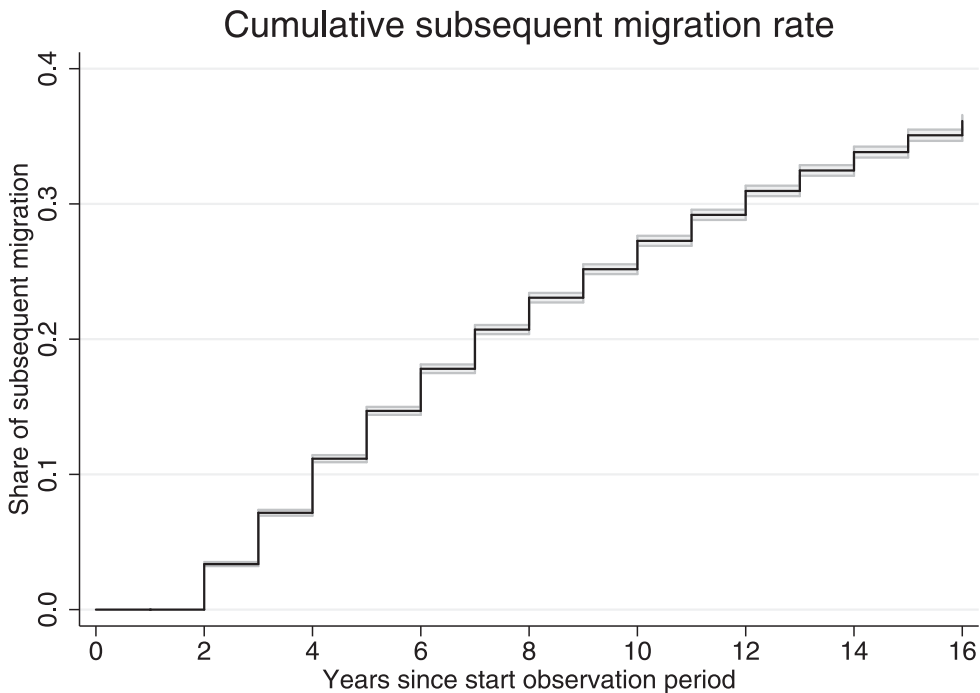


Figure 1. Kaplan-Meier cumulative incidence of subsequent migration ($N = 60,218$), Source: Statistics Netherlands.

The general event of interest, subsequent migration, is measured annually and captures both migration to the country of origin as well as to new destinations. Basic Cox models are further complemented with a more detailed model specification. Competing hazard models allow for the differentiation between (1) return migration of migrants who registered their emigration, (2) onward migration of those who registered their emigration and (3) migration of asylum migrants who did not register their departure (destination unknown). It is possible and likely that a share of the refugees in this latter group (destination unknown) actually continued their stay in the country on an irregular basis.

Covariates

This section describes how we capture time-varying factors that shape mobility outcomes. All time-varying factors are measured annually, on December 31. Central to our theoretical framework is the possession of a Dutch passport. *Dutch citizenship* is measured by means of a dummy-variable (Dutch versus non-Dutch citizen). The vast majority of refugees acquire Dutch citizenship over the years: 81.6% of the total sample were in possession of a Dutch passport by the end of the observation period (see Table 1). Notable is the variation in citizenship acquisition across origin groups, ranging from 62.4% for asylum migrants from Angola to 94.6% for migrants from Afghanistan (see Table A3 in the appendix). The timing of naturalisation also varies considerably between (groups of) migrants in the sample. The naturalisation peak occurs five years after registration, reflecting the residence requirements in Dutch naturalisation law. It is noteworthy that a portion

of asylum migrants had naturalised within five years of residence in the Netherlands, which is possible for stateless refugees and those with a Dutch partner.

We control for a set of procedural characteristics, including a dummy measuring whether the person came to the Netherlands as an *unaccompanied minor*. Other dichotomous variables capture *family reunification* (versus first applicant) and a proxy of *categorical protection* versus individual asylum protection based on the country of origin. To proxy the length of the asylum procedure, the *share of time spent in a reception centre* was calculated and controlled for in all the models. A categorical variable is used to capture different household situations: a single person household, a couple with children, a couple without children, a single parent household or an institutional household. A category of missing information on household is added to the last category. Note that household composition does not necessarily equal the composition of the families, as one or more members of the nuclear family may live elsewhere within or across borders. We also control for the *number of children in the household*. The *socio-economic position*⁴ of asylum migrants is introduced as a categorical variable, distinguishing employed refugees from those in education, entitled to pensions or welfare benefits, and without any registered form of income. Another variable measures the *type of residential location*, comparing suburban and urban places of residence to more rural locations in the Netherlands. A measure of internal moves is also included in the models – capturing residential moves between municipalities. All individual, time-variant variables are lagged by one year, except for the socio-economic position dummies, that we lag by two years to reduce the likelihood of reverse causality.

In addition to individual characteristics, various covariates concerning the origin group are controlled for in the models. Based on the country of origin, the *geographical distance to the Netherlands* is included. Time-varying factors at this group level include the *political stability* of country of origin (based on the Kaufmann index) and the *number of compatriots* in the Netherlands. In addition to economic or migration capital, a network of fellow compatriots is known to potentially diminish the costs of the initial migration (Boyd 1989) by supporting the migrant's incorporation into the new country. Based on the nationality of refugees (other than Dutch), we added a categorical variable capturing the *mobility value of their citizenship* (Kochenov 2017). We use the Quality of Nationality Index (QNI) as measured in 2012 to proxy the (legal) freedom of travel and settlement that refugees are entitled to, or lack thereof.⁵ QNI looks at two external aspects of one's nationality: the first is the number of other jurisdictions to which one can travel or settle in while holding a particular nationality; the second is the kind of countries one can travel to or settle in, taking into account the Human Development and Strength of every possible destination. QNI categories are based on quartiles that we adjusted slightly, in order to increase the range of actual QNI values of the lowest groups (see table A4 in the appendix). We add a fifth group of people who never registered their previous nationality at the municipal level, probably due to the absence of supporting documents.

Results

What drives subsequent migration?

Table 2 presents the results from the general Cox proportional hazard models. When controlling for a confined set of procedural and household characteristics, we find a negative

Table 2. Cox proportional hazard regression, risk of subsequent migration.

| | Model 1 | | | | Model 2 | | | |
|---|------------|-----|---------------------|------|------------|-----|---------------------|------|
| | HR | sig | Confidence interval | | HR | sig | Confidence interval | |
| Dutch citizenship (ref. = no) | 0.58 | *** | 0.56 | 0.60 | 0.82 | *** | 0.80 | 0.85 |
| <i>Demographical characteristics</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Family reunification (ref. = first applicant) | 0.85 | *** | 0.82 | 0.88 | 0.92 | *** | 0.89 | 0.95 |
| Unaccompanied minor (ref. = no) | 1.12 | *** | 1.07 | 1.19 | 0.98 | *** | 0.93 | 1.04 |
| Categorical protection (ref. = no) | 1.39 | *** | 1.35 | 1.43 | 1.50 | *** | 1.43 | 1.56 |
| Gender (ref. = female) | 1.34 | *** | 1.30 | 1.39 | 1.51 | *** | 1.46 | 1.57 |
| Age at registration | 0.98 | *** | 0.98 | 0.99 | 0.97 | *** | 0.96 | 0.97 |
| Age at registration squared | 1.01 | | 1.00 | 1.01 | 1.03 | *** | 1.02 | 1.04 |
| <i>Household (ref. = single person)</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Couple with children | 0.65 | *** | 0.62 | 0.68 | 0.69 | *** | 0.66 | 0.72 |
| Couple without children | 0.28 | *** | 0.27 | 0.30 | 0.32 | *** | 0.30 | 0.34 |
| Single parent family | 0.54 | *** | 0.51 | 0.57 | 0.60 | *** | 0.56 | 0.64 |
| Institutional and unknown | 1.05 | | 0.97 | 1.12 | 0.95 | *** | 0.88 | 1.02 |
| Children in Household (N) | 1.19 | *** | 1.17 | 1.21 | 1.16 | *** | 1.14 | 1.18 |
| <i>Municipality of residence (ref. = rural)</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Suburban | | | | | 1.02 | | 0.96 | 1.09 |
| Urban | | | | | 1.13 | *** | 1.08 | 1.19 |
| <i>Socio-econ position (ref. = employed)</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Self-employed | | | | | 1.07 | | 0.98 | 1.17 |
| In education | | | | | 0.80 | *** | 0.74 | 0.86 |
| Pensions | | | | | 1.00 | | 0.84 | 1.18 |
| Welfare benefits | | | | | 1.31 | *** | 1.26 | 1.36 |
| No income | | | | | 3.21 | *** | 3.08 | 3.34 |
| <i>Country of origin characteristics</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Geo. distance origin country | | | | | 1.11 | *** | 1.10 | 1.12 |
| Political stability (Kaufmann) | | | | | 0.98 | * | 0.96 | 1.00 |
| Compatriots in the NL (x10,000) | | | | | 0.96 | *** | 0.96 | 0.97 |
| <i>QNI external (ref. = cat 1: >25)</i> | | | | | | | | |
| QNI cat 2 (> 10 <= 25) | | | | | 1.24 | *** | 1.14 | 1.36 |
| QNI cat 3 (>7.5 <=10) | | | | | 0.94 | | 0.87 | 1.01 |
| QNI cat 4 (<=7.5) | | | | | 1.13 | ** | 1.04 | 1.22 |
| QNI cat 5 (No registered nationality) | | | | | 0.99 | | 0.92 | 1.06 |
| Observations | 675,657 | | | | 654,048 | | | |
| N individuals | 60,141 | | | | 59,352 | | | |
| N events | 21,117 | | | | 20,085 | | | |
| Log likelihood | -179902,68 | | | | -74013,927 | | | |
| LR chi2 | 8086.18 | | | | 16349.87 | | | |
| Prob > chi2 | 0.000 | | | | 0.000 | | | |

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Stratified by: Self-care arrangement, internal migration, registration cohort. Breslow methods for tied events.

Source: Statistics Netherlands.

association between host country citizenship and subsequent migration. The hazard ratio of Dutch citizenship (0.58) implies that naturalisation is associated with a 1.7 times (42%)⁶ smaller hazard of subsequent migration (Table 2, model I). Cohabitation with a member of the nuclear family leads to an even more pronounced negative relationship with subsequent migration. Compared to asylum migrants without children at home, living with one child or more halves the hazard ratio of subsequent migration. At the same time, having more children in the household *increases* the hazard of leaving the Netherlands. Larger families thus appear to be more migratory after asylum compared to families with fewer children. Men, asylum migrants who arrived at an older age, unaccompanied minors, and those who received categorical (temporary) protection have a higher hazard of migration than refugees in the respective reference categories. Asylum migrants who came to the Netherlands to join family members who had already obtained an asylum

permit are less likely to leave their new country of residence in comparison to persons who themselves lodged an asylum claim.

The negative hazard of Dutch citizenship is less pronounced when accounting for socio-economic and residential position in the Netherlands, as well as a set of origin country characteristics (Table 2, model 2). This suggests that origin country and individual socioeconomic characteristics are associated both with subsequent migration and with naturalisation. The revealed relevance of such individual and origin country characteristics for the propensity to naturalise is consistent with existing empirical studies on the Dutch context (Peters, Vink, and Schmeets 2016; Peters, Vink, and Schmeets 2018). Keeping various individual and group characteristics constant, naturalised refugees have a 1.2 times (18%) lower hazard of emigration than their counterparts who have not (yet) obtained Dutch citizenship. This implies an *overall* negative association between naturalisation and subsequent migration. The finding that becoming a Dutch citizen is generally associated with long-term settlement in the Netherlands leads us to reject hypothesis 1b. Contrary to this hypothesis, naturalisation *generally* decreases the likelihood that refugees leave their country of acquired citizenship.

Compared to those who participate in the Dutch labour market or formal education, asylum migrants who receive welfare benefits or who lack registered employment have a higher hazard of leaving the Netherlands, respectively 1.3 and 3.2 times higher. This supports hypothesis 2, which stated that economically marginalised migrants are more inclined to leave than migrants who are embedded in education or the labour market. The presence of a large group of fellow-countrymen, in contrast, decreases the hazard of migration (4% decrease per 10,000 compatriots), which suggests that a country-of-origin network has a retaining effect on newcomers in the Dutch setting. Political stability does not seem to play an important role in subsequent migration. However, when controlling for a set of origin country dummies (Table A5 of the appendix), we do find that higher political stability in the origin country generally results in higher subsequent migration rates, which is in line with earlier findings (Toma and Castagnone 2015; Ortensi and Barbiano di Belgiojoso 2018). In addition, refugees who originate from geographically distant countries are more likely to remain mobile than refugees from countries located closer to the Netherlands (11% increase per 1,000 km). The association between quality of nationality and subsequent migration is not linear, nor substantial. The highest subsequent migration hazard rates are observed for those who hold the weakest passports (QNI ≤ 7.5) and the one to highest group (QNI $10 \leq 25$).

The interplay of citizenship and other forms of capital

In this section, we examine the differentiated role of host country citizenship in migration trajectories by including a set of interaction terms. The interaction effects in model 3 (Table 3) imply that the role of legal status in the mobility of refugees is indeed conditioned by their socio-economic position. The main hazard ratio of Dutch citizenship (0.75) indicates that for employed refugees, acquisition of Dutch citizenship decreases the hazard of migration by 1.3 times. The effect of Dutch citizenship on subsequent migration appears to be different for refugees without registered employment. Although receiving welfare benefits is generally negatively associated with migration (model 2), the effect of naturalisation on subsequent migration for welfare recipients is 1.5 times the effect of naturalisation on

Table 3. Cox proportional hazard regression, risk of subsequent migration, interaction effects.

| Model 3 | HR | sig | Confidence interval | | H |
|---|------------|-----|---------------------|------|-------|
| Dutch citizenship (ref. = no) | 0.75 | *** | 0.70 | 0.81 | -0.29 |
| Socio-economic position (ref. = employed) | | | | | |
| Self-employed | 0.96 | | 0.74 | 1.25 | -0.04 |
| In education | 0.73 | *** | 0.63 | 0.85 | -0.32 |
| Pensions | 2.17 | *** | 1.65 | 2.86 | 0.78 |
| Welfare benefits | 0.95 | | 2.90 | 3.32 | -0.05 |
| No income | 3.10 | *** | 0.87 | 1.03 | 1.13 |
| Socio-economic position * Dutch citizenship | | | | | |
| Self-employed * Dutch citizenship | 1.13 | | 0.85 | 1.48 | 0.12 |
| In education * Dutch citizenship | 1.14 | | 0.96 | 1.35 | 0.13 |
| Pensions * Dutch citizenship | 0.36 | *** | 0.26 | 0.50 | -1.03 |
| Welfare benefits * Dutch citizenship | 1.51 | *** | 1.38 | 1.65 | 0.41 |
| No income * Dutch citizenship | 0.88 | ** | 0.80 | 0.96 | -0.14 |
| Other control variables | | | | | |
| yes | | | | | |
| Log likelihood | -168383.12 | | | | |
| LR chi2 (sig 0.000) | 12264.38 | | | | |
| Model 4 | HR | sig | Confidence interval | | H |
| Dutch citizenship (ref. = no) | 0.42 | *** | 0.37 | 0.47 | -0.88 |
| QNI external (ref. = cat 1: >25) | | | | | |
| QNI cat 2 (> 10 <= 25) | 1.08 | | 0.95 | 1.22 | 0.07 |
| QNI cat 3 (>7.5 <=10) | 0.57 | *** | 0.51 | 0.64 | -0.56 |
| QNI cat 4 (<=7.5) | 0.62 | *** | 0.54 | 0.71 | -0.48 |
| QNI cat 5 (No registered nationality) | 0.61 | *** | 0.55 | 0.67 | -0.50 |
| QNI external * Dutch citizenship | | | | | |
| QNI cat 2 (> 10 <= 25) * Dutch citizenship | 1.11 | | 0.94 | 1.31 | 0.10 |
| QNI cat 3 (>7.5 <=10) * Dutch citizenship | 2.17 | *** | 1.89 | 2.50 | 0.78 |
| QNI cat 4 (<=7.5) * Dutch citizenship | 2.43 | *** | 2.08 | 2.84 | 0.89 |
| QNI cat 5 (No registered nationality) * Dutch citizenship | 2.13 | *** | 1.89 | 2.41 | 0.76 |
| Other control variables | | | | | |
| yes | | | | | |
| Log likelihood | -168370.32 | | | | |
| LR chi2 (sig 0.000) | 12289.98 | | | | |
| Observations | 654,048 | | | | |
| N individuals | 59,352 | | | | |
| N events | 20,085 | | | | |

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

Stratified by: Self-care arrangement, internal migration, registration cohort. Breslow methods for tied events.

Source: Statistics Netherlands.

onward migration for those who are employed. In other words, once Dutch citizenship is acquired, social welfare recipients mobilise their newly acquired mobility capital to migrate again more often than their counterparts who are active in the Dutch labour market. We find no significant interaction effects for refugees who are self-employed or enrolled in education, implying that the effect of naturalisation is for people in these positions similar to those who are employed. Receiving pension benefits (versus being in employment) is associated with a higher hazard of subsequent migration (model 2), but only when Dutch citizenship has not been obtained. The negative interaction hazard ratio that we obtain in model 3 (0.36) shows that naturalisation decreases the hazard of subsequent migration even more for pension beneficiaries than for employed refugees.

Quality of nationality and mobility

The interaction terms of the quality of nationality indicator (QNI) and Dutch citizenship shed more light on the differentiated role of a Dutch passport in the migration trajectories

of refugees (model 4). When in possession of a relatively strong passport, obtaining Dutch citizenship results decreases the likelihood of subsequent migration by 25% (0.75). For refugees with a former passport in the two lowest QNI groups (QNI value ≤ 10) the hazard rate of naturalisation is however significantly higher than for those with a relatively strong nationality. Whereas for asylum migrants with a relatively 'high value' passport, naturalisation decreases the hazard of subsequent migration, for those with a 'low value' passport, naturalisation is associated with a higher hazard of subsequent migration. Although we find no linear pattern, we do observe that refugees with a weak former citizenship (lowest and second quartile) as well as those without a registered previous citizenship, are more likely to migrate after naturalisation as compared to refugees with an unknown or relatively high value citizenship. This finding supports hypothesis 4: a weak passport increases the likelihood that host country citizenship will lead to subsequent migration.

Competing outcomes: return and onward migration

In addition to the general models estimating subsequent migration as a singular event, three competing risk models serve to explore variation in mechanisms depending on the direction of the migration (see models 5–7 in Table 4). These models are estimated separately, allowing for comparison of hazard ratios in terms of direction and significance, but not size. We find that the negative association between Dutch citizenship and subsequent migration, which we previously observed (models 1 and 2), only pertains to asylum migrants who do not deregister from the Netherlands when they emigrate (model 7). In other words, asylum migrants are much less likely to leave the Netherlands without formal deregistration if they have acquired Dutch citizenship. This suggests a negative selection of the group of migrants who leave without formal deregistration in terms of legal, and possibly social, ties to the Netherlands.

The possession of a Dutch passport appears to strongly increase the hazard of registered onward migration. With Dutch citizenship acquisition, the hazard of this particular outcome is 3.9 times higher. For those who leave the Netherlands, Dutch citizenship effectively provides them with an EU passport that facilitates resettlement across internal EU borders. The main destinations of these new, mobile EU citizens are the United Kingdom

Table 4. Competing risk hazard models registered onward migration (model 5), registered return migration (model 6), Unknown destination (model 7)

| | Model 5: Onward migration | | Model 6: Return migration | | Model 7: Unknown destination | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------|------|---------------------------|------|------------------------------|------|
| | HR | sig. | HR | sig. | HR | sig. |
| Dutch citizenship (ref. = no) | 3.87 | *** | 0.98 | | 0.42 | *** |
| Other control variables ^a | Yes | | Yes | | Yes | |
| Observations | 654,048 | | 654,048 | | 654,048 | |
| N individuals | 59,352 | | 59,352 | | 59,352 | |
| N events | 7,788 | | 2,855 | | 9,442 | |
| N competing events | 12,297 | | 17,230 | | 10,643 | |
| Pseudo log likelihood | −81818 | | −30086 | | −94417 | |

*** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$

^aSee Table A5 of the appendix for hazard ratios of all covariates in the model.

Source: Statistics Netherlands.

(47.7%), Belgium (15.5%) and Germany (11.4%) (see Table A7 of the appendix). For migrants who register a return to their origin country, we observe an insignificant association of approximately 1 between Dutch citizenship and subsequent migration, suggesting that the increased transnational mobility that comes with a Dutch passport (including back to the Netherlands) may also play a role in the mobility considerations of this group.

Conclusion and discussion

Migration scholars have increasingly emphasised the importance of legal citizenship to migrants' international mobility. It has become apparent that in our contemporary globalised world, the value of host country citizenship lies not just in the rights it confers within a particular nation state, but also in rights to cross borders. In this contribution, we have focused on the naturalisation of refugees who obtained asylum in the Netherlands and how this legal status relates to their migration trajectories. Little is known about the demography, origins and socio-economic profile of those refugees for whom Dutch nationality appears to facilitate subsequent migration rather than ongoing residence within Dutch territory. We have addressed this research gap by employing register data that allow us to follow an entire cohort of refugees ($n = 60,218$) over a period of 12–16 years. By means of Cox proportional hazard models, we investigated for whom and under which conditions a Dutch passport has resulted in subsequent international migration.

We conclude that naturalisation of refugees is *generally* associated with long-term settlement in the Netherlands. This positive association, however, does not hold for all groups of refugees, but instead depends largely on the socio-economic position that refugees attain. For those who successfully navigate the Dutch labour market and find formal employment, naturalisation is likely to result in their staying. Recipients of welfare benefits are generally less likely to forsake the Netherlands than employed refugees, but only as long as they have not been naturalised. Once Dutch citizenship is acquired, this group of welfare beneficiaries is more likely to migrate again. Economically marginalised refugees with no form of registered income are more inclined to migrate again than those in employment, which applies to both naturalised and non-naturalised asylum migrants.

Based on the idea of a 'citizenship hierarchy' (Harpaz 2018), we have explored whether previous citizenship affects the role that a Dutch passport plays in migration trajectories. The 'quality' of a refugee's previous nationality appears to help determine whether the new passport provides 'citizenship-to-stay' or 'citizenship-to-go' (Della Puppa and Sredanovic 2017). Refugees who are or had been in possession of a relatively weak passport are generally less likely to leave the Netherlands than those with a stronger (previous) citizenship. Whereas for the latter group (relatively strong previous citizenship), Dutch citizenship decreases the relative chances of subsequent migration, naturalisation for the former group (weak previous citizenship) seems to bring 'citizenship-to-go'. Our findings indicate that host country citizenship is used as mobility capital in particular when asylum migrants plan to engage in *onward migration* (to a country other than their country of origin). We do not find a significant association between Dutch citizenship and registered migration to the country of origin (*return migration*). The absence of a negative effect implies that mobility and settlement resources derived from host country citizenship may be relevant also for (temporary) return to the country of origin. More research is

needed to explore the differentiated role of naturalisation in migration trajectories that include return migration. In this regard, dual citizenship – as a facilitator of return or circular migration – deserves specific attention.

The results of our research suggest that mobility capital in the form of a passport increases international migration especially among the most marginalised refugees. We should acknowledge that *international migration* is only one of the many ‘mobility outcomes’ that may be enhanced by naturalisation. In fact, various other types of transnational mobility, including circular migration, holidays and family visits, are also eased by means of a high value passport. The nature of our data restricts our empirical contribution to international migration and falls short in capturing other forms of international mobility. But it is plausible to assume an increase of alternative forms of mobility upon naturalisation, including amongst those who remain residents of the country of asylum.

Although in our analysis we distinguished between different types of migration, including return and onward migration, we should acknowledge the lack of information concerning the destination country for a substantial group of subsequent migrants. This group of ‘leavers’ refrained from registering their emigration and may have moved anywhere beyond Dutch borders while also continuing to visit the Netherlands irregularly. Further research into practices of (non-)registration of emigration is needed to more accurately estimate the mechanisms driving refugees’ onward versus return migration. In addition, more detailed information on the countries of (potential) destination of onward migrants is necessary to better understand which factors encourage (or discourage) their migration. Recent academic contributions have, for example, shown how (ethnic) communities in these other countries play an important role in both facilitating and shaping onward mobility aspirations (Schapendonk 2012; Toma and Castagnone 2015).

More research into the migration trajectories of younger cohorts of refugees is also desirable. As naturalisation requirements have become stricter and asylum procedures have altered over the past two decades, the mobility motivations and opportunities of those who arrived in the 2000s potentially differ from the nineties cohort. In addition, recent developments within the EU, particularly the Brexit referendum and its aftermath, may have serious consequences for migration decision-making by Dutch citizens with a refugee background. Onward migration was mostly directed to the UK. Whether migration to the UK has become less of an option after the referendum and whether refugees who moved to the UK will return to their countries of citizenship form exciting avenues for future research.

Notes

1. A minority of the asylum applicants who receive a residence permit in the Netherlands are recognized refugees based on the Geneva Convention. Most asylum applicants receive either subsidiary or humanitarian protection. In this article, the terms ‘refugee’ and ‘asylum migrant’ are used interchangeably and both refer to residence permit holders.
2. In the decade after the introduction of the New Aliens Act 1994, a relatively tolerant citizenship regime was in place. Only with the introduction of the Dutch citizenship law in April 2003 did requirements for naturalization become stricter, including language and integration tests as well as a fee for the applicant.
3. Some asylum migrants are removed from the registers only to reappear in the registers sometime after as legal residents. We ignore such ‘emigrations’ in cases where the gap between removal from the registers and reappearance is less than two years.

4. This concerns the main (economic) activity of the person. Welfare benefits include both employee benefits (unemployment, sick leave and disability) and national insurance (social benefits). In our sample, social benefits are by far the most common. These benefits are not portable to other countries.
5. We assume that the *sequence* of nationalities as recorded in the QNI did not change *substantially* in the decade prior to 2012.
6. A hazard rate of 0.58 means that the hazard or rate of subsequent migration for naturalised refugees is 42% ($1-0.58 \times 100\%$) or 1.7 ($1/0.58$) times *lower* than for non-naturalised refugees.

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