Negotiating place, culture and new Dutch identities:

Inclusion, exclusion and belonging in a grassroots refugee integration organisation in Utrecht, the Netherlands

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1 Introduction

> *The crucial objective for all of us should be the redefinition of the nation, expanding it beyond its ethnohistorical, 'traditional' image to a more inclusive one. And beyond brace of good politics, fostering integration, combating stereotypes, encouraging exchange, this requires a story, an account of where we came from, where we are and where we're going.* (Taylor in Meer *et al.* 2016: viii-ix)

The above quote by Charles Taylor in his work on interculturalism points out that in order to redefine nations that embrace diversity, we need a story. This paper aims to offer a particular story of refugee integration in the Netherlands through the example of De Voorkamer, a grassroots initiative located in Lombok, one of the most ethnically diverse neighbourhoods in the city of Utrecht. The initiative aims to enhance the integration of refugees and asylum seekers in ways that counter 'bureaucratic processes of integration' (Interview 7). In light of growing Islamophobia, the rise of right-wing populism and increasingly restrictive immigration politics across Europe, stories of inclusion, integration and belonging in cultural diversity are needed to a growing extent. An intercultural narrative may present new perspectives, filling a gap in both theories and practices of refugee integration.

De Voorkamer, like many other civil society initiatives in the Netherlands, was founded in December 2016 as a response to the high influx of refugees from 2014 onwards. The project – which literally translates into 'The Front Room' – is a physical meeting space, in which a variety of events and activities take place and around which a close-knit community of 'locals' and 'newcomers' has emerged. According to its members, the project of De Voorkamer is successful because of the equal involvement of locals and newcomers, as this enables interactions, connections and communication between and among different communities. The project explicitly opposes governmental integration processes and forwards a fluid and dynamic conception of integration, consisting of the creation of feelings of belonging to an inclusive space and diverse community. Consequently, its practices have been recognised by the municipality of Utrecht and have been acclaimed as 'successful refugee integration'.

The ethnically diverse population composition of Lombok, the neighbourhood in which De Voorkamer is located, mirrors a history of integration of minority communities in the Netherlands. This history is shaped by the influx of immigrants from former colonies Indonesia and Suriname and the arrival of Turkish and Moroccan guest workers in the 1960s and 1970s (Ehrhardt 2011). In policy, a multicultural model of cultural diversity, in which different cultural and religious communities co-existed in a relatively segregated manner, has been replaced by increasingly assimilationist expectations, especially towards Muslim communities (Fekete 2009 in Bagley and Al-Refai 2017: 84). Current narratives surrounding the integration of refugees in the Netherlands express an understanding of belonging that is conditional; an individual's integration must be proven by the fulfilment of state requirements (De Waal 2017: 51). Additionally, national policy assumes the presence of a comprehensive Dutch identity that immigrant populations, in this case refugees, are expected to integrate into. As such, governmental policy and De Voorkamer appear to propose opposing conceptions of successful refugee integration. De Voorkamer rejects the conditions that are set by the government and suggests a sense of 'belonging in diversity', which is supposedly enhanced by its location in an ethnically diverse neighbourhood.

In fact, the initiative presents the multicultural character of Lombok as 'a reflection of what [De Voorkamer] aims to achieve' and thus conceives the neighbourhood as an example of successful integration (Interview 7). Furthermore, the foundation of De Voorkamer in Lombok implies how refugee populations are thought to belong in a place in which a myriad of ethnic non-Western communities is concentrated. Such local communities are thereby assumed to create a more welcoming atmosphere for refugees than other locals would, as they supposedly share ethnicity, religion, language or a history of migration. However, in state and municipal policy documentation, the second-generation immigrant communities that inhabit Lombok continue to be referred to as non-nationals on the basis of ethnic difference, which dismantles the idea of 'belonging in diversity' and instead suggests a clear distinction between those who belong and those who do not. Additionally, the particular sense of belonging that newcomers express seems to be exclusive to De Voorkamer and Utrecht, whereas identifications with the Netherlands and 'Dutchness' are remarkably absent. The fact that newcomers keep coming back to De Voorkamer suggests that its practices forge notions of belonging which cannot be found elsewhere.

The observations above illustrate how De Voorkamer's particular location assumes certain conceptions of belonging, cultural diversity and integration. This thesis is predicated upon these assumptions and revolves around the interactions between communities of 'locals' and 'newcomers' in De Voorkamer, Lombok and Utrecht. Through an in-depth case study of De Voorkamer, by means of semi-structured interviews and a small-scale ethnographic sketch, it aims to examine the ways in which De Voorkamer facilitates specific processes of integration that have become exemplary for a particular conception of successful refugee integration. The research focuses on local and daily forms of belonging, aided by scholarship on refugee integration and interculturalism. This body of theory considers the social, cultural and identity dimensions of refugee integration, taking into account refugees' social interactions and relationships, their attitudes and behaviours, processes of home-making and the processes through which they develop a sense of belonging with the nation, communities and people among whom they live (Spencer and Charsley 2016).

After a detailed outline of the research methodology, a short description of the research context and the construction of a theoretical framework, three comprehensive chapters present the analytical body of the research. The first chapter discusses how De Voorkamer has become 'a special kind of place'. It examines particular notions of belonging, considering practices of home-making and intercultural co-creation. As understandings of successful refugee integration are implicated by the way in which conceptualisations of integration are narrated to audiences, they are embedded in a discourse of cultural diversity. Guided by De Voorkamer's practices and self-identifications, the second chapter therefore explores discourses of multiculturalism and interculturalism, analysing the binary of 'local' and 'newcomer' through terminologies of sameness and difference. Finally, assisted by an intersectional lens, the third chapter looks at different levels of engagement among locals and newcomers, investigating to what extent instances of inclusion and exclusion inform feelings of belonging.

Ultimately, this research aims to demonstrate whether and how De Voorkamer – in the words of Charles Taylor – fosters integration, combats stereotypes and encourages exchange, and thereby offers insights on what successful refugee integration, in the Netherlands and beyond, might entail.

2 Methodology

For this research, I collected my data through eight semi-structured interviews with members of De Voorkamer and an ethnographic sketch of the initiative's daily practices. I was introduced to the project by naturally passing it several times when living in Lombok. I reached out to the initiators several months before having to begin my research, and after exchanging ideas with them, De Voorkamer was identified as the site of fieldwork. The initiators' input and expertise has partially informed the research design and methodology. Resultantly, the research design was based on fitness for purpose (Silverman 2011) and informed by examples of similar research (Smets and Ten Kate 2008; Sorgen 2015; Marlowe 2018). Furthermore, it built on anthropological principles, aiming to capture the versatility and unicity of refugee voices (Preis and Hinton 1996; BenEzer and Zetter 2015), yet attempting to observe more general tendencies among a specific refugee population as well.

Throughout the research I adhere to a number of specific terms and categories. When speaking of 'members', I refer to all members of the community surrounding De Voorkamer, regardless of their position and role in the organisation, their level of engagement or their cultural background. At times, I indicate members' specific involvement with regard to De Voorkamer, distinguishing between 'volunteers', 'employees', 'initiators' and 'visitors'. On other occasions I differentiate between 'newcomers' and 'locals' – observing De Voorkamer's self-proclaimed terminology – to distinguish between refugees, status holders, asylum seekers and other newcomers on the one hand, and people that have lived in the Netherlands for a longer period of time – including second-generation migrants – on the other hand.[1] When using the term 'participant', I refer to those members who participated in the research.

Method selection

In total, I conducted eleven semi-structured interviews over the course of eight days. Each interview commenced with the same set of orienting questions, yet as interviews proceeded, their course evolved depending on the participant (Appendix 2). Participants included the initiators of De Voorkamer, an intern, a paid employee and several volunteers (Appendix 1). Apart from the initiators, participants were recruited from the moment of arrival, as I met them during one of De Voorkamer's events or upon introduction by the initiators. Recruitment was thus cumulative and assisted by a snowball sampling technique (Kaplan *et al.* 1987). Three of the interviews were conducted with interviewees who were not directly involved in De Voorkamer, but in similar initiatives. The data collected through those interviews has been used to contextualise findings, however is not directly included in the analysis. Additionally, I engaged in a participant-observer methodology for eight days in order to draw an ethnographic sketch of De Voorkamer, its events and the surrounding community. Because of the short time span of the research, the sketch does not amount to a conventional long-term ethnography, but rather reflects its method of observation and participation.

During the day, I used De Voorkamer as my office, interviewing participants or attending meetings between the initiators and external parties, or among participants. During events, which included an International Dinner, a women's event, two language cafes, Straffe Koffie – an Arabic coffee house and game night – and a one-off discussion event, I participated and observed. At times, the ethnographic sketch and interviews overlapped, as I conducted all interviews in De Voorkamer,

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[1] The term 'refugee' is used according to the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees.

while volunteers, employees and the initiators were following their daily routines, yet also had in-depth conversations with members during events. There were several occasions on which I met with members outside of De Voorkamer, as they invited me to come along to a film project and social gatherings.

The use of semi-structured interviews enabled the input of participants and facilitated the exploring of their perceptions and experiences. The orienting questions were designed in an open-ended and malleable manner, in order to avoid assuming certain responses and leaving room for participants' subjective interpretations. During interviews, questions were posed in an iterative manner, implicitly alluding certain thematic directions. I paid special attention to attentive listening and the careful representation of responses, which is reflected in the colloquial – yet detailed – transcribing of the conducted interviews (Bailey 2008). All interviews served to inform the analytical component of the research and a number of direct quotes was selected to be anonymously included in the research. An overview of all data collection is included in Appendix 1.

In order to appreciate the elaborate insights collected through interviews and the ethnographic sketch, I have adhered to an interpretivist approach, incorporating both objective and subjective discursive analysis (Della Porta and Keating 2008). As mentioned, the co-construction of data collection was at the heart of the epistemological approach and produced an extensive consciousness of power relations – and imbalances – between myself and participants, and the embedded notions of agency in the process of meaning-making, interpretation and narrativity (White 1980; Pittaway and Bartolomei 2001; Leavy 2014). Before beginning the fieldwork, considerable attention was paid to researcher positionality and reflexivity, ethical dimensions – which were approved through a formal CUREC procedure – and potential limitations. Throughout the research I observed what Kathy Charmaz coins as standing '*within* the research process, rather than above, before or outside it' (2006: 180).

The interpretation of all collected data – both through interviews and by means of the ethnographic sketch – was an active process that was affected by my researcher positionality. As a former inhabitant of Lombok, my connection to Lombok, and Utrecht more generally, has generated a particular interest in the city and resulted in specific knowledge stemming from personal experience that does not compare to other contexts. Furthermore, being a young, white, highly educated woman has potentially impacted data collection, for example in the recruitment of participants – by attracting or discouraging certain participants – or in the kind of information that was shared with me. Hence, in some respects, I engaged in a form of intercultural dialogue similar to the one I analyse (Stokke and Lybæk 2016).

Ethical concerns

During participant-observation components of the research, I informed participants of my researcher position and asked them for verbal consent when a conversation started to develop in a more personal direction. I took short written notes in a notebook and recorded some of my observations on my mobile phone. When conducting interviews, participants were informed of the research subject, its purpose and its methodology. Each interviewee signed a written consent form and every interview was recorded and stored safely. When interviewing or conversing with participants, I adapted my use of language – either Dutch or English – to their preference.

For the sake of precluding the essentialisation of participants' insights and experiences, the research considered principles of intersectionality, which allowed for the integration of notions of race, gender, age and class into the analysis (Marlowe 2018). In order to 'grasp the everyday praxis of

group formation in its variability and context dependency' (Wimmer 2004: 4) and focus on participants' membership of the community surrounding De Voorkamer, participants were not assumed to belong to cultural, religious or ethnic communities, unless they proclaimed to do so themselves (Hage 2005; Anderson 2006). Interviews were conducted in a space familiar to participants and participants were helped to feel comfortable at all times. The research has been presented to all participants, who have been offered the opportunity to comment on the findings. De Voorkamer as an organisation may use the results of the research to their benefit if desired.

Limitations

Firstly, I acknowledge the impact of time constraints, as I conducted interviews and engaged in a small-scale ethnographic sketch over the course of one week. Therefore, I have spoken to a limited number of people, whose experiences and insights do not necessarily reflect those of other members of De Voorkamer. Secondly, De Voorkamer is a relatively young and small organisation. Findings mirror this and cannot be presented as findings that apply to all grassroots initiatives assisting refugee integration in the Netherlands. As becomes apparent in Chapter Three of the research, not all newcomers and locals in Utrecht are included the practices of De Voorkamer, and thus no general claims can be made with regard to their integration preferences and needs. Thirdly, over the course of the research, some elements of the collected data proved to be more relevant than others. To conclude, as a detailed study of a specific organisation, the research offers findings that contribute to modest claims on grassroots refugee integration processes and refugee experiences in the Netherlands.

3 Research context: refugees in the Netherlands

Despite increasingly restrictive EU immigration policies, the Netherlands has seen an increased number of asylum applications since the 2014 so-called 'Refugee Crisis'. In 2015 numbers were highest, as a total of 43,093 asylum applications were filed (Vluchtelingenwerk Nederland 2018). In 2016, numbers had dropped to 18,171 and in 2017, 'only' 14,716 applications were filed. In all three years, the largest number of applicants originated from Syria (18,677 in 2015) and Eritrea (7,359 in 2015), closely followed by Iraq (3,009 in 2015), Afghanistan (2,550 in 2015), Iran (1,884 in 2015), and Albania (1,005 in 2015). In 2016, 97% of Syrian applications and 96% of Eritrean applications were approved, as opposed to 52%, 35% and 48% of Iranian, Afghan and Iraqi applications respectively (Ibid.). Consequently, as of 1 January 2018, the city of Utrecht counted 2,867 refugees, who live either in one of the three AZCs or in independent housing (Gemeente Utrecht 2018a).

In the Netherlands, formal processes of integration do not start upon arrival, but when legal refugee status is attributed. Legislation prevents asylum seekers from engaging in paid employment and prohibits them from seeking formal Dutch language training. Controversially, once refugee status is attributed, refugees are expected to initiate their formal integration process immediately. According to the 2017 governmental coalition agreement 'integration is a duty and a requirement for the obtainment of citizenship' (Regeerakkoord 2017: 54). The agreement drafts an understanding of successful integration as 'participation' – 'learning the language, being part of the labour market, contributing to society and respecting Dutch liberties and equalities' – which is dependent on refugees' personal initiative as well as 'a society that facilitates the equal development of talent' (De Waal 2017: 31; Ibid.). As a result, narratives surrounding the integration of refugees in the

Netherlands express an understanding of belonging that is conditional, and successful integration is thus predicated on a presumed comprehensive collection of Dutch 'norms and values' and a cohesive Dutch identity (De Waal 2017: 51).

4 An intercultural framework of refugee integration

In order to unpack the assumptions sketched in the introduction and, as the opening quote by Charles Taylor in his work on interculturalism points out, to foster integration, combat stereotypes and encourage intercultural exchange, we need a story, 'an account of where we came from, where we are and where we're going' (Taylor in Meer *et al.* 2016: viii-ix). In order to uncover stories of successful refugee integration, the first section of this analytical framework discusses different notions of refugee integration and identifies a working definition. Furthermore, any understanding of successful refugee integration is grounded in a discourse of cultural diversity, which implicates the way in which conceptualisations of integration – stories – may be narrated to audiences. Therefore, the second section examines discourses of multiculturalism and interculturalism, forwarding how conceptions of integration are embedded in terminologies of sameness and difference. Finally, the third section introduces both a local focus and an intersectional lens, which assist in revealing elements of inclusion and exclusion within refugee integration. The order and content of the sections in this intercultural framework of belonging correlate with each of the analytical chapters.

Refugee integration

Lucy Hovil describes integration as the ending of 'exile', by which refugees become full members of the host community (2014: 488). Yet, it is that 'full' which is subjected to discussion; when does someone become a full member of society? The European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) has been a forerunner in the coining of refugee integration as a 'two-way and dynamic process', which places 'demands on both receiving societies and the individuals or communities concerned' (1999: 29). In a recent overview of conceptualisations of integration processes, Spencer and Charsley conclude that academic consensus on integration being at least 'two-way' exists (2016). A majority of scholars acknowledge the importance of the position of the host government, as well as the relationship between local populations and refugees (Jacobsen 2001; Zetter *et al.* 2006; Valtonen 2008; Polzer 2009; Strang and Ager 2010; Spencer 2016). Similarly, the UNHCR Resettlement Handbook describes integration as 'a mutual, dynamic, multifaceted and ongoing process', which involves refugees' adaptation to the host state's 'way of living', without losing 'one's own cultural identity' (2011: 53). Strang and Ager go beyond a 'two-way' conception and advocate a multidimensional approach, in which relationships are formed between people with 'multiple and overlapping identities' (2010: 602). This evolving process implies that there is no end-state to integration and no such thing as an 'integrated society' (Phillimore 2012). Following from this observation, moving away from state- and policy-centred perspectives, which entails the inclusion of refugee voices and experiences, is crucial in order to grasp the dynamic nature of integration (Griffith *et al.* 2005; Strang and Ager 2010; Marlowe 2018).

An emphasis on refugees as primary social actors, considering their expectations, intentions and experiences, allows the inclusion of social, cultural and identity dimensions in conceptualisations of refugee integration (Jacobsen 2001; Losi and Strang 2008; Spencer 2016). As governmental integration policies predominantly stress political and economic participation, these dimensions are

often neglected (Korac 2009; Polzer 2009). A focus on social, cultural and identity dimensions of integration incorporates refugees' social interactions and relationships, their attitudes and behaviours, processes of home-making and the 'processes through which they develop a shared identity and sense of belonging with nation, communities and people among whom they live' (Korac 2009; Spencer 2016: 5; Marlowe 2018). As such, this research adopts a working definition of integration much like Polzer's, which suggests that exchanges between refugees and local communities can be seen as negotiations over the creation of new value systems and forms of belonging which instruct the ways in which further interaction takes place (2009: 93). Integration is thus a process through which immigrants, refugees in this case, change society as they integrate into it (ECRE 2002: 9). Additionally, as such integration primarily takes place at the local level, it is 'voluntary and community organisations that, along with families and neighbours' that are central to integration process (Spicer in Papademetriou 2006: 26).

An intercultural framework

Cultural, social and identity dimensions of integration do not exist in a vacuum. They are embedded in a discourse of cultural diversity, which inherently affects the way interactions between refugees and local populations take place and are understood. Culture provides individuals with a 'sense of identity and a source of belonging' (Kymlicka 1995: 89). Parekh adds that the value of culture lies in its 'unassimilable otherness', which tests and expands the limits of intellectual and moral categories of thought (2000: 167). He thereby acknowledges the inescapability and desirability of cultural diversity (Parekh 2000; Meer *et al.* 2016). As such, cultural diversity offers a way through which individuals can understand their culture, societies can mediate intercultural conflict and different cultural communities can engage in intercultural dialogue (Parekh 2000: 168). The integration of cultural minorities, like refugee communities, into host societies is thus implicated by an understanding of cultural diversity, which determines negotiations over who belongs and why. Discourses of multiculturalism and interculturalism both aim to reconcile cultural diversity within unity (Meet *et al.* 2016). Meer *et al.* suggest that both 'isms' oppose 'assimilationist ideas of membership and policy perspectives concerning citizenship' such as those prevalent in the Netherlands (Ibid.: 9). Similarly, Taylor stresses that both multi- and interculturalism seek to integrate increasingly diverse societies on the basis of equality, rather than 'pursuing the assimilation of *newcomers* to some (supposed) ancestral identity' (Taylor 2012; Ibid.: vii, 9). As such, multiculturalism and interculturalism redefine the normative terms on which individuals and cultural groups are treated equally, through the inclusion of cultural difference. As a result, refugee populations can be incorporated in the host society, in spite of cultural differences.

However, a large body of scholarship acknowledges the shortcomings of multiculturalism, both as a theoretical and policy framework. Multiculturalism concentrates on accommodating and integrating ethnic minorities – primarily migrant and post-migrant populations – into the state through resolving distinctive notions of nationality, ethnicity and race by new forms of citizenship (Tully 2000; Benhabib 2002: vii; Modood and Meer 2013: 113; Meer *et al.* 2016: 3). This focus on citizenship is widely accused of causing social fragmentation, partial segregation, and cultural isolation. Additionally, multiculturalism appears to be unable to generate a shared identity and sense of belonging that incorporates cultural diversity without essentialising and emphasising ethnic affiliations (Berg and Sigona 2013: 348; Guidikova 2014; Meer *et al.* 2016). As a result, multicultural policies in Europe have slowed, or even inhibited, processes of integration (Cantle 2012; Meer *et al.* 2016: 18). Instead, Cantle forwards interculturalism to replace and complement multiculturalism (Cantle 2012: 2).

Interculturalism's core meaning is captured by a support for cross-cultural and intercultural dialogue which is inevitable, beneficial and dynamic (Ibid.). It thereby offers a more applicable and comprehensive framework to examine a 'dynamic and constantly changing environment in which individuals and collectives express multiple, hybrid and evolving identities and needs' (Guidikova 2014: 14; Cantle 2016; Zapata-Barrero 2016). Additionally, interculturalism is equally concerned with the interests of the majority culture and those of minorities and immigrants (Bouchard 2011: 438; Van Oudenhoven 2013). Accordingly, an interculturalist framework moves beyond the mere acceptance of the multicultural fact of cultural diversity and allows for a comprehensive understanding of refugee integration on the basis of cultural exchange and social interactions.

Local and daily forms of belonging

Guidikova explains how interculturalism encourages the adequate representation of diverse groups, enhances positive intercultural mixing and interaction, and stimulates institutional capacity to deal with cultural conflict (2014: 1). As interculturalism has been marked by forging responses to urban diversity (Zapata-Barrero 2016) and has become foundational to new integration policies (Guidikova 2014), it is marked by a change of scale. Rather than managing cultural diversity on the *national level*, interculturalism seeks equal political and cultural treatment of culturally diverse populations through the inclusion of cultural difference on a *city level* (Amin 2002; Vertovec 2007; Spicer 2008; Zapata-Barrero 2016; Meer *et al.* 2016; Peterson 2017). Following a shift from the national to the urban (the local), interculturalism, as opposed to multiculturalism, covers 'the multi-faceted aspects of difference and otherness, including those based on disability, age, sexual orientation and gender, crosses national boundaries and reflects the heterogeneity of national, ethnic and faith groups' (Cantle in Meer *et al.* 2016: 135). As such, interculturalism offers a framework that incorporates local dimensions of cultural diversity as well as intersectional instances of difference (Yuval-Davis 2006; Berg and Sigona 2013). Through its local focus, an intercultural framework might reveal elements of stratification within conceptualisations of refugee integration. It thereby explores how instances of inclusion and exclusion support, create and constrain belonging in local contexts (Peterson 2017; 1069; Marlowe 2018: 33).

In addition to emphasising local interactions and exchange, an interculturalist framework links people's transnational and intersectional relationships to 'the microlevel of everyday life' (Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Baldassar *et al.* 2007; Levitt & Jaworsky 2007; Peterson 2017; Vertovec 2007; Faist 2010; Berg and Sigona 2013: 355; Castles *et al.* 2014; Marlowe 2018). The microlevel of the everyday zooms in on entities like cities and neighbourhoods, and overcomes static conceptions of belonging to a single culture, by cherishing these entities as the culturally heterogeneous places they are (Amin 2002: 972; Spicer 2008; Berg and Sigona 2013). Marlowe suggests a distinction between 'the everyday' and 'the extraordinary', which is marked by the way in which people's understanding and management of extraordinary happenings – such as flight or uprootedness – is captured in everyday actions and perceptions (2018). In the case of refugees, these actions and perceptions are dependent on multi-stranded social and cultural relations that link together societies of origin and settlement (Basch *et al.* 1994 in Marlowe 2018). Consequently, the everyday can be considered as a collection of 'sites and moments of translation and adaptation' (Neal and Murji 2015: 811) or what Marlowe calls 'socio-spatial forms of inclusion and exclusion' (Marlowe 2018: 33). In other words, because an intercultural framework allows a nuanced exploration of cultural diversity through *local* and *daily* interactions, it is able to capture the, sometimes exclusionary, nature of belonging and thereby reveals the limits of processes of refugee integration, ultimately uncovering understandings of 'successful refugee integration'.

5 Findings and analysis

A special kind of place

In its ambition to stimulate 'feelings of belonging and facilitate an inclusive and diverse meeting space where people can connect through talent and creation' (Interview 7), De Voorkamer propagates an intercultural understanding of refugee integration. This chapter therefore examines conceptions of belonging in space and community through the experiences and impressions of both newcomers and locals. It explores why newcomers seem to keep coming back to Utrecht in order to visit this particular space in Lombok. The first section outlines how practices in De Voorkamer can be understood through theories of home-making and belonging, resulting in the perception of De Voorkamer as 'a special kind of place' among members. The chapter moves on to consider intercultural exchange as exemplified through notions of ownership and co-creation. Finally, the last section examines to what extent practices in and around De Voorkamer generate a sense of belonging that is unique and exclusive to Utrecht.

Finding home in De Voorkamer

De Voorkamer consists of a simple rectangular space with a small kitchen and minimal furniture (Figure 1). It organises recurring events, including Arabic and Dutch Language Cafes, Straffe Koffie (an Arabic Coffee House), Samen Zingen (Singing Together) and monthly women's events, as well as one-off 'special events', such as International Dinner, Hammam Verhalen (storytelling), film screenings and many more food, music and culture related events. Several members indicate that – despite some of them having moved away from Utrecht – they frequent De Voorkamer and attend its events, because it is 'a special kind of place' in which they feel they belong (Interview 3; 5; 8). They suggest various elements which seem to foster the special and unique nature of De Voorkamer. These include the project's home-like familiar atmosphere, its continuous physical presence and accessibility, its low threshold of engagement and commitment, the flexibility of the space, and most of all it being a place where newcomers and locals meet to build collective networks based on shared interests and talents. This section outlines elements of continuity, informality, flexibility, accessibility and inclusivity in three subsections, discussing notions of home, aspects of familiarity and material design.
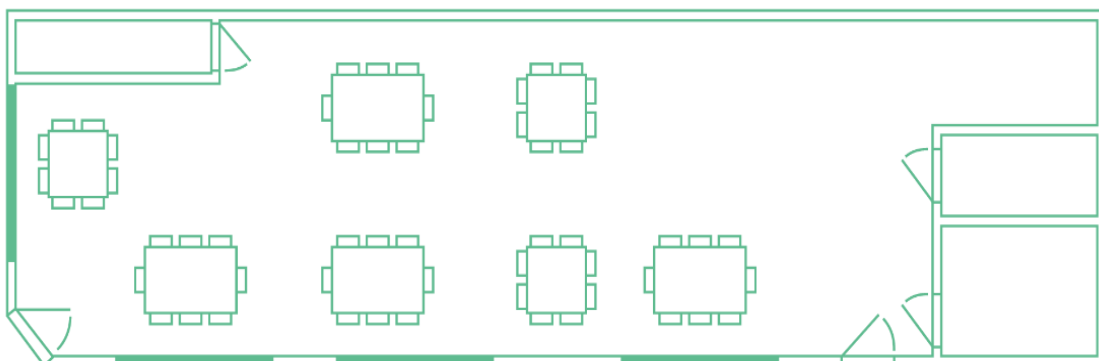

Figure 1: De Voorkamer Ground Plan (*Source: De Voorkamer)*

Human movement from one location to another, or forced migration in the case of refugees, is always accompanied by the transformation of human relations (Bascom 1998: 130). Yuval-Davis argues that notions of belonging come to the fore when under threat. This means that when refugees arrive in the new setting of a host society, issues of belonging surface among both refugees and host populations (2011). As belonging is closely related to conceptions of 'home', some of people's most personal and intimate self-identifications are implicated in redefining a sense of belonging (Bisharat in Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 10; Antonsich 2010; Yuval- Davis 2011). Members deem the formation of a community surrounding the space as the most important contribution to feelings of home and a sense of belonging in De Voorkamer (Hollands 2001; All interviews). This illustrates that as locations become permeated in people's everyday lived experiences, they have the capacity to develop into a space that informs feelings of belonging, security, freedom, opportunity and empowerment (Spicer 2008: 492). Through the forging of social networks and friendships, newcomers are provided not only with social support and a safety net, but also are stimulated to 'start their lives' and to connect to the city (Spicer 2008: 492; Antonsich 2010: 652; Interview 5).

As the social group with which a person identifies is altered according to context, feelings of belonging are determined by the generating of place-belongingness – (re)creating instances of home or familiarity – to a diverse group of members (Antonsich 2010: 652; Marlowe 2018). The spaces in which processes of integration take place are thus inherently social and therefore crucial in facilitating intercultural exchange between locals and newcomers (Gardner 1993: 5; Strang and Ager 2010; Sorgen 2015). When informally enquiring about the role of De Voorkamer in newcomer participants' lives, a striking number of them expressed how the space and people in it were like 'a second home' to them (Interview 3; 5; Ethnographic sketch). Upon further questioning their understandings of 'home', participants specified that home is a place where you do not have to pretend to be someone else, where you are understood, your opinions are valued and where 'you are not obliged to do anything but can be involved if you wish' (Interview 2; 4; 3; 5; 6). One participant strikingly argued 'you could have all the material possessions in the world, but if you haven't got a friend, then you won't feel at home' (Interview 8). De Voorkamer is thus perceived as 'home' due to a combination of the space itself and the social networks surrounding it.

Participants understood the physical presence of the space as an element that embodied the continuous – static if you will – accessibility of a home, which is a place one can always return to (Interview 2; 3; 5; 6; Malkki 1992; Korac 2009; Yuval-Davis 2011). To many newcomer participants, De Voorkamer fulfils a primary function in their lives and frequenting the space is included in daily, weekly or monthly routines, even though no formal commitment is made. One participant notes that the reason De Voorkamer is popular among newcomers and locals is because no one is obliged to fulfil any expectations. He continues to explain how Dutch people seem compelled to commit to a project after attending twice or three times, in order to properly incorporate it in their busy schedules. Participation in De Voorkamer, however, is not dependent on regularity of attending, and so members can adapt their level of engagement to fit other – educational, professional and social – commitments. Thus, the informal, home-like atmosphere that is transmitted in De Voorkamer activates newcomers and locals to participate with varying levels of engagement, whenever and however it suits them best. This suggests that participants ascribe notions of home to a level of informality, flexibility, continuity, accessibility and inclusivity, reflecting theorised factors of home-making (Antonsich 2010: 647-8). As newcomers describe De Voorkamer as a secondary home, their continuous transnational attachments to countries of origin, where their relatives, family homes and cultural attachments remain, are revealed (Basch *et al.* 1994).

Additionally, feelings of belonging to De Voorkamer are stimulated by instances of familiarity through its surroundings (Antonsich 2010: 652). The way De Voorkamer is positioned in Lombok, a small neighbourhood quarter in Utrecht West, is believed to impact its accessibility and therefore familiarity to members. The space is located on the Kanaalstraat (Figure 2), which hosts a great many stores, cafes and other services, owned by entrepreneurs of various ethnic backgrounds, including Persian, Iraqi, Moroccan, Turkish, Surinamese and Indonesian. The presumption is that newcomers are likely to know the Kanaalstraat as it is one of the central roads connecting one of two major asylum seeker centres (AZC) in Utrecht to the city centre. However, several newcomer participants point out that they were introduced to De Voorkamer by word of mouth, often after they had left the AZC and were living independently in Utrecht or elsewhere (Interview 3; 5). This implies that the strategic location of De Voorkamer does not cause members' initial attraction to the project. Rather it is De Voorkamer that introduces the neighbourhood to newcomers, thereby familiarising refugee populations with this part of Utrecht.

Figure 2: De Voorkamer as seen from The Kanaalstraat (*Source: De Voorkamer*)

According to the municipality of Utrecht, Lombok enjoys unity in its atmosphere and has 'a high degree of multiculturality' (Gemeente Utrecht 2018b). It has an average of 61% *autochthon* Dutch population and a significant percentage of inhabitants with a non-Western migratory background. Local members – who often live outside of Lombok and of whom the majority has no migratory background – emphasise Lombok's ethnically diverse composition and attribute De Voorkamer's success partially to its location in such a diverse environment (Interview 1; 4; 7). Their belief in the success of a refugee integration project in Lombok fits the aforementioned expectation that newcomers are likely to consider an environment that is inhabited by populations with a migratory background familiar and thus more accessible (Amin 2002: Spicer 2008). New bonds and collaborations with the neighbourhood continue to be sought as the idea that different migratory populations can 'help each other out' continues to prevail (Interview 7; 8). Despite local conceptions, newcomers do not explicitly express familiarity with the multicultural nature of Lombok as a source

of belonging. Rather, instances of familiarity are found within the space itself, as this is the socio-spatial site where newcomers' 'extraordinary refugee-identity' is normalised, thereby revealing identities that go beyond legal status and traumatic experience (Marlowe 2018: 35). In other words, De Voorkamer normalises being a newcomer and thus offers newcomers familiarity in the ordinary practice of everyday life.

In addition, as space is a socially constructed set of configurations, familiarity is comprised in De Voorkamer through the way the room is used (Anthias 2012: 103; Marlowe 2018: 34). Two participants explain how De Voorkamer resembles what they call *manzul* in Syria (Interview 3).[2] A manzul is a secondary home or apartment that people 'keep open for most of their friends', so that everyone invited through word of mouth can come whenever they want. According to the participants 'De Voorkamer is like a manzul, which is the reason why people continue to come' (Ibid.). This expresses how the informal nature of coming and going is familiar to many Syrians, and possibly other Middle Eastern nationals. Like a manzul, De Voorkamer is principally embedded in the creation of a low symbolic and actual threshold to enter the space (Phillimore 2012). The room is accessible throughout the week and keys have been distributed among those who frequently require access. The presence of a group of regular members alongside a small number of highly engaged employees further creates a sense of familiarity among members, as they are welcomed by 'friendly faces' which they recognise upon entering the space. There are no parts within De Voorkamer that have been attributed to one person in particular: everything is communal and no one has a private desk or designated seat. All elements and resources present are equally available to all members, as would be the case in their homes (Strang and Ager 2010). Thus, like the aforementioned notions of home, instances of familiarity are integral to De Voorkamer's creation of a sense of belonging and are informed by configurations of continuity, accessibility, flexibility, inclusivity and informality.

De Voorkamer's welcoming nature, enhanced by the aforementioned configurations, is further reproduced through the creation, design and usage of the room (Antonsich 2010; Anthias 2012). The former commercial purpose of the room has left large windows allowing full exposure of any activity inside. A large noticeboard listing weekly events and activities in English and Arabic is visible from the street to any passers-by. As a result of this open-door policy, it frequently happens that people spontaneously enter the space to inquire into its mission and functioning. The founders of De Voorkamer call this strategy 'Living Room Recruitment' (Raviv *et al.* 2017: 18). The initiators highlight the conscious balancing of an ornamental Eastern aesthetics and more abstract, hip design (Interview 7). A hard-to-define combination of light, colours and atmosphere means 'that something happens' (Ibid.). Although the exact processes that bring about such a place are difficult to pinpoint, both a sense of home and familiarity seem to be manifested in objects through hinting at members' contributions which reflect diverse talents and backgrounds (Woodward 2013). Photos of past and present participants are hanging on the walls, alongside descriptions and depictions of successful projects. The inscribing of objects with meaning and history informs the way in which participants interact with the objects and with the space surrounding these objects, thereby conveying feelings of inclusion, familiarity, home and thus belonging (Antonsich 2010). This process transforms physical place into metaphorical space, in which objects and properties have become central to understanding cultural and social relations, relating back to the inherent connection between space and community (Armburster 2002: 20; Woodward 2013). In sum, members are made to feel that they belong in De Voorkamer, because elements of the design are familiar and the use of the room is tailored to their equal needs and preferences.

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[2] Manzul/Manzil (منزل) is literally translated from Arabic as room, house, apartment, domicile, flat or dwelling.

Elements of informality, accessibility, flexibility, continuity and inclusiveness in De Voorkamer thus form the basis on which configurations between members of De Voorkamer's community and its space take place. Through the formation of a community, the place has transcended its physical existence and instead functions as a metaphorical space that participants describe as a sort of 'home'. A sense of belonging is facilitated as interactions between members occur and relationships emerge, by which newcomers' 'extraordinary lives' are normalised. The following section elaborates on the nature of these interactions, discussing matters of intercultural exchange, co-creation and ownership.

Intercultural co-creation

> *Co-creation is an important feature of home-making. It involves people in the making of a space and stimulates a sense of ownership (Interview 7).*

When refugees arrive in the Netherlands as asylum seekers, they find themselves in a position with very little decision-making opportunities and hardly any personal property. They live in isolated refugee centres and are often treated as a collective uniform group, by which internal differentiations and personal identities are often disregarded (Interview 7). Through its personal approach, focus on talent development and involving newcomers in every element of its organisation, De Voorkamer re-attributes newcomers' individualism, recognising their uniqueness and personal capacities (Ibid.). This section demonstrates how feelings of belonging stimulate and at the same time are enhanced by practices of co-creation and ownership. It is these two concepts that are at the heart of an intercultural understanding of successful refugee integration as propagated by De Voorkamer. As intercultural integration takes place on the basis of equal exchange and dialogue between members of the majority and minority culture – here locals and newcomers – active involvement of both groups facilitates such integration on the premise of 'co-creation'. Additionally, the practices that allow such cultural co-creation – activities and events organised by and in De Voorkamer – are dependent on the input of members, who are encouraged to claim 'ownership' of the project by actively engaging and participating. The creation of dynamic and interactive bonds – points of reference as well as identification – among members and between them and De Voorkamer as a place, generates the emergence of new cultural forms, which in turn shape the community that has erupted surrounding De Voorkamer.

Co-creation in De Voorkamer has come to mean the twofold relationship between benefitting from organised events and contributing to the organisation of other events, whereby members are instilled with 'ownership'. One participant attributes the success of De Voorkamer to 'the equal involvement of everyone' (Parekh 2000: 239; Interview 3). Neither locals or newcomers are deemed more important or valuable for the functioning of the space, which stimulates equality and respectful interactions between participants (Bouchard 2011: 438). As a result, many newcomers have initiated their own activities, 'which shows how involved and empowered they've become' (ECRE 1999: 29; Interview 8). The two-way process of exchange that is stimulated through De Voorkamer is very important for newcomers, as it acknowledges their presence explicitly, reinstalls a feeling of purpose and ownership, and prevents that they 'come to the game after the rules have been set' (Young 1990: 165; Interview 3; 5; 8). The best example of such 'co-creation' is the two language cafés that are organised alongside each other every week, one Arabic and one Dutch. Not only is language exchanged, but different members are responsible for the organisation of each cafe. Newcomers utilise their capacities and talents in order to contribute to the organisation of services, instead of merely being on the receiving end of support. Furthermore, attributing responsibility to members in various events creates feelings of pride and validation. One participant notes how 'being a

coordinator of De Voorkamer makes [him] happy and proud to be involved' (Interview 5). He also points out that finding a role and purpose in De Voorkamer has helped him to 'stop feeling new' (Ibid.). Thus, co-creation instils members with a feeling of ownership which seems to coincide with members' sense of belonging in De Voorkamer; the more involved they are, the more they feel they belong, and the more they feel they belong, the more confident they feel to contribute.

Subsequently, as interculturalism's core meaning is captured by intercultural dialogue and exchange, co-creation stimulates the interaction of different cultures coming together in De Voorkamer (Cantle 2012: 2). This enhances the emergence of new ideas, communities and identities (Gielis 2009; Meer *et al.* 2016: 11). The success of De Voorkamer is then dependent on the equivalent involvement of locals and newcomers, since both communities introduce different cultures (Parekh 2000: 168). In the words of one participant: '[De Voorkamer is] a place where I can meet new people, but where I can also offer these people my own culture' (Interview 2). Another participant explains how the Dutch need to learn how to become more open, while he wants to learn how to become more direct, indicating how interactions in De Voorkamer constantly impact his conceptions of identity and culture, making him feel like he belongs (Guidikova 2014: 14; Interview 5).

Apart from attributing feelings of ownership and stimulating new cultural forms, co-creation leaves physical marks in De Voorkamer, which directly demonstrate members' involvement and thus further stimulate a sense of belonging (Miller 2006; Woodward 2013;). The aforementioned photos of members on the wall, as well as the stools, tables and ceramics that were designed and manufactured for De Voorkamer's opening in 2016, not only enable the functioning of the room, but also acknowledge members contributions, sparking feelings of confidence and pride (Smyth and Kum in Strang and Ager 2010: 600). Contributing to the functioning of a space in different ways, whether it be by creating its furniture, designing its wallpaper, organising events or serving coffee during events, endorses newcomers' agency – which is often considered lost as a result of displacement and subsequent settlement in a country of asylum – and reintroduces a sense of purpose (Korac 2009). Material imprints of involvement are inherent to a sense of home and belonging, constituting connection and attachment to a place.

This section has demonstrated how De Voorkamer's practices inherently stem from an intercultural understanding of integration. Through interactions between people, place and objects, De Voorkamer is constantly shaped by its members while in turn, members' identities are changed by engagement with the space and intercultural interactions with other members. As such, a community that is intimately engaged with a particular place is dependent on levels of co-creation and ownership. As the community consists of newcomers and locals, intercultural exchange is facilitated. Together co-creation and intercultural exchange enhance a feeling of connectedness and belonging to both the space and the community. The next section explores to what extent practices of co-creation generate a sense of belonging that is unique and exclusive to Utrecht

Belonging in Utrecht

> *Utrecht is in my heart, it's my hometown. When I bike past the Galgenwaard[3] and I hear a goal has been scored, I am really happy and I feel home (Ethnographic Sketch).*

According to Gaspar and Fonseca, cities are the places where immigrants 'can most quickly find points of reference around which to build new ways of life' (2006: 73). The location of De Voorkamer in Lombok encourages belonging into a particular setting of cultural diversity in Utrecht. Embedded is the assumption that newcomers are predominantly non-Western and find it easier to belong in a place that is already ethnically diverse with non-Western communities (Amin 2002). This seems to suggest that the multicultural nature of Lombok is thought to enhance newcomers' sense of belonging and thus articulates a particular version of successful refugee integration. In the previous two sections it has become apparent that members of De Voorkamer experience a sense of belonging to De Voorkamer as a place and community. This section examines to what extent such a sense of belonging is unique to Utrecht or Lombok, rather than to the Netherlands in its totality, considering the role of the city and neighbourhood in an intercultural conceptualisation of successful refugee integration.

Participants indicate that 'knowing people in Utrecht', particularly of their own age, contributes to their feelings of belonging, making the city more accessible and familiar (Interview 2; 3; 5). The coining of 'community' as the primary form of belonging seems to reveal why newcomers experience feelings of home and belonging in relation to De Voorkamer and Utrecht, without relating to the Netherlands as a national entity. Local participants live spread out across Utrecht, meaning that newcomers could potentially 'run into them' in different parts of the city. As the community surrounding De Voorkamer transcends the bounded space, a feeling of belonging, opportunity and empowerment is expanded to the entire city of Utrecht, as this is where different members of the established community are based and where they may interact with one another outside of De Voorkamer (Spicer 2008: 492; Anthias 2012). The fact that participants return to Utrecht and De Voorkamer despite having moved elsewhere, emphasises the inherent interdependency of community and place, and highlights the dynamic and relational nature of the city and the space (Amin 2002: 973). As the initiators explain, De Voorkamer seems to answer to a need that is not addressed in other cities or towns and thus makes members willing to travel an extra mile to see their friends: 'people come back for the connection to other people' (Interview 7). According to one participant, 'it is really important for newcomers to have a space which is not connected to any AZC, where they can feel at home and feel comfortable. In Utrecht, De Voorkamer is the only place that has a permanent space that has really created that atmosphere' (Interview 8). Local experiences of living in a city are seen to assist newcomers in becoming familiar with the host society, thus social interactions that take place outside of an AZC, which is intimately connected to governmental policy, significantly augment integration (Strang and Ager 2010: 595).

Feelings of belonging in De Voorkamer and Utrecht are different to feelings of belonging in the Netherlands, which are remarkably absent among newcomer members. Several participants coin Utrecht's progressive character as the reason for De Voorkamer's success (Interview 6; 7; 8). One newcomer describes his experience with Dutch national immigration and integration policy as follows: 'Welcome to the Netherlands, you may wait here' (Ethnographic sketch). Although newcomers enjoy certain elements – symbols if you will – of 'Dutchness', as they use certain Dutch proverbs they find entertaining, sing Dutch songs and enjoy traditional Dutch biscuits, they have in

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[3] The stadium of Football Club Utrecht.

many ways distanced themselves from Dutch national identifications and instead seek ways in which to reconcile their cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds with local realities and communities (Amin 2002: 969; Polzer 2009). As these processes of negotiation take place in- and outside of De Voorkamer, local communities are increasingly aware of the presence of different communities and thus the changing and diverse character of their city, which is exemplified in their engagement in initiatives like De Voorkamer.

In Lombok different cultural communities, such as Dutch, Moroccan, Surinamese, Turkish and Indonesian communities, very much interact. 'Prosaic negotiations' between multiple ethnic, cultural and religious communities constantly take place in the neighbourhood's spaces of association: on the streets, in shops and in, for example, the Mosque (Back in Amin 2002: 969; Spicer 2008). Interculturalism recognises that communities inevitably exchange conceptions of norms, values and beliefs – no community lives in isolation – that manifest in a specific form of co-existence (Parekh 2000: 167; Meer *et al.* 2016). If mixed neighbourhoods like Lombok are cherished as the culturally heterogenous places they are, they can spark instances of belonging through intercultural interactions between communities, which shape the way these communities cohabitate the same area of Utrecht (Amin 2002; Polzer 2009). With a multiplicity of different communities, interactions and affiliations between different cultural, religious, linguistic and ethnic groups in Lombok, it becomes impossible to identify a common identity that newcomers can integrate 'into' (Phillimore and Goodson 2012). Instead of being moulded into a single comprehensive understanding of a 'Lombokker', newcomers in Lombok are welcome to add to the eclectic mix of people that is already present, as a result of the arrival of Moroccan and Turkish guest workers, immigrants from the former colonies, and more recently, students. As such, De Voorkamer indeed reflects what Lombok exemplifies; with every new member – local or newcomer – the space is changed because of new interactions and negotiations (ECRE 2002; Polzer 2009). Newcomers' experiences suggest that it is not the presence of 'similar cultures' – sharing religion, language or ethnicity – that assists refugee integration, but rather the predominance of diversity in itself that fosters belonging. Hence, De Voorkamer's conception of Lombok as an example of integration can only be productive if such integration is understood on intercultural terms.

The community that has formed from intercultural interactions transcends De Voorkamer and creates a conception of Utrecht as an intercultural city in which newcomers belong among local populations. In turn, the way newcomers identify with the community surrounding De Voorkamer develops feelings of belonging towards Utrecht. As Utrecht is 'different from Amsterdam or The Hague' (Interview 3), or even more so from rural contexts, that sense of belonging is not extended outside of this particular urban context. Newcomers in De Voorkamer express no affiliations with the Netherlands as a national entity, which confirms the elusive nature of 'Dutchness' that newcomers are expected to integrate into through governmental policy. This section has demonstrated that within an intercultural conceptualisation of society, belonging needs be understood as a local process of continuous cultural exchange, as is propagated by De Voorkamer in Utrecht.

Conclusion

De Voorkamer – in its design and practices – propagates certain notions of integration that prove to be successful to the extent that both locals and newcomers continue to return to the place, recognising its unique and special features. Through practices of home-making, co-creation and ownership, De Voorkamer generates a sense of belonging among its participants, which transcends physical place by establishing a community. However, identifications with Dutch national identity are strikingly lacking, suggesting a sense of belonging that is unique to Utrecht. As belonging and

community are formed on the basis of intercultural exchange and interaction, integration comes to exemplify the constant negotiation of identities through the reconciling of newcomers' cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds with local realities and communities. Chapter Three will explore to what extent the fluid and dynamic character of an intercultural conceptualisation of integration might be limited, touching upon the stratifications that complicate interactions between locals and newcomers on the neighbourhood and city level. Additionally, an intercultural conception of integration is not reflected in national and municipal discourses of cultural diversity and integration. The next chapter is therefore dedicated to discussing how these discourses impact the De Voorkamer's self-expression and identification.

Discourses of cultural diversity

> *Lombok is a multicultural success and is therefore is a reflection of what we aim to achieve (Interview 7).*

An understanding of refugee integration is inherently embedded in a discourse of cultural diversity, which determines the subjects of integration and the way they are designated. Despite its propagation of an intercultural conceptualisation of refugee integration, De Voorkamer continues to describe its own practices using a multicultural discourse. In distinguishing between locals and newcomers, the processes De Voorkamer intends to facilitate might be hindered by a binary terminology of sameness and difference (Marlowe 2018: 5). In other words, the way De Voorkamer self-identifies could impede its ambitions. This chapter examines to what extent categories of locals and newcomers have been informed by a multicultural discourse that permeates national, municipal and popular understandings of integration. The first section of this chapter outlines the way in which binary conceptions of newcomers and locals are shaped by public understandings, municipal policy and funding. Subsequently, section two discusses the rootedness of terminologies of sameness and difference in Dutch integration discourses. Finally, the third section explores how conceptualisations of interculturalism offer alternative terminologies that might capture fluid, hybrid and constantly evolving identities and could thereby potentially resolve De Voorkamer's issues of self-identification.

Denominations of dependency

As a grassroots initiative, De Voorkamer is dependent on civil society engagement, municipal support and funding. In order to communicate the aims and practices of the initiative to prospective participants, the municipality and funders, it therefore is engaged in the use of a terminology which is relatable and recognisable (Spencer 2006). Civil society engagement is bound by the mobilisation of specific target groups that are expected to have an interest in the practices of the initiative (Papademetriou 2006). As such, terminology appears to be geared towards accommodating local populations, whose inclusion is essential for the functioning of an initiative, but difficult to ensure (Interview 7). As one of the initiators of De Voorkamer highlights, they attempt to activate people who are not immediately interested, 'especially those who live in our direct neighbourhood' (Ibid.). The nuancing of the dichotomy between refugees and citizens and the overcoming of differentiations between refugees and asylum seekers has resulted in a terminology of locality, in which status or category is informed by an individual's past and current relation to the local; the neighbourhood and the city (Gardner 1993). 'Newcomer' signifies an individual who has recently arrived in the city and thereby may include expats or exchange students. 'Local' then refers to an individual who has resided within a certain vicinity for a longer period of time. In principle, a newcomer can become 'local' over time. Categories of 'newcomer' and 'local' are thus embedded in the ambition to

'facilitate the equal involvement of locals and newcomers' (Interview 7). The way in which this ambition relates to reality is discussed in Chapter Three.

Additionally, the way grassroots initiatives frame their practices and define their target groups is affected by a politically informed terminology ingrained in governmental and municipal procedures (Papademetriou 2006; Spencer 2016). These terminologies are embedded in legal statuses and bureaucratic procedures, which are meant to communicate the various stages of asylum applications and integration processes, thereby justifying measures of inclusion and exclusion (De Waal 2017). De Voorkamer's terminology offers an alternative to these procedural denominations and overcomes legal differentiations between asylum seekers and refugees. The municipality of Utrecht appears to acknowledge its limited institutionalised capacity and recognises that processes of integration are initiated as soon as refugees enter the host society and therefore take place largely without, or transcending, governmental supervision (Papademetriou 2006: 26; Polzer 2009: 93;). It therefore has attributed partial responsibility to grassroots initiatives through granting funding and publicly declaring support. Yet, even though De Voorkamer aspires to the blurring of legal categories, its terminology remains implicated by governmental acknowledgment. [4]

Furthermore, De Voorkamer relies on subsidies from private or national funding and thus needs to justify how and on whom they spent their budget. It is currently sponsored by the Stimulation Fund for Creative Industries, the VSB Fund and the BankGiro Lottery Fund. Although the first is personalised funding allocated to one of the initiators, the second and third are granted depending on social impact and community development. Both funds emphasise a need for ownership and co-creation, local community involvement, and require initiatives to tailor their projects to local contexts. The VSB Fund specifies that projects are expected to respond to a particular need among individuals within the target group and create a lasting effect on the target group and its surroundings. Differentiating between 'locals' and 'newcomers' explicitly indicates a focus on the local. Furthermore, the term 'newcomer' identifies a perceived need of integration and suggests the possibility of integration over time, thereby implying the sustainable impact of the project. Requirements set by funds thus partially determine the use of terminology of De Voorkamer.

Hence, binary categories of 'newcomer' and 'local' do not exist in a vacuum. They are informed by practical constraints and are dependent on the general framework within which grassroots initiatives function. Although De Voorkamer successfully moves away from legal categories through the adoption of 'local' and 'newcomer', its terminology must nonetheless be further examined as part of a discourse of cultural diversity, which inherently instructs the practical constraints outlined above.

Terminologies of sameness and difference

> *Dutch, or originally Dutch, I don't know how to say that (Interview 7).*

As Spencer argues, a terminology of integration is 'by no means unproblematic' (2016: 1). This section therefore explores the extent to which binary categories are instructed by a particular understanding of cultural diversity and how these categories dictate understandings of national belonging (Vertovec 2001: 574). It specifically elaborates on the way in which prevailing discourses of sameness and difference in the Netherlands affect the forming of categories and the use of terminology within conceptions of refugee integration.

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[4] Although De Voorkamer did not receive municipal funding before, it is currently filing a funding application to ensure the project's future.

In the Netherlands, multicultural conceptions of cultural diversity have historically juxtaposed the ethnic national against the non-national. Dutch 'pillarization' – a social structure that consists of different societal 'blocs' – resulted in a multicultural model of cultural diversity, in which different cultural and religious communities co-existed in a relatively segregated manner (Bader 2005; Emerson 2011; Meer *et al.* 2016; Bagley 2017). Over time, the prevalence of the multicultural model faded and minorities, specifically Muslim minorities, are increasingly expected to 'assimilate' into Dutch society (Veldhuis and Van der Maas 2011: 29; Fekete in Bagley 2017: 84). Correspondingly, a distinction between *autochtoon* and *allochtoon* emerged as an alternative to the term 'ethnic minorities' (Ehrhardt 2011: 2010). *Allochtoon* was presented as the 'broadest denotation of the category of residents of the Netherlands who are of non-Dutch origins' (WRR 1989 in Ehrhardt 2011: 209). Therefore, the use of *autochtoon* and *allochtoon* became implicated in assimilationist differentiations among *allochtonen* on the basis of their similarity to *autochtonen*, with non-Western *allochtonen* as the most 'other' (Ibid.: 211).

An emphasis on differences between the national and the non-national has resulted in a focus on 'newcomers' to society (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002: 320). Therefore, the coining of 'newcomer' by De Voorkamer unintentionally implicates a hierarchy of belonging. Foreign students, for example, fit within the category of 'newcomer' on the basis of their recent arrival. However, they are not subjected to the same municipal integration policies as refugees and asylum seekers. Many foreign students are similar to the *autochtoon*; they are often of 'Western' origin and speak fluent English. Although they qualify as newcomers in Utrecht, they do not fit within the conception of (ethnic) difference and 'otherness' that is expected of newcomers (Vertovec 2001: 574). In the context of De Voorkamer, this seems to have resulted in their perceived position as local, rather than newcomer. Like *allochtoon*, 'newcomer' has thereby come to mean a certain category of newcomers only (Ehrhardt 2011: 210). Although unintentional and partially the result of governmental policy differentiations, this differentiation reveals a persisting double standard regarding categories of newcomers and locals.

The integration of refugee populations thus remains marked by a hierarchy of sameness and difference. Those who are least like the Dutch national, need to engage in the highest degree of integration. While host societies have been attributed the obligation 'to facilitate the equal development of talent', integration largely remains 'refugees' own responsibility' (Regeerakkoord 2017). Newcomers are attributed the tools to reach membership of the local society yet remain dependent on the acknowledgement of locals to be considered part of that society. Despite referring to a terminology of locality, rather than ethnicity, the dichotomy between 'local' and 'newcomer' maintains notions of 'us' and 'them' (Anthias 2013). Instead of presenting two clearly defined categories of inclusion and exclusion, this distinction implies a normative standard of 'being local' that newcomers are expected to develop into over time. Within such subjective practices of defining who belongs and who does not, qualifications of inclusion and exclusion have become increasingly ambiguous and a comprehensive conception of 'full membership' of Dutch society remains lacking. In conclusion, a binary of locals and newcomers is fundamentally embedded in a discourse of difference which can be traced back to a multicultural understanding of cultural diversity. The term 'newcomer' inherently suggests the possibility and necessity of integration. It proposes a distinction on the basis of relative closeness to local membership and implies that over time, difference can and should be overcome. An interculturalist focus on the 'everyday' might offer a less binary alternative and will be outlined in the next section.

Intercultural diversity

As the previous section illustrated, issues of self-identification in De Voorkamer stem from an unintended embeddedness in a discourse of sameness and difference. In its terminology and self-expression, the initiative expresses affiliations to multiple narratives at the same time. Annual reports and initiators refer to elements of multiculturalism, a terminology of 'newcomers' and 'locals' comprises instances of assimilationist expectations, while De Voorkamer's focus on establishing social networks, co-creation and talent development seems to indicate a much more complex and dynamic process of integration. This suggests that De Voorkamer's propagation of refugee integration is not served by the discourses the initiative adheres to, and in fact, supposes that integration in itself is an inappropriate denomination for De Voorkamer's practices. This section explores the way an intercultural framework of refugee integration transcends categories of sameness and difference, and provides an alternative terminology which potentially resolves De Voorkamer's issues of self-identification.

As Chapter One has demonstrated, an interculturalist conceptualisation of refugee integration offers an understanding of belonging in diversity, an understanding that permeates both ambitions of initiators and experiences of participants in De Voorkamer. The initiative reflects the way sameness and difference alternate in diverse societal contexts as is apprehended by intercultural exchange (Veldhuis and Van der Maas 2011: 29; Anthias 2013). Any member is invited to be involved on the basis of a particular sameness, creating a reciprocal relationship between locals and newcomers in which neither is 'othered'. Instead, the two categories approximate each other through collective practices, shared interests and the establishing of communal networks, as exemplified by a focus on co-creation and local ownership. In the same way that interculturalism conceptualises societies as entities in which multiple cultures interact and produce new forms of culture through continuous and dynamic processes, members with different contributions in De Voorkamer do not exist alongside one another, but contradict, provoke, enhance, stimulate and interact with the talents, interests and contributions of others. Otherness is thereby respected and celebrated, without over-emphasising difference (Veldhuis and Van der Maas 2011: 30). As a sense of belonging is created through the process of intercultural exchange, which generates a particular form of 'belonging in diversity', interculturalism forges a common identity which incorporates difference (Guidikova 2014: 4). It thus has the capacity to offer one single denomination for locals and newcomers alike – emphasising commonalities instead of difference.

For example, one newcomer arrived in De Voorkamer with an interest in photography. By being paired to a local with the same interests and talents, the participant was introduced to individuals who advised him on the various educational institutions he could apply to in order to pursue his passion. As a refugee, he is new to the Dutch education system and needs some assistance to navigate this system. Meanwhile, as a photographer he is confident, knowledgeable and equipped to assist others who are less qualified. This rather simplified example illustrates how local and newcomer may connect on the basis of a shared interest in photography, by which their identities as either 'local' or 'newcomer' gradually dissolve and instead 'photographer' as a common distinctive feature comes to the fore (Anthias 2013). The added value of a difference in cultural background between local and newcomer is expressed through the potentially novel creative output their collaboration yields, which could be enhanced by different cultural conceptions of photography. As such, a focus on intercultural exchange fosters a move away from 'integration', as individuals and groups are equally engaged in interaction and exchange, by which neither is necessarily becoming the other. Furthermore, the new cultural forms that emerge are not necessarily inherent to either of the makers' cultural backgrounds, but rather are a cumulation of the dynamic and complex relations between and beyond the members' networks, localities and personal histories.

Although acknowledging a reality in which theory is fast outpacing practice and in which it remains difficult to reconcile terminologies of policy with recently emerged scholarship, this section has suggested that an interculturalist conceptualisation of integration manages to overcome a narrative of difference. It demonstrates how particular intercultural practices foster a conception of 'belonging in diversity' and a terminology of sameness. Chapter Three elaborates on the establishment of such sameness by considering members' intersectional identities.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how an emphasis on cultural exchange, dialogue and interaction as propagated by an interculturalist framework has the capacity to transcend the binary categories of sameness and difference that prevail in a discourse of refugee integration in the Netherlands. An intercultural conception of 'belonging in diversity' implies the absence of a cohesive society to integrate into, and hints at a move away from conceptualisations of integration altogether. However, De Voorkamer remains 'a special kind of place'. Interculturalist practices that operate within the micro-context of De Voorkamer are not naturally representative of integration practices in Lombok, Utrecht or the Netherlands as a whole. As such, national and municipal narratives of integration and funding opportunities continue to hinder a terminology of sameness that would suit De Voorkamer's intercultural practices. The following, and final, chapter further complicates the possibility of 'belonging in diversity' by introducing instances of inclusion and exclusion.

Belonging, inclusion and exclusion

Despite De Voorkamer's conceptualisation of intercultural integration as 'belonging in diversity', processes of integration continue to be affected by instances of inclusion and exclusion. Stratifications among members of De Voorkamer – both locals and newcomers – appear to impact the functioning of De Voorkamer as well as the success it is supposed to exemplify. Therefore, De Voorkamer as exemplary of successful refugee integration needs to be critically examined in light of the intersectional identities of its members and the cultural diversity surrounding its location. This chapter discusses how an intercultural conception of 'belonging in diversity' is challenged by processes of inclusion and exclusion. The first section considers how intersectional identities impact levels of engagement and subsequent processes of belonging among newcomers. The second section situates De Voorkamer in Lombok and Utrecht, thereby shifting scales of inclusion and exclusion to notions of belonging in neighbourhood and city.

Intersections of inclusion and exclusion

> *There are mostly Syrians in De Voorkamer. Syrian men (Interview 4).*

Despite De Voorkamer's continuous efforts to promote inclusiveness and seek diversity among its members, the dominance of certain groups in some ways results in selective accessibility, inclusivity and ownership, which considerably influences the functioning of the space and impacts newcomers' feeling of belonging (Interview 1; 7; 8). The presence of a core community of newcomers – who are consistently involved and take a lot of initiative – with specific cultural and linguistic backgrounds has resulted in a particular sense of belonging, which inevitably excludes and obscures other groups with different integration preferences or needs. The following section will examine this sense of belonging through an intersectional lens, which complicates the binary of locals and newcomers by including variations in gender, age, education, class, country of origin, and particular migratory history.

An intersectional lens has the capacity to explore newcomers' multiple social, cultural, political, economic, ethnic and national identifications, which inescapably impact their level of engagement with De Voorkamer or cause them to not engage altogether (Anthias 2012). Intersectional refugee identities are understood to encompass classical pillars of identity – such as gender, class, age, education, nationality, ethnicity and religion – and include notions that are unique and significant to migrant experiences, such as country of origin, familial relations, migratory history and intentions to stay (Jacobsen 2001; Anthias 2012: 102; Marlowe 2018). This intersectionality results in a myriad of newcomer identifications that overlap, interact and change over time. Although De Voorkamer is open to every newcomer, there is a dominant presence of young, male status holders from Syria. As the making of place is implicated in 'hegemonic configurations of power', the dominant presence of this core group – a 'clique' – affects the atmosphere of inclusivity De Voorkamer intends to convey (Gupta and Ferguson 1997: 10). A male Arabic-speaking newcomer dominance has translated into several activities and events that in some ways can be considered exclusionary to newcomers who fall outside of the core group. Observing different social, cultural and political axes of inclusion and exclusion, there appear to be two main groups of newcomers that are consistently 'less included' in the sense of belonging propagated by De Voorkamer. The first are non-Arabic-speakers, or even non-Syrians. The second are women.

Most members of De Voorkamer consciously point out the presence of a large group of Syrians in the community (Ethnographic sketch). Some even refer to 'Syrians' when speaking of newcomers more generally (Interview 4). Syrian newcomers themselves seem to be aware of their presence prevailing over that of other groups of newcomers. Their statements suggest that they do not find this problematic, but rather perceive it as natural and logical (Interview 2; 5). The initiators and local volunteers however, point out the consequences of the formation of 'cliques' generally, but also express concerns regarding the presence of this particular group (Interview 7; 8). A volunteer notes that 'the exclusion of non-Syrians or non-Arabic-speakers is a big problem for the women's events and De Voorkamer more generally' (Interview 8). She further emphasises that the Syrian community itself is very much divided (Ibid.). These statements indicate that stratifications exist both between and within groups of newcomers, creating multiple, overlapping and hierarchical group formations (Anthias 2012: 104).

In listing recent and upcoming events, a clear Arabic, sometimes Muslim, prevalence can be detected; a weekly Arabic language café, a recurring Arabic coffee house, Iftar[5] during Ramadan, and film screenings as part of the Arab Film Festival. Due to language barriers and cultural norms, non-Arabic-speakers and non-Muslims are much less inclined to participate in such events. Newcomers from some African countries, such as Somalia and Sudan, share a predominantly Muslim, Arabic-speaking background with Syrians and other newcomers from the Middle East, easing communication between them. However, Eritreans, who constitute the second largest group of refugees in the Netherlands, are much more diverse in terms of language and religion. Feelings of belonging and home, as examined in Chapter One, are not instigated in them as they cannot recognise themselves in organised activities or face obstacles of communication (Antonsich 2010: 652). Participants observe that Eritreans' attendance and participation has dropped over time, with the exception of a number of young Eritrean men attending the Dutch language café (Interview 4). Low levels of engagement among Eritreans and other non-Arabic, non-Muslim groups result in the absence of a sense of belonging, which in turn impedes a feeling of ownership. Consequently, these groups do not feel empowered to initiate activities, leaving their needs and preferences unheard. This dynamic reveals the limits of intercultural co-creation and causes a cycle of exclusion: as

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[5] Iftar is the evening meal that is consumed to break Muslims' daily fast after sunset during Ramadan.

members who do not feel addressed by events, they refrain from engagement, yet without their engagement no events are created that address them.

A dominance of Arabic-speakers alone cannot account for the absence of other newcomers. Migratory experiences, which may come with syndromes of post-traumatic stress or other mental health conditions, the presence of national communities or religious networks in Utrecht, and other circumstantial factors may well prevent newcomers from attending De Voorkamer's events and activities (McGhee 2006; Farrag 2009). One participant notes that after arriving in the Netherlands, 'the [legal] procedure is the most important', so the intercultural exchange De Voorkamer offers is useful, but of secondary importance. De Voorkamer becomes a primary need after status has been attributed, as that is when people need to start building networks and a social life (Interview 3; Spencer 2016: 5). It is a majority of single men from Middle Eastern and African countries that actively seeks new groups of friends, as they do not have families to provide or care for (Interview 8).

However, as one volunteer notes, there are men who have wives, sisters or daughters that never come to De Voorkamer (Ibid.). This raises questions about who is allowed to participate in De Voorkamer and who is barred from entry, because of complex, often cultural, social relations and traditions (Howard-Hunt 2013; Asaf 2017). Many factors – some of which are unknown – need to be incorporated when examining the inclusion and exclusion of women in refugee integration services. Due to time constraints, this thesis will only superficially outline them.[6] First, the number of female refugees and asylum seekers is significantly lower than the number of male newcomers. Second, women tend to accompany their male counterparts, sometimes with children, resulting in family obligations. Third, culturally, women are more restricted from entering public space and surrounding themselves with male non-family members (Asaf 2017). Syrian women in particular are rarely unaccompanied by brothers, fathers or husbands. However, focusing on the Syrian experience overlooks situations of newcomer women from other areas, mainly African states, who have arrived in the Netherlands without male family members to a much larger extent. The absence of women in De Voorkamer stems from a myriad of circumstances that are unique to the experience of female refugees (Howard-Hunt 2013). At the same time, non-Arabic-speaking women may feel excluded on similar grounds as men (Brah 1992; Yuval-Davis 2006). The lack of female presence in De Voorkamer thus points at multiple instances of exclusion, based on gendered dimensions of social and cultural norms, on women's specific migratory experiences, but also on aspects of race, religion, class and level of education.

The conjunction of intersectionality of a particular kind of newcomer – young, male, Arabic-speaking and often educated – has shaped public perceptions of refugee needs in the Netherlands and therefore has sparked particular civil society initiatives that are geared at meeting these specific needs (Anthias 2012). The visibility of mostly Syrian men communicates a presumed necessity and urgency among that group, by which the needs of other groups, such as Eritreans, and women, remain underdeveloped (Papademetriou 2006). At the same time, the seeming self-reliance, entrepreneurial nature and active engagement of Syrian newcomers – which is addressed by De Voorkamer through stimulating co-creation and ownership – normalise a degree of perceived self-sufficiency. Newcomers who require more assistance due to reasons explored in the previous section – both within and beyond the Syrian community – are left unseen.

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[6] Much literature is dedicated to the gendered needs and services for refugee women in countries of asylum (see Deacon and Sullivan 2009; Bassel 2012; Hesse-Biber 2012; Howard-Hunt 2013; Tastsoglou *et al.* 2014; Koyama 2015; Asaf 2017).

Although several members of De Voorkamer express an awareness of exclusionary practices and aim to remain more inclusive by, for example, creating an Eritrean instead of an Arabic Coffee House and women-specific events (Interview 7; 8), the issue here is more complex. The reciprocal interlinkage between a dominant group of male Arabic-speaking members, which is encouraged to use the space and co-create events, and is thereby attributed feelings of ownership and agency, generates a particular spiral of inclusion and exclusion, resulting in selective ownership. A self-confirmative cycle of organised events and attracted participants is created. This cycle is hard to interrupt, as the propagation of co-creation is inevitably corrupted by the 'tyranny of the majority'.[7] Although De Voorkamer organises an abundance of activities that do not communicate any regional, linguistic or religious focus, the presence of a male Syrian core group seems to discourage groups with other origins from engaging past a certain point. While some non-Arabic-speaking members attend events, varying from frequent participation to sporadic presence, the majority does not claim ownership of De Voorkamer in the same way that Syrian members do. Similarly, despite their active involvement in the women's events, women do not seem to be part of the core group. Therefore, at times, notions of belonging, co-creation and ownership appear hard to reconcile with instances of exclusion. This suggests that reconciling inclusive intercultural practices that are aimed at diversifying the body of members, with responding to the needs and input of the dominant group, remains a challenging exercise.

Belonging in diversity

> The non-newcomer communities that come are more educated white people. [The project] doesn't particularly cross communities so well in Dutch society (Interview 8).

Through examining members' myriad identifications, this section explores notions of inclusion and exclusion at the level of neighbourhood and city. Shifting scales situate De Voorkamer, a space specifically geared at intercultural exchange and dialogue, in Lombok and Utrecht, where populations are not necessarily concerned with facilitating the integration of newcomers. The neighbourhood as a point of reference thereby reveals relations among and between Dutch citizens – including second-generation migrants – and newcomers (Berg and Sigona 2013). By accepting Utrecht, and Lombok in particular, as the 'spatially open, culturally heterogenous and socially variegated' space it is, De Voorkamer can be understood in the context of Lombok as a neighbourhood with a diverse population (Amin 2002: 973). A focus on (cultural) diversity expands the concept of intersectionality as it examines the multiple, dynamic and fluid relations between groups of people, as well as individuals (Yuval-Davis 2006). As such, it allows for a conceptualisation of belonging by which individuals are able to 'weave their collective identities out of multiple affiliations and positionings and link their cross-cutting belongingness with complex attachments and multiple alliances' (Caglar in Vertovec 2001: 580).

Local engagement with De Voorkamer varies between different communities. Since the emergence of the 'refugee crisis' in 2014, accompanied by a correlating narrative of this crisis being caused by the war in Syria, Dutch public perceptions on refugees are shaped by the Syrian context, which they know best (Interview 8). Correspondingly, local engagement is notably dominated by highly educated young people, who are politically active, aware of current affairs and often female. In fact, multiple participants explicitly note the dichotomy between the prevalence of male newcomers and mostly female white locals in De Voorkamer (Interview 4; 7; 8). Simultaneously, participants

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[7] The concept of the 'tyranny of the majority' refers to the weaknesses of direct democracy as proposed by John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* (1859).

observe that communities living in the direct vicinity of De Voorkamer, mainly with second-generation migratory backgrounds, are hardly involved in its events and activities (Interview 4; 7; 8). Regardless of De Voorkamer's active rapprochement of these communities, through specially organised neighbourhood dinners and neighbourhood ambassadors, there seems to be little to no interest in the initiative among non-Western populations in Lombok. The initiators recognise the lack of involvement of communities with different 'cultural backgrounds', as 'they just don't seem to relate' to De Voorkamer's proposed intercultural practices of refugee integration (Interview 7). Another participant notes:

> *I think it's a shame that not more Moroccan and Turkish from Lombok come.* [...] *I think it's always a shame when other immigrant communities or second-generation migrants don't recognise that what they or their families have been through is the same or similar to what refugees are going through [...] I feel there's so much potential for them to connect and share experiences and find comfort in each other, especially for newcomer communities (Interview 8).*

The quote proposes how cultural background and migratory history are expected to create some elements of shared experiences between second-generation migrants and refugees and asylum seekers. While De Voorkamer's location in a culturally diverse neighbourhood is therefore believed to assist De Voorkamer's intercultural practices, it might actually impede them. Mixed neighbourhoods are not integrated or cohesive imagined communities and neither will they become so in the future (Amin 2002: 972). Instead, urban diversity provides an infinite number of imagined communities, which, like individual affiliations, are complex, multidimensional and subject to change. Vertovec calls this 'hyperdiversity', highlighting migrants' histories, transnational ties, migratory trajectories, countries of origin and a number of social relational factors (Vertovec 2007: 1024). The exclusionary consequence of such hyperdiversity is that people are likely to connect to 'similar others' and therefore may live in the same area without engaging with different communities (Peterson 2017: 1069).

However, as public spaces are not natural servants of intercultural exchange, several scholars introduce the potential of semi-public spaces to stimulate the simultaneous use and intermingling of various communities. The micro-level of those spaces assists the process of 'prosaic negotiation' and thus intercultural exchange, allowing individuals and groups to weave their intersectional identities accordingly (Massey 1999; Back 1996; Caglar in Vertovec 2001: 580). De Voorkamer, aided by its intercultural practices and its open-door policy, has the capacity to function as a semi-public space. Although the initiative has become such a place for newcomers, it has not acquired the same status for local communities in Lombok. Because of its Islamic and Arabic-speaking focus, not all local communities in the neighbourhood are addressed. Neither are all Arabic-speaking and Muslim communities automatically addressed by this emphasis, as they are internally stratified due to the neighbourhood's hyperdiversity. A lack of local engagement is therefore logical and in part refutes notions of 'belonging in diversity'.

Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated that despite conceptual intercultural intentions and propagated inclusiveness, processes of refugee integration remain implicated with instances of inclusion and exclusion. The dominance of particular groups of newcomers and locals affect the intercultural practices of De Voorkamer, thereby challenging its propagation of 'belonging in diversity'. Levels of engagement among locals and newcomers continue to be stratified as a result of intersectional identities and the culturally hyperdiverse character of Lombok. Although newcomers' feelings of

belonging to De Voorkamer and Utrecht are enhanced by Lombok's diversity, it is this same diversity that seems to impede the engagement of local communities in the neighbourhood. This demonstrates how De Voorkamer exclusively informs feelings of belonging, opportunity and empowerment when it becomes permeated in people's everyday lived experiences (Spicer 2008: 492).

6 Conclusion

This in-depth case-study of De Voorkamer brings to light a myriad of experiences, insights and perspectives that in many ways refute public and governmental understandings of refugee integration in the Netherlands. Rejecting formalised processes of 'integrating into' Dutch society and a supposed cohesive Dutch identity, the research demonstrates how integration is an open-ended process that does not result in a comprehensively integrated national society. Instead, through the stimulating of home-making, intercultural co-creation and instances of familiarity, De Voorkamer offers an intercultural conceptualisation of refugee integration. Such a conceptualisation exposes an ever-changing society in which individuals and groups express multiple, hybrid and evolving identities and needs. The negotiating of identities through the reconciling of newcomers' cultural, religious and ethnic backgrounds with local realities and communities, suggests that both newcomers and locals can belong in cultural diversity. An intercultural framework of refugee integration thereby proposes how such 'belonging in diversity' can overcome practices and terminologies of difference, which historically have been rooted in Dutch understandings of cultural diversity. As such a conceptualisation of belonging embraces the myriad identities and affiliations of individuals and groups, it implies the elusive nature of 'integration' altogether and exposes the problematic nature of binary categories that denote the possibility and necessity of integration, including 'local' and 'newcomer'. Instead, by celebrating the inevitability of cultural diversity, an intercultural framework incorporates cultural difference and includes refugees – who are assumed to be culturally different from members of host societies – in local communities through intercultural exchange, thereby offering terminologies of 'sameness' and commonality.

Ironically, an intercultural understanding of 'belonging in diversity' is hindered by the exclusionary nature of that same diversity, which complicates intercultural practices of refugee integration because of stratifications among and between newcomers and local communities. An intersectional lens exposes how complex collective identities and affiliations manifest in instances of inclusion and exclusion, which complicate 'belonging in diversity'. Feelings of belonging are thus simultaneously supported and constrained in the local context of De Voorkamer, as groups of locals and newcomers are targeted by and included in the initiative's practices to varying extents. Whereas male and Arabic-speaking newcomers find both familiarity and a sense of home in De Voorkamer, other groups, such as women and Eritreans, are not equally addressed by its practices and are therefore not evenly engaged. At the same time, while newcomers' feelings of belonging are extended to Lombok and Utrecht, rather than to the Netherlands as a national entity, such feelings are not reciprocal among all local communities.

As Ash Amin (2002: 972) argues, mixed neighbourhoods should not be imagined as future cohesive or integrated communities. Similarly, public spaces are not natural servants of intercultural exchange. Therefore, despite a mutual history of migration and regardless of sharing the neighbourhood space surrounding De Voorkamer, second-generation migrant populations in Lombok cannot be expected to become naturally involved in De Voorkamer's activities. However,

as the consistent and intense engagement with De Voorkamer of some newcomers suggests, when permeated in people's everyday lived experiences, semi-public spaces like De Voorkamer can inform feelings of belonging, opportunity and empowerment. Hence, it is through daily and local interactions that individuals and groups develop identifications with the people among whom and the spaces among which they live. A focus on the everyday reality of cultural diversity thereby uncovers the promises and pitfalls of an intercultural conceptualisation of integration and prompts an understanding of successful refugee integration.

In order to foster successful refugee integration, practices should not prescribe one particular identity as the outcome of integration, but rather, approach the inclusion of refugees in society as a continuous process of negotiation, through which commonalities between locals and newcomers take the fore. Replacing the focus on a binary of the nationals and the non-national, with an emphasis on shared local neighbourhoods and daily practices, an intercultural framework of refugee integration marks a modest attempt at moving away from 'ethnohistorical and traditional' understandings of Dutchness, to a more inclusive one. The result is an emergence of new Dutch identities. These are not singular, but multiple. They are not static, but dynamic. They are not exclusively Dutch but may transcend physical space and cross national borders.

Consequently, an intercultural conceptualisation of refugee integration might be enhanced and complemented by scholarship on transnationalism and diasporas. Through analysing connections between people and place across distance, theories of transnationalism and diasporas may expand understandings of refugee integration in culturally diverse areas like Lombok, as they highlight the ways refugees combine and alternate between identifications with past and present locations and other 'migratory generations'.

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8 Appendices

Appendix 1: Data collection overview

Reference in text:	Function:	Location:	Date:
Interview 1	Employee	By Phone	22 January
Interview 2	Member	De Voorkamer, Utrecht	20 March
Interview 3	Member	De Voorkamer, Utrecht	20 March
Interview 4	Employee	De Voorkamer, Utrecht	21 March
Interview 5	Volunteer	De Voorkamer, Utrecht	21 March
Interview 6	Employee	De Voorkamer, Utrecht	22 March
Interview 7	Both employees	De Voorkamer, Utrecht	23 March
Interview 8	Volunteer	De Voorkamer, Utrecht	23 March
Interview 9	Employee FOAM	FOAM, Amsterdam	15 March
Interview 10	Employee Yallah Yallah	De Voorkamer, Utrecht	20 March
Interview 11	Employee Pages Bookstore	Pages Bookstore, Amsterdam	22 March

Reference in text:	Event:	Date:	Location:
Ethnographic sketch	International Dinner	17 March	De Voorkamer, Utrecht
Ethnographic sketch	Filming in AZC Overvecht	18 March	AZC Overvecht, Utrecht
Ethnographic sketch	Women Come Together	18 March	De Voorkamer, Utrecht
Ethnographic sketch	Arabic Language Cafe	19 March	De Voorkamer, Utrecht
Ethnographic sketch	Dutch Language Cafe	20 March	De Voorkamer, Utrecht
Ethnographic sketch	Arabic Coffee House	21 March	De Voorkamer, Utrecht
Ethnographic sketch	Heroes of De Voorkamer	22 March	De Voorkamer, Utrecht

Appendix 2: Interview questions

Preliminary Interview Questions

CUREC Approved

Negotiating Space, Culture and New Dutch Identities

NOTE: These questions may not all be asked to every participant, they may change order, and they may change in content between different participants, depending on the participant being:

1. An individual who has founded or is working for a grassroots organisation or cultural venue that in one way or another supports refugee integration in the Netherlands.

2. An individual who has arrived in the Netherlands as a refugee or asylum seeker, and has been granted official refugee status according to the 1951 Refugee Convention.

3. An individual with Dutch citizenship, of any cultural background, who participates in, or is a member of the audience at one of the cultural venues considered.

Interview questions:

1. Conversation starter, depending on the individual. Could you tell me a little bit about yourself? Where did you grow up? Where do you live now?
2. How did you get involved with [organisation/venue]? How did you find out about its existence? Why did you found it/start working for it?
3. Who are the people you work with here? What people come here?
4. What does [organisation/venue] do? What is their mission according to you? Are they successful in fulfilling this mission?
5. Why do you come here? What elements of [organisation/venue] attract you?
6. What is the purpose of some of the elements/projects that [organisation/venue] offers and organises? How are these elements identified and organised by [organisation/venue]? What is [your/the people's] say in that?
7. What do you think is important for [you/people] to feel home in a place? Does [organisation/venue] create that feeling? How?
8. How are people invited to [organisation/venue]? Is there a specific group that is invited to participate/watch? What is expected from them once they enter [organisation/venue]?
9. What do you consider the main challenge for [you/people] to feel home in a place? Is feeling home to you part of belonging in a place?
10. Do you feel that belonging in the context of [organisation/venue] means belonging in the Netherlands as well? Is belonging part of integrating in the Netherlands according to you?
11. What does integration mean to you? How does [organisation/venue] relate to this understanding of integration?
12. What do [you/people] find the biggest obstacle to integrate in the Netherlands? Does [organisation/venue] address that obstacle and help [you/people] overcome it? How?
13. Does [organisation/venue] relate to governmental or municipal policies on integration in the Netherlands? How and why?

14. Is there any funding or relation between what [organisation/venue] tries to do and other governmental or cultural institutions in the Netherlands or abroad?
15. How important is it to have an actual physical meeting space?
16. How accessible is [organisation/venue] to [you/people], both literally and figuratively? Are there reasons people might not know about or want to/are able to come to [organisation/venue]?
17. What is the role of the city or neighbourhood in your [organisation/venue]?
18. Do [you/people] come to [organisation/venue] on a daily/weekly/monthly basis? Why do you think that is? Why don't others come to the same extent?
19. Is there a difference between [you/people] and people from a [Dutch/refugee] background in attending [organisation/venue]'s services or projects? How and why do you think that is?
20. How is [organisation/venue] located in [neighbourhood/city]? Does that affect who attends and participates? How?
21. Have you noticed any changes in who attends and participates in [organisation/venue]'s services and projects over time? Why is that you think? Have [you/people] made changes in the services/projects [organisation/venue] offers as a result?
22. If you were given unlimited means – time, money and manpower – what kind of project would you like [organisation/venue] to develop to enhance the integration of refugees?