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Home Cultures

The Journal of Architecture, Design and Domestic Space

ISSN: 1740-6315 (Print) 1751-7427 (Online) Journal homepage: https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rfhc20

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To cite this article: Mandy de Wilde (2016) Home is Where the Habit of the Heart is, Home Cultures, 13:2, 123-144, DOI: 10.1080/17406315.2016.1190583

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/17406315.2016.1190583

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Published online: 18 Jul 2016.

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HOME CULTURES
VOLUME 13, ISSUE 2
PP 123–144
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MANDY DE WILDE

HOME IS WHERE THE HABIT OF THE HEART IS

Governing a gendered sphere of belonging

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ABSTRACT Dutch neighborhood policy is increasingly, and quite literally, addressing the habits of the heart—residents' values, emotions, and intimate relationships—to encourage what we may call "affective citizenship." Central to this governmental strategy is the creation of communities as spheres of belonging. This article focuses on neighborhoods as potential spaces of belonging and the role that "feeling at home" plays in residents' community participation. More specifically, the article focuses on how immigrant women who are subject to the policy interventionism of a community participation program make use of a neighborhood center—a "parochial space"—in a Dutch urban neighborhood. I show how the program resonates with and affects their feelings of home; and, I

HOME CULTURES DOI: 10.1080/17406315.2016.1190583

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address how the practices, concerns, and emotions of an intimate, gendered, domestic sphere are given expression in "parochial spaces" through the encounters and activities of immigrant women, thereby blurring the boundaries between what is conventionally considered public and private. Also, I show how this enacts a gendered sphere of belonging that enables women to cultivate bonds of affinity with other women in the neighborhood. I argue that the governmental strategy of "affective citizenship" allows immigrant women to express their emotions, values, and morals through domesticating space, feminizing culture, and "whispering voice." Despite the feelings of belonging experienced by many immigrant women, the case study reveals how this does not lead to an inclusive community but often to a community that is fragile, temporary, and exclusive. The article thereby reveals the dynamism of belonging and why it is so difficult to plan and manage for the benefit of community building.

KEYWORDS: affective citizenship, belonging, community, gender, governance, parochial space

INTRODUCTION: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CACOPHONY

On a Wednesday morning in Slotermeer, a deprived urban neighborhood in Amsterdam, a group of women are gathered in a neighborhood center [*buurthuis*]. Some are chit-chatting and exchanging gossip. Others are knitting quietly; one woman has brought her small children. On the table there is tea, coffee, and a selection of home-made sweets. "Take another one, we will still love you even if you're fat," I hear Khadija, a volunteer who organizes these mornings, joking to another woman who laughs and indulges. Every Wednesday, the neighborhood center transforms into a cozy living room where women living in Slotermeer can engage in activities they normally undertake in the safety and comfort of their own homes, sharing stories, gossip, and their experiences of everyday life. Yet this temporary living room is set in the public surroundings of a neighborhood center where residents and community outreach workers, occasionally walk by, peek in, and at times enter.

Wilma, a community outreach worker who helped Khadija and her friend Houda to organize this weekly coffee morning for women, enters. She tries to bring order to the cacophony of voices, laughter, and small talk. After raising her voice, she whistles through her fingers and the liveliness comes to a halt. Wilma attempts to begin a group discussion on the neighborhood's lonely elderly who need help and a listening ear. She points out that Khadija has cooked for neighbors in the elderly home several times. Wilma then asks the women

if they want to follow Khadija's example. Wilma invokes cultural values—which she assumes the women share—as she asks rhetorically: "it is normal in 'your culture,' to take care of your elderly parents, right? You even take them into your home, right? Why not care for the lonely elderly living next door? Your cooking talents can really make a difference for these people." Wilma explains that there is a budget to organize voluntary activities in the neighborhood. But the women do not respond to her call. A joke by Houda is a welcome reprieve to scatter the discussion once more into a spontaneous cacophony of voices and laughter.

AFFECTIVE CITIZENSHIP AND THE DUTCH GOVERNANCE OF BELONGING

The French social theorist Alexis de Tocqueville stated, in *On Democracy in America* ([1835/40] 2003), that the "habits of the heart"—the morals and values that shape our lives, often outside of our awareness—motivate people to public engagement. Over the past two decades, communitarian criticisms of the lack of public engagement and a sense of local belonging have inspired extensive debate on local governance in deprived urban neighborhoods. In Western Europe, governments have often sought to engage local communities to improve "social cohesion" in these deprived neighborhoods (see Uitermark 2014 for an overview). As such, the main protagonist within public debate on local governance has become the "communitarian" citizen: someone who feels a sense of belonging and loyalty to her community, identifies with its members, and actively engages with and contributes to its well-being. However, to imagine a neighborhood as a community and give that image a productive function, enough residents have to identify with and feel a sense of belonging to it: this is where the habits of the heart come into play.

Dutch national and local governance increasingly, and quite literally, targets residents' habits of the heart to encourage communitarian citizenship (Tonkens and De Wilde 2013; De Wilde 2015; De Wilde and Duyvendak forthcoming). This governmental strategy of "affective citizenship" (see Mookherjee 2005; Fortier 2010; Johnson 2010) is a relatively new trend within Western European policies on citizen participation:

> The recent "affective turn" in policies to foster citizen engagement (Plummer 2003; Isin 2004) acknowledges the importance of values, feelings and intimate relations in community life, and aims to mould these to engage citizens in a super diverse, ever-changing public domain. More specific, the notion of 'affective citizenship' refers to how governments acknowledge, harness, and try to influence citizens' emotions and intimate relationships within the construction of citizenship. (De Wilde and Duyvendak forthcoming)

The affective turn in Dutch local governance can be seen in the context of a national governmental strategy that attempted to manage the effects of macro processes such as globalization and mass migration. In influential national policy reports leading up to a nationwide Neighborhood Renewal Policy (2007–2014), problems in "deprived" urban neighborhoods were qualified as originating from a lack of "social cohesion in the direct living environment" of people and a lack of residents "feeling familiar and at home in the neighborhood" (VROM-council 2006; Cabinet VROM 2007). This national public discourse saw a pathologization of these neighborhoods: they were framed as arenas where the public unease about Dutch multicultural society was most manifest and subsequently as fragile places where a perceived loss of neighborhood identity affected the everyday life-worlds of its inhabitants and their sense of *local* belonging. Although multicultural tensions and the lack of social integration in urban neighborhoods stirred the debate on citizenship and Dutch identity at a national level, the solution—community—was deemed to lie elsewhere, namely on a local level.

The engineering of communitarian citizenship at a neighborhood level became central to the Dutch Neighborhood Renewal Policy (De Wilde 2015). Residents were encouraged to play an active role in their neighborhoods through the installment of community participation programs that attempted to recast residents into an ideal of resilient neighborhoods and underlined their powerful roles there as communitarian-minded citizens. These programs aimed to seduce residents into identification with, and a sense of belonging to, the neighborhood, from which public engagement with their neighbors and their living environment could eventually arise. Put differently, "feeling at home" became a particular register of emotions through which local governments tried to intervene in the hearts of citizens—a governance of belonging. Central to this governmental strategy was the creation of neighborhood communities as spheres of belonging.

HOME IN A PAROCHIAL SPACE

There are various studies that have dealt with the question of whether neighborhoods can be or become a home (Kearns and Parkinson 2001; Van der Graaf 2009) or a community (Blokland 2003). These studies bring to the fore an important aspect of neighborhoods: they are places characterized by a variable and complex geography, as the relations of the residents who bring them into being are often also constituted through heterogeneous relationships with other places and times. This relational perspective on place (see also Amin 2002; Massey 2004) dismisses an emphasis on fixed boundaries and timeless identities, favoring a perspective of place as relationally constituted. From this perspective, a neighborhood does not hold a timeless identity that residents have to adapt to as a condition of their accept-

ance into the community. Rather, neighborhoods are open and fluid "sites of multiple geographies of affiliation, linkage and flow" (Amin 2004: 38). These geographies and the temporary boundaries they construct are often mediated by emotions. As Ahmed (2004: 117) states: "emotions are not simply 'within' or 'without' but [...] they create the very effect of the surface or boundaries of bodies and worlds." This implies that feeling at home in the neighborhood is also intertwined with and conditioned by feelings of belonging on different spatial and temporal scales such as an individual's dwelling unit, a city, a nation, or a past (see also Reinders, this issue).

Duyvendak (2011: 38–9) distinguishes between home as "haven" and home as "heaven." Home-as-haven "covers aspects of home that pertain to feelings of safety, security and privacy, which most often relate to the micro level of the house...[It is a] place for retreat, relaxation, intimacy and domesticity." Home-as-heaven is "more outward-oriented and/or symbolic: it helps individuals to 'be', develop and express themselves collectively, and to connect with others, often through the creation of intentional communities." Through conceptualizing these two forms of feeling at home, Duyvendak brings to the fore not only the relationality of home, but also the public/private-boundary implicated at the heart of feeling at home: feeling at home can be an emotion of exclusion, which might affect someone else's sense of home. In this article, I question if and how a community participation program, which specifically targets the home feelings of residents, is able to construct an inclusive community.

To unpack the dynamics of the Dutch local governance of belonging, I analyze the activities and encounters in a specific kind of space, namely neighborhood centers. Dutch neighborhood centers are spaces where local administrators and community outreach workers have their workspaces and hold office hours. They are also spaces where leisure activities, empowerment workshops, and neighborhood gatherings are organized by and for residents (see Figure 1). Many Dutch neighborhoods have one or more neighborhood centers, depending on their size or state of "deprivation." The kind of community that is performed in a neighborhood center varies with its usage. Depending on the encounters and activities that take place, the community might be experienced as having a private and exclusive character or a public and inclusive character. To bring this to light, I operationalize neighborhood centers as "parochial space." In her geography of the public realm, Lofland (1989) argues that the neighborhood can be seen as "parochial space." This space is "characterized by a sense of commonality among acquaintances and neighbors who are involved in interpersonal networks that are located within 'communities'" (Lofland 1989: 455). "Parochial spaces" link the intimate, private world of the household, and kin networks to the public world of strangers and "the street." Yet, Lofland (1989) leaves room

Figure 1
A panorama view of a square in Slotermeer. The ground floor of the building in the middle functions as a small neighborhood center. The weekly coffee morning described in this paper is hosted here.

for permeable boundaries between these spaces, arguing that it is people's interactions and relationships which bring these spaces into being:

> It is the proportion and densities of relationship types present in any given space which give that space its identity as fully private, as location, or as locale—as part of the private, parochial or public realm. Changes in these proportions and densities change the identity of the space itself. [...] What is considered private, parochial or public space: whether a particular space is exclusive or inclusive; and whether that is, should be, may all be matters of conflict and/or negotiation. (Lofland 1989: 470, 457)

In this article, I focus on the neighborhood as a potential local space of belonging and how "feeling at home" impacts the community participation of immigrant women. I describe how these women—considered a "hard to reach group" and thus explicit targets of policy—make use of Slotermeer's neighborhood centers. More specifically, I show how these immigrant women respond to the interventions of community outreach workers and how the activities and encounters they organize at the neighborhood center resonate with and affect their feelings of home. I argue that the governmental strategy of "affective citizenship" allows immigrant women to express their emotions, values, and morals in a neighborhood center through domesticating space, feminizing culture, and "whispering voice." Subsequently, I focus on the gendered activities and encounters that are organized in this "parochial space." By activities and encounters, I mean women's face-to-face interactions in the neighborhood center where they create, share, and exchange emotions, longings, and experiences that are mediated by other places and times.

This leads to a gendered sphere of belonging that is fragile, temporary, and exclusive. The article thereby reveals the dynamism of belonging and why it is so difficult to plan and manage for the benefit of community building. Furthermore, it touches upon one particular complexity that manifests itself through the women's feeling at home, which relates to a fundamental citizenship-issue, namely the relation between public and private and how boundaries of inclusion and exclusion are continually negotiated through that division.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN SLOTERMEER

Slotermeer, a neighborhood on the periphery of the city of Amsterdam, is a heterogeneous neighborhood. Diverse factors coalesce and condition the everyday life of residents: ethnicity, culture, educational level, class, and lifestyle. In 2010, 59 percent of its residents were officially categorized as "non-Western migrants," of whom most are of Turkish, Moroccan or Surinamese descent, 9 percent were categorized as "Western-migrants" and 32 percent are listed as "autochthonous," as being of Dutch descent (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2010).

Many of its population of 16,400 struggle with urban marginality (cf. Wacquant 1999); poverty (23 percent of households live on a minimum income, with four out of ten children growing up in such households), high unemployment (11.3 percent against the Amsterdam average of 7 percent), high school dropout rates (22.5 percent against the Amsterdam average of 15.8 percent), low school results (the average primary education final test score in the neighborhood is the lowest of Amsterdam), and criminality and feelings of anxiety shaping the daily reality of its inhabitants (Municipality of Amsterdam 2010). Due to these problems, Slotermeer has been at the forefront of both national and local policy interventions for over a decade and has been one of 40 neighborhoods targeted by a nationwide Neighborhood Renewal Policy (2007–2014).

Slotermeer's community participation program is prominent within this Neighborhood Renewal Policy. It aims to mobilize feelings of home to encourage residents to construct a community. Policy documents emphasize a focus on participation as "directed towards relations (emotions)" with the aim to create "a safe and pleasant environment" in which residents would "feel at home, important, welcome and wanted" (POSEIDON 2006: 34, 86). In practice, the program encompassed a broad range of "sensitizing policy techniques" in order to get residents into the spirit of community engagement (De Wilde and Duyvendak forthcoming): local administrators and community outreach workers invite residents to participate in a warm, cozy sociability, to care for each other and their urban environment, and to transform such affective attachments into active deeds of civic

responsibility that will promote social cohesion. One local administrator explained that a mental and emotional transformation was necessary among residents for community participation to take root:

> Some of them do voluntarily help their family members. But they don't see that as a voluntary activity, because it is family, it's close. It's that family atmosphere, that feeling, which we try to link to the neighborhood.

Here, the emphasis on the private, exclusive sphere of the family resonates with "home-as-haven," yet the policy practitioner intends to link the private sphere to a "home-as-heaven" on a neighborhood level.

I draw on data gathered over a period of two years (2009–2011) when I participated in a broad range of community participation activities in Slotermeer. I make use of data derived from participant observation of the voluntary activities of immigrant women. I first came into contact with four women with whom I shared a table at a collective gathering in a neighborhood center. At the gathering, these women discussed the possibility of a "women's teahouse." I observed the discussion and asked if I could join their initiative. They agreed and over a period of three months, we met every week and discussed our ideas and plans for action under the guidance of a community outreach worker. After three months, we applied for funding from the district administration, which we failed to receive as administrators wanted us to integrate the activities of two institutionalized women centers in the district into our initiative. The women were reluctant to do so, as they did not feel welcome in these centers and eventually withdrew the application.

Two of the women (Khadija and Houda) already organized a weekly coffee morning, which they soon invited me to visit. The target group for the women's teahouse largely coincided with the women who attended the coffee mornings, so I attended the coffee mornings almost every Wednesday between the summer of 2010 and the spring of 2011. After a period of three months, the initiative for a women's teahouse slowly faded, but I continued attending the coffee mornings for a period of ten months. The women formed a group of about twenty. I interviewed eleven and had (additional) conversations with most of the women during the coffee mornings, though I could not communicate with a few due to the fact that their Dutch was not fluent, and I did not speak sufficient Turkish or Berber. I also interviewed seven other female volunteers who organized similar (weekly) activities or events in the neighborhood but were not involved in this particular coffee morning.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) recommend collecting various slices of data in order to strengthen conclusions. My slices of data included in-depth interviews and informal conversations, participant

observations of the coffee mornings and the teahouse meetings, and analyses of a sample of email correspondence between the women. I used a constant comparative method to iteratively collect and analyze field notes and interview transcripts to identify themes and categories throughout the research process. The initial themes that emerged included concepts related to space such as "public," "private," and "parochial." Once these initial themes were identified, I organized and systematized the coding of the transcripts and field notes. Taken together, these various data sources triangulate the findings, increase validity, and provide a richer, fuller picture of the home-making practices of these immigrant women.

ENACTING A GENDERED SPHERE OF BELONGING

My informants in Slotermeer were aged between 30 and 35; most were mothers with Moroccan, Turkish, or Surinamese backgrounds. Some of them were first-generation immigrants and had left their country of birth many years ago. Others were second-generation immigrants, born and raised in the Netherlands, some in Amsterdam. They formed a group of about 20–25 women, most of whom were unemployed due to a lack of education or health problems. Facing unequal access to resources and opportunities (see Martin 2002 on female neighborhood participation), they had not actively engaged with neighborhood life before the community participation program. While most had lived in Slotermeer for quite some time, they were not very familiar with (issues in) the neighborhood. Houda's mental map of the neighborhood was prompted by her "walking area": accessible by foot and bound by home, her children's school, grocery shops, and the neighborhood center. The women's knowledge, experience, and use of the neighborhood was limited and can be understood to reflect differences in access and mobility according to class, race, and ethnicity, as has been discussed by human geographers (see Lynch 1960 on mental mapping).

It is not strange that the neighborhood center should be part of Houda's mental map. In addition to the aspects mentioned earlier, neighborhood centers are also spaces where "empowerment" programs are organized, in particular for less educated, immigrant women. Dutch emancipation and integration policy and the Neighborhood Renewal Policy have centered on combating their social isolation and deprivation in order to improve their participation in society. Studies show that these empowerment programs do not, however, result in the inclusion of immigrant women based on appreciation and the need for their experiences, skills, and talents; instead, they emphasize the cultural differences and shortcomings of these women (see Prins and Saharso 2008; Ghorashi 2010).

Most of the female volunteers I met were obliged to attend these programs to qualify for social benefits: the content of these courses

Figure 2
The entrance to the neighborhood center where post-migrant women organize weekly coffee mornings.

varies from learning Dutch and assertiveness training to learning how to ride a bike and guidance in parenting. These programs led to their first trips to the neighborhood center and their first contact with community outreach workers working there. As part of the community participation program, these community outreach workers encouraged immigrant women to organize activities and encounters in the neighborhood center according to their own preferences, hobbies, and interests. The following sections describe how, in the process, community outreach workers intervened in these women's feelings of home. I will show how women act out community in the neighborhood center by: (1) domesticating space; (2) feminizing culture; and (3) "whispering voice" (Figure 2).

DOMESTICATING SPACE

Khadija and Houda, two volunteers who organize a weekly coffee morning for women in Slotermeer, were well aware of the social isolation faced by many of the neighborhood's immigrant women. Wilma, a community outreach worker, approached them during one of their visits to the center and appealed to their sense of sympathy and compassion. Khadija explained:

> She told us that there were still so many women here who have never been to school, are still not able to leave their house and have no outlet or possibilities. I felt really sad about that because I have made some steps in my life, but other women are not there yet. But that doesn't mean that they are not important or that they should not be part of this neighborhood.

With Wilma's encouragement and support, Khadija and Houda organized a weekly opportunity for women to gather and share their stories in "a safe environment." Houda explained that she experiences the weekly coffee mornings "like home, but without men and children." But what does Houda mean when she equates the neighborhood center with home?

Khadija's explanation offers a first point of reference. For her, the coffee mornings are "a place for women of all cultures to come together": "Here women can chit-chat, laugh, relax, forget about their cares and get information about everything that concerns women in the neighborhood." The importance attached to seemingly trivial activities such as laughing and relaxing point to their understanding of "home-as-haven"(Duyvendak 2011): the coffee mornings allow women to engage in practices normally undertaken in the realm of their private homes or within the confines of their intimate relationships. Furthermore, the reference to "forgetting" points to the welcome ambivalence with respect to private problems related to family and household. At the center, laughing, relaxing, and forgetting bring about "home-as-heaven," (Duyvendak 2011) as women are invited to engage in new intimate relationships and express their feelings and concerns in a public environment. Women like Khadija and Houda, and the other women who organize and attend the coffee mornings *domesticate* the neighborhood center: through their home-making practices, the public space of the neighborhood center acquires comforting, relaxing qualities as it becomes a sort of living room, where some women can share emotions and experiences that are closely related to things happening in the privacy of their households or families.

To give an example. On a cold but sunny winter day, the women gather in the neighborhood center for a coffee morning. For the past four weeks, two social workers from a local organization specializing in psychological care have taken over the coffee morning. Wilma had asked them to integrate a four-week course designed for women suffering from "mental health issues, loneliness and sadness." The course was meant to allow women to reflect on their private worries and daily struggles with their peers, outside of the confines of their private homes. This morning, Zineb, a social worker, waits for the right moment to intervene. She proposes that all the women share their feelings. "Which grade would you give yourself today?", she asks the group, "and why?" To set an example, she starts grading her own feelings. The women follow. Some give themselves high grades: one is due to become an aunt; another has just finished cleaning her entire house. Then, Nurjan, a timid woman, shares her story about her illness and how it confines her to her house and prevents her from doing the things that she wants to do. The women respond compassionately; Emine gets up from her chair to give Nurjan a comforting hug before taking over and explaining why she gave herself an eight:

She is happy that she took the initiative to complain to her neighbors about their son throwing snowballs: "I feel that I stood up for myself." The women applaud. When members of the group have all had their turn, they stand up to "dust each other off." "Just let go of those negative feelings and thoughts!", Zineb shouts.

Several weeks later, an unexpected occurrence during the coffee morning illustrates the ambiguity of this domestication of public space. Wilma has sent out invitations to the neighborhood's elderly, but has forgotten to mention that only women are allowed. An old man enters the room with an invitation. Suddenly, panic stirs in the room, as two women rush to put on their headscarves, and others nervously straighten their headscarves around their faces. Wilma welcomes the old man, while Aisha angrily utters words in her native language; Emine does not understand the tumult and asks Aisha to talk in Dutch, which Aisha, upset, fails to do.

Here, the private environment that is acted out clashes with the public function of the neighborhood center. Wilma tells the women that a neighborhood center is a public space and is "for everybody." Emine emphasizes this as well as she tries to engage Aisha in conversation. However, Aisha and two other women leave; some of those who stay remain uncomfortable. Some start doing the dishes, while others start talking to the old man who appears flabbergasted by the stir he has caused. For some women, a transgression has occurred that is experienced as out-of-place. They do not recognize the man as a neighbor, but as a stranger and a threat to their particular sphere of belonging. Unexpectedly, he becomes a reminder of the differences between the women, as his presence affects them differently. As such, this "strange encounter" (Ahmed 2000) establishes relations of proximity and distance between the women in this sphere of belonging. Moreover, it shows how a temporary, contested boundary is constituted in this sphere: some women try to perform an act of exclusion, while others attempt to include the man.

The incident revives a discussion among the women about getting their own place and making their coffee morning more inclusive. Ideally, they would like to leave the neighborhood center and start their own "women's tea house": "a place where women are not just welcome, but where women *feel* welcome." The words they use to describe such a space convey what they want: it has to be "without men," "safe," "informal," "spontaneous," "playful," and "cozy," and with "no obligations"; it should make them "feel respected"; additionally, they must have a couch. While the couch may seem like a trivial thing, it emphasizes that the teahouse has to feel like a true haven. This becomes clear when Wilma sits down with some of the women and tells them that they should focus on activities rather than on furniture, as the local authority does not fund requests for furniture. At this point, the governance of belonging is confronted by both

formal procedures and the practical convictions of the women. For the women, a couch is very important:

Emine: Well, it has to be a meeting space. But if we put a couch in the large room, then immediately the room is filled.
Nurjan: But without a couch it is not really homey [*huiselijk*] ...
Naqiba: And it doesn't really invite women to walk in and make and drink tea.
Naqiba: We agreed that it has to be a meeting space right? Not a center for activities.
Emine: Yeah, you're right. I guess I'm just afraid the room will become cramped.
Salima: Well, still we will need nice couches and chairs, because we want to drink tea in a nice ambiance [*we willen gezellig thee drinken*].

The women agree, against Wilma's advice, that "meeting" is a very important activity, and one that cannot be organized in an uncomfortable, formal setting. Therefore, a couch is essential, and they decide to keep it on the application form, as they see the neighborhood center—and their imagined teahouse—as an extension of their own homey living room.

FEMINIZING CULTURE

Like most residents of Slotermeer, my informants were well aware of the stigma their neighborhood suffers—as a place where the discontents of Dutch multicultural society are most manifest. Yet, encouraged by the affective interventions of local administrators and community outreach workers, they related positively to the adjective "multicultural."

Female volunteers organized activities around cooking and eating. Eating together—and other activities related to food—is an important aspect of the affective citizenship that local administrators and community outreach workers try to encourage among residents. In his role as chairman of most neighborhood meetings, Sander, a local administrator, introduced the ever-present buffet as a delicious "multicultural" feast and made it part of a short narrative on Slotermeer as a "rainbow palette" of cultures. Dishes were usually prepared by female volunteers from their own culinary tradition. By qualifying the food as "multicultural," local administrators and community outreach workers employ the sensory experience of tasting, cooking, and eating to invoke curiosity and respect for each other. Opening up to each other's culinary traditions is meant to help residents become familiar with each other's rich cultures. As such, it helps community outreach workers and local administrators to accentuate the positive aspects

of the everyday, multicultural reality of Slotermeer and reframe the stereotypically negative image of the multiethnic neighborhood.

In the process, they publicly celebrate female immigrant volunteers as the heroines of this new space of belonging, as cooking is a typical everyday practice that reveals the hidden strengths of, mostly, immigrant women. For Khadija, moments of eating together provides a cherished opportunity to reach out to her neighbors:

> I like to see people eating cozily together. It is important…in my culture. It doesn't matter then where you're from, whether you're Muslim or Christian or I don't know what…Love goes through the stomach, that's the saying isn't it?

The notion of eating together appealed to my informants' sense of togetherness; they interpreted and used food as the community outreach workers and local administrators intended. The seemingly trivial activity of preparing food, usually done in the private realm of the kitchen, is imbued with new meaning, as it is brought out into the semi-public openness of the neighborhood center, giving rise to a community there. Yet it is a community that has the tendency to exclude, as the sensory experiences of eating, tasting, and smelling also enable women to recollect a sense of belonging to an immaterial home far away in time and/or place. The home-made sweets that women bring to the coffee mornings are often the entry point for exchanging recipes and cooking tips, followed by conversations about growing up in Turkey, Morocco, or other places and the peculiarities of family life there. Together, they indulge in a nostalgic longing for the intimacy of a haven long gone or far away. Here, a sense of communality comes to life through the collective act of reminiscing. In this respect, the governance of belonging is confronted with restrictions that relate to a nostalgic longing for the past that can only be shared with those who also have a migrant background.

Women also organized activities around creative handicrafts. In Slotermeer, the activity program of the neighborhood center includes a traditional Turkish paper marbling workshop and a sewing workshop (e.g. for traditional Hindu costumes, knitting). The female volunteers responsible for these activities are particularly proud of these expressions of what they consider their cultural heritage and want to share it with others—primarily women—in the neighborhood. It led Carmen and Cyrille, two friends, to organize a traditional Surinamese headscarf workshop in the neighborhood center. When asked about her motivation, Cyrille refers to issues of integration:

> My mother used to say, "If you are in a country and people walk on one leg there, you'll have to try to walk on one leg as well." The Surinamese have learnt to do that very well here, but there

> is one thing hanging loose: their tradition…the importance of the things which you have been raised with, your own culture.

Cyrille distinguishes herself from her fellow Surinamese who have forgotten about their “culture.” Carmen, her friend, adds that she wants “to share our rich culture, all the good things that come from our culture.” For these women, integration is a two-way street; their ability to feel at home in Slotermeer is tied to a home-making practice that emerges out of a sense of belonging to a former (and imagined) home, namely Suriname.

Interestingly, these home-making practices include cultural heritages—as manifestations of a public home—that have traditionally been handed down by women. These gendered expressions of culture enable women to act upon their feelings of pride for their (imagined) cultural heritage by making them a part of the construction of another (imagined) sphere of belonging, namely that of the neighborhood community. Through these cultural expressions, they contribute to the policy narrative of Slotermeer as a rainbow of diversity, and help local administrators and community outreach workers imagine the neighborhood as a community. They thus display a positive attitude toward multiculturalism.

Yet, this enactment of community appears fragile—and again interwoven with the home-as-haven—as the following example illustrates. When, due to financial cutbacks, local administrators asked the organizers of sewing workshops in different neighborhood centers to relocate to one place so that they could share the sewing machines, they were reluctant to do so. Marcia, a local administrator, invited three volunteers to discuss the plan. Due to their indignant reactions, she first thought the women had misunderstood her. Two of the workshops were organized and primarily attended by Moroccan-Dutch women, the other by Surinamese Dutch women. Marcia thought the volunteers were afraid that they would have to mingle, which is something the local administrators favor but the female volunteers do not.

It soon transpired that this was not the main issue; it was Marcia who had misunderstood the situation. Gosta, one of the volunteers, told her in an angry manner that the plan was “unrealistic” because her group lived too far away from the designated center. The women do not have money for public transport, and she could not ask them to walk, as they needed to be back in time to pick up their children from school. The two other volunteers agreed: while these creative and cultural activities offer women the opportunity to suspend their identities as mothers, tap their creativity, and express a different side of their womanhood, they are still first and foremost mothers who must care for their young children. If they have to venture too far from home, this will prevent them from engaging in community activities. The opportunity for home feelings to travel is once again confined

to their walking area—a physical and relational space demarcated by buildings and family relations.

WHISPERING VOICE

Voluntary work not only offers immigrant women opportunities to domesticate and feminize the neighborhood center, but also to voice issues that concern them in a safe, intimate environment. The warm ambiance of the coffee mornings and cozy neighborhood meetings encourage intimate forms of conversation and interaction with jokes, laughter, and gossip, helping the women to reflect on themselves and on others and to deal with the neighborhood's diversity. By engaging in this talk, they also sometimes touch upon wider social issues in the neighborhood or in society at large.

One day Nurjan comes late to the coffee morning. She sits down and tells us that over the weekend she attended a meeting organized around *Eid al-Fitr* (festivities celebrating the end of the annual month of fasting).

Nurjan: There was an imam, a priest, and a Jewish religious man, how do you call someone like that? He explained about Judaism, with countries and borders and how they are not allowed to cut trees? I didn't understand?

Adriana: I don't think I understand you either?

Nurjan: Well, if you don't abide by that you're not Jewish, because everybody has to abide by those rules, right?

Gisele: There are all kinds of faiths within Judaism, just like in Islam.

Emine: Look, sweetheart, it's just like with Wilders [a Dutch right-wing politician] who says that within Islam you can hit women. But we know that the Qur'an doesn't say that. Some men use that to suppress their women. And politicians just use it to suppress us as Muslims. But it is not our guidance [*leidraad*].

Nurjan [jokingly]: Don't use such difficult words!

Emine: Oh, I'm sorry. I mean that people interpret things differently.

In the meantime, Houda returns from the kitchen, and a discussion ensues about religion and what it means to women.

Emine: It's very important that you respect others and that the other can be different. We all believe in God and that's what is important. I'm not going to say: I'm Muslim and you have to be Muslim too, or vice versa.

Then, Adriana refers to the awkward situation with the old man entering the coffee morning and asks Houda: "But you don't want men to

attend the coffee morning, right?" She refers to her own husband who had once wanted to attend the *Eid al-Fitr* festivities at their children's primary school but was told not to come, as the feast was organized for mothers. Houda responds that she understands the school's position, as she can "really not allow any men" during the coffee mornings: "What will our husbands think of us!" The discussion takes an interesting turn when Nurjan makes a link between men and lesbians and tells us that in her previous neighborhood center there was a lesbian couple attending activities. "Is that allowed?", she asks out loud. Houda is somewhat surprised but answers firmly: "No! I don't want that. They will stare at me!" She emphasizes her point by making faces and gestures, imitating someone in love and taking Adriana's hand and cuddling up to her. The women laugh and imitate Houda by engaging in playful behavior, touching hands and hugging the woman next to them. Then Khadija asks: "What about gay men? They will not fall in love with you?" Houda cries out: "Noooo! No! Gay men with my children?" Emine is less outspoken but makes it clear that she would find it difficult as well. She associates being gay with pedophilia and refers to a famous Amsterdam child abuse case that has recently been prominent in the news. Adriana jokes that perhaps only the "man of the lesbian couple" can attend their coffee mornings. Again, the women laugh; the discussion continues partly in the group, but also scatters into face-to-face talk between women. Then, all of sudden, Adriana looks at the clock and panics, realizing that school is almost out. She says goodbye and runs off to pick up her little daughter, triggering the other women to do the same without finishing the discussion. They hug and kiss each other goodbye despite their previously uttered different standpoints on this particular issue of religion, sexuality, and diversity in the neighborhood.

Despite the fact that a serious issue was being addressed during the coffee morning, the atmosphere remained playful, with laughter resonating through the public talk. The incident also shows how a serious topic can emerge out of a transgression of the boundary between private and public—the old man entering a week before—while the topic itself is discussed in a safe and intimate environment, acted out through laughter, jokes, and playful behavior. Where Wilma (at the start of this article) failed to start a serious discussion about loneliness among the elderly and prompt the women to reflect on public issues in the neighborhood or in society at large the women are able to "whisper voice." The notion of "voice" was given particular meaning in the social sciences through the work of Hirschman ([1970] 1982) who showed how members of an organization have two possible responses to a perceived wrongdoing: they can *exit* (withdraw from the relationship) or they can *voice* (try to improve the relationship through expression of a complaint, a grievance or a proposal for change). When used in theories on citizenship and democracy, the

notion of "voice" points to the right and ability of people to express their concerns and make contributions to the public sphere. In "republican" ideals of citizenship the manner of voicing concerns is ideally done through official and formal deliberations, such as fora, committees, and councils (see Boyte 2011). In opposition to this traditional form of articulating a voice, the act of speaking of these women is different. The warm ambiance of the coffee mornings and cozy neighborhood meetings encourage an act of speaking that is intimate, informal and takes place in safe, women-only space. Still, the concerns and neighborhood issues voiced in this intimate ambiance, are meant to be heard, but in a private or subtler register. Rather, these women look for a listening ear in intimate surroundings.

The value of this kind of home-like environment became clearer when I joined the women on an excursion to a neighborhood center in a nearby city. Wilma had encouraged this visit, as it was a "neighborhood center where a lot of volunteers do very good work." The trip was meant to teach the women about self-organization to help them set up their teahouse. For the women, the excursion was a real outing, involving taking a bus to a different town. On the day itself, they prepared sandwiches, fruit, and drinks and were excited. However, when we arrived in the neighborhood center, it appeared that Wilma had made a mistake. The program was not about how to run your own community activities, but instead it was a program from the National Cooperation of Active Residents, an organization affiliated with residential committees and public protest. The room was filled with native Dutch, (mostly) male, older volunteers, among them two volunteers from the residential platform against demolition plans in Slotermeer. The afternoon unfolded with discussions on political issues like urban renewal, demolition, and the deterioration of streets, parks, and squares. Our group sat in the back of the hall, obviously out of place and very quiet. The women regained some of their enthusiasm and chattiness when there was an excursion through the neighborhood, and they were liberated from the official form of the meeting. Yet they did not mingle with the other participants, instead enjoying walking among themselves.

The above example shows that when these women do venture away from their "walking area," it is essential for most of them to be able to still feel at home. If they end up in a traditional public setting where discursive competences, political talk, and male presence are dominant, the women's delicate public spirit tends to wither away.

CONCLUSION: THE EXCLUSIVITY OF A GENDERED SPHERE OF BELONGING

What are the effects of a governmental strategy of "affective citizenship" (Fortier 2010; De Wilde and Duyvendak forthcoming) that aims to create a particular sphere of belonging—community—in the

neighborhood? And, what role does residents' feelings of home play in making this community? Ethnographic insight into the voluntary activities of immigrant women shows how these interventions specifically target—and at times resonate with—the emotions, morals, and manners of these women, encouraging them to engage with the neighborhood. They enable women to collectively develop and express themselves by acting upon their feelings of home. They bring practices, concerns, and emotions—which are part of the domestic sphere of the private house(hold) and the intimate sphere of family and friendship—to the "parochial space" (Lofland 1989) of a neighborhood center. Their activities and encounters in this space bind immigrant women together and give form to a sense of communality. Doing so, women enact a *gendered* sphere of belonging that becomes a place for transition and escape.

They do so through reaching across space and time, involving a symbolic exchange of recognition and care as well as a visceral economy of scent and touch (see Ahmed 2000). The women, in their desire to create a domestic sphere of safety and comfort—a "home-as-haven" (Duyvendak 2011)—share a sense of home that is not so much rooted in the neighborhood, the city of Amsterdam, or the Dutch nation but, rather, in the images and memories of places far away (Turkey, Morocco, Surinam) and long ago (their childhood). In doing so, these women construct an exclusively female-gendered "parochial space" (as the example of the man entering indicates), which demonstrates that there are limits to parochial space being able to link the intimate, private world of the household, and kin networks to the public world of the street and strangers (Lofland 1989: 455).

At other times, however, the domesticated, feminized construction of home in the neighborhood center provides room for "a fragile public" (Eliasoph 1996) where women address concerns and neighborhood issues in an act of speaking typical for the women participating in the weekly coffee morning. To "whisper voice" is an act of speaking that is intimate, informal, and takes place in safe, women-only space. Together with the feminizing of culture it has a productive, powerful potential: through their desire for a couch, the women subtly contest how the local administration has set the parameters for the community participation program. If eating is so important, surely providing kitchen utensils is part of the responsibility of the local administration, and, if socializing is so important, surely a "comfy couch" is their responsibility and a pre-requisite before they can ask women to be responsible for caring for others. As such, making use of the "parochial space" enables them to make territorial and symbolic claims. Thus, at times, they not only act out community, but also small, public acts of citizenship. These acts of citizenship are still born out of practices related to gendered, female-ascribed household tasks (cooking, sewing) or out of their roles as mothers (caring,

nurturing) (see also Van den Berg and Duyvendak 2012). Moreover, these immigrant women would rather voice concerns intimately and informally than engage in a republican-inspired official articulation of voice (Boyte 2011).

The policy and the “parochial space” that is deployed to produce a community and a sense of belonging, thus produces a gendered, exclusionary belonging. Neighborhood centers are temporarily and contingently privatized so that immigrant women can feel at home there. Feelings of belonging appear back-to-back with a feeling of otherness. The result is a sphere of belonging that is fragile, temporary, and exclusive. It is therefore worth bearing in mind that the transitions enabled by this “parochial space” may represent an interval more than a permanent shift. The affective interventions of local administrators and community outreach workers offer immigrant women opportunities to pursue a “politics of home” (Duyvendak 2011) as it fits into the larger narrative of Dutch neighborhood policies. However, the governance of belonging also meets religious convictions, personal interests, or practical impediments when carried out in practice. For instance, the bonding between immigrant women from different cultures does not necessarily bring them closer to Dutch national identity. Moreover, the production of affinity between the women seems to be partly fed by shared opposition to norms of Dutch culture, specifically sexual equality, acceptance and openness towards the LGBTQ-community.

Public integration remains an unresolved problem, as the women do not appear pliable enough for the benefit of community building within the Dutch model. The women clearly do create a community, just not necessarily the sort of community official Dutch policies envisage. And so, acting out community leads to an affective citizenship that is not so much an inclusive sphere of social relations but an exclusive sphere of affective relations, and due to its ambiguous, fragile character this gendered sphere of belonging is difficult to manage.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A word of thanks to Marguerite van den Berg, Evelien Tonkens, and the co-authors of this theme issue for their constructive comments on earlier drafts of this paper, and to the reviewers for their critical and most helpful comments. Also, I would like to thank the participants, in particular Friederike Faust and Beate Binder, of the GenderQueer Research Lab of the Institute for European Ethnology at Humboldt University, Berlin where this paper was first presented. Finally, the editing of Takeo David Hymans greatly improved this paper.

DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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