



Migrants in Emmeloord;  
A Study on Lived Experiences of Women at the Women's Center Noordoostpolder

Master thesis- Migrants in Emmeloord

**Migrants in Emmeloord;**  
**A Study on Lived Experiences of Women at the Women's**  
**Center Noordoostpolder**

Master thesis Cultural Anthropology: Sustainable Citizenship

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feeling and new inspiration. Your critical yet constructive feedback has surely lifted this thesis to a higher level. Now I can look back on this process as an instructive, particular period. It has been an experience I will never forget and that I can be proud of. Thank you all for your endless support and trust in me.

## Abstract

*Human beings have always moved in search of new opportunities, or to escape poverty, conflict, or environmental degradation. However, migration took on a new character with the beginnings of European expansion from the sixteenth century, and the Industrial Revolution from the nineteenth century, which set in motion a massive transfer of population from rural to urban areas within and across borders (Castels, de Haas and Miller 2014, 23).*

Through the globalization of the world, the movement of goods, networks, and people has increased. Many countries not only enjoy the possibilities that are enabled through these constructions but are also challenged by them. This thesis focuses on two main topics, namely migration and citizenship. The research took place at a Women's center in Emmeloord, capital of the Noordoostpolder, which lies in the province of Flevoland in the Netherlands. Emmeloord would become the foodshed of the Netherlands. Emmeloord was the promised land for agriculture and attracted many farmers and agricultural companies. It was also the hotspot for seasonal workers who were very often labor migrants from outside the Netherlands. Today Emmeloord is a multicultural society of 26.000 citizens with a Women's center. This center was initially established in 2007 by the initiative of a few women working in the healthcare sector. Their goal was to provide a safe meeting place for migrant women who experienced psychosomatic complaints as a result of their isolated social situation. A few migrant women joined this initiative. In this thesis, there will be no generalization on how women with a migration background experience citizenship, but an individual approach where every case will be analyzed separately. Throughout the thesis, the different challenges women, in particular, face in their daily encounters as migrants in Emmeloord but also the opportunities they gain through migration will be discussed. Through the application of different theories on citizenship, gender, and migration, the thesis will analyze the notion of citizenship in the lives of women with a migration background in Emmeloord.

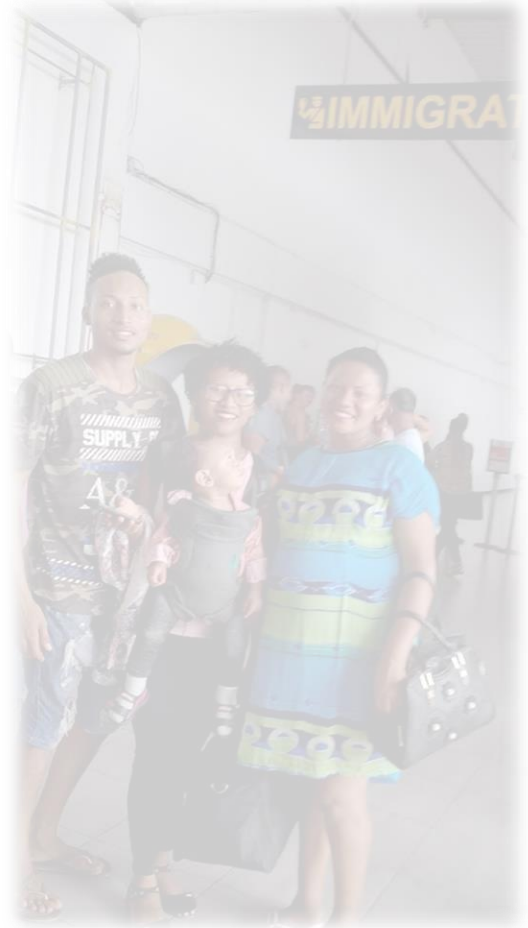
Key words: globalization; migration; transnationalism; citizenship; gender; integration; language; Women's center, Emmeloord

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

It was June the 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018, when I put my feet on the Netherlands' soil as a migrant. It was not my first time here, but this time was different. I was no longer a tourist. I had to register my arrival to collect my residence permit. I was arranging many things like health insurance and vaccinations. To reunite with my boyfriend in the Netherlands and achieve our goals together, were things we had been looking forward to for a long time—dreaming about a country with better economic opportunities. Unfortunately, there was also a downside. My familiar environment, close relatives, and friends stayed behind in Suriname. Here I was, in the cold Netherlands, on a warm summer day.

What does it mean for migrant women to live in the Netherlands? How do these women practice citizenship as a migrant? Through the use of personal stories, autoethnography, participant observation, interviews, and many more methods I used to gather data, I will navigate you through different experiences and practices of citizenship among women who visit the Women's center in Emmeloord.

This thesis is the result of theoretical and empirical research on migration, women, and citizenship. The empirical part consisted of three months of fieldwork, which can be divided again in physical and virtual or online-based research. The issues that occur among migration and citizenship are widely studied and analyzed. Not only in academia (Yuval 1997; Ong 1996;



*Figure 1 Picture of the author (standing in the middle) at the airport on the day of migration*

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<sup>1</sup> A great deal of information provided in this introduction and the theoretical framework are retrieved from my research proposal. Fouzya Fredison, "Lived experiences of citizenship among migrant women in Emmeloord: An auto-ethnography with life stories" (unpublished manuscript, January 27 2020), draft proposal.

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Duyvandak, Hurenkamp and Tonkens 2008 (in A. Chebeld D'Appolonia and S. Reich 2010, chapter 13); Bloemdraad, Korteweg and Yurdakul 2008), but it has also been on the agenda of the EU (European Union) as their primary objectives (<https://www.europarl.europa.eu/factsheets/nl/sheet152/immigratiebeleid>). The migration crisis in 2015, has opened space for intensive consultation among the nation-states on how to regulate the migration flow. On June the 7<sup>th</sup> in 2016, the European Commission designed a plan for this matter, called; 'Action Plan on the integration of third-country nationals' (<https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/europe-integration-action-plan-of-third-country-nationals-launched>). With this thesis I want to add unto this specific topic of migration and citizenship by analyzing the way citizenship is lived and experienced among women with a migration background, who visit the Women's center in Emmeloord.

The Netherlands, a member of the EU, has not been spared the consequences of migration. In particular, according to research from the Social Cultural planning Agency<sup>2</sup> (SCP), many native Dutch people perceive immigrants as unwilling to adapt to Dutch society, consequently, the Dutch norms and values are under pressure (Josje den Ridder 2019). In SCP's latest publication from December 2019, they analyzed the different opinions around integration in the Netherlands. They argue that integration means participation in society. However, who and how people need to integrate differ. One source of answering these questions can be found in the coalition agreement on integration, providing different perspectives (<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/regering/regeerakkoord-vertrouwen-in-de-toekomst/4.-nederland-in-de-wereld/4.6-integratie>). According to the coalition agreement, integration is a process that expects efforts from both the native and the migrants, where the newcomer must take initiatives to use the different possibilities offered by the government. The opening statement states the following: *In a fair society, your origin should never determine your future. Integration is, therefore, essential for both people themselves and Dutch society* (VVD 2017). From the SCP research outcome on integration, it becomes clear that, in the Netherlands, people still struggle to find ways to live with each other, even immigrants or their descendants might struggle to find a place in this society.

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<sup>2</sup> SCP is an interdepartmental, scientific institute that conducts social and scientific research for the government.



As a migrant myself, I encountered plenty of obstacles in the Netherlands. These vary from difficulties in finding a decent job to navigating my way in an unknown society. These struggles made me very curious about the lived experiences of other women with a migration background. My position as a female immigrant enables me to understand and share similar experiences with my research participants. There are two main reasons why I choose to study the expectations, experiences, and practices of citizenship among women with a migration background. The first comes from a personal account. As a newcomer, I became sensitive to migration, meaning that the obligations and expectations from both government and society, which not only interests me but also impacted my personal life. I had never focused nor delved into migration matters this great, as I have done through this thesis. As a foreigner, I am aware of the challenges I face in paving my way through society. I choose to take my accounts along in this thesis because I see myself as an expert on the area of migration experiences. The second reason for this research topic is the challenge the Netherlands faces in this particular time by dealing with the aftermath of the migration crisis from 2015.

Specifically, migrants and women form contestation grounds, a battlefield for exclusion, belonging, and inequalities (Davis 1997). For this reason, I find it utterly relevant to study individuals who might regard themselves as both migrants and women. Citizenship often is used in different ways and in different meanings. One of the concepts of citizenship that this research relies on is self-making and being made by Ong (Ong 2013). The 'being-made' and 'self-making' process reflects the complexity of negotiating citizenship (Sophia Woodman and Zhonghua Guo 2017). I have an excellent opportunity to look into these processes among visitors of the Women's center Noordoostpolder (NOP)<sup>3</sup> in Emmeloord, which lies in Flevoland province in the Netherlands, where I spent time conducting research. This center is a meeting place for women all over the world. Participant observation at the center enabled me to build meaningful relations and knowledge, leading to understanding the notion of citizenship from both migrant and native<sup>4</sup> women's perspectives.

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<sup>3</sup> NOP stands for Noordoostpolder, which translates Northeastpolder in English.

<sup>4</sup> Native: a person born in a particular country (Oxford Dictionary). In this thesis, I refer to natives as white people born in the Netherlands with no migration background.

During the research period, I counted 32 different countries in the women logbook as a country of origin. Bloemraad<sup>5</sup> subdivides the notion of citizenship into four dimensions: legal status, rights, political and other forms of participation in society, and a sense of belonging (Bloemraad, Korteweg, and Yurdakul 2008). In my opinion, citizenship is more complicated than a four dimension concept. The deeply interwoven objects of race and gender inequalities still emerge today. In the Netherlands, a migrant can obtain the legal status of citizenship through naturalization, which includes a process of integration. In this thesis, citizenship is not confined to only a proper passport or resident permit but looks at citizenship as broader practices of belonging. In as much integration is a contested area in the Netherlands, the central question here is: How is the notion of citizenship lived and experienced by women with a migration background, that visit the Women's center Noordoostpolder in Emmeloord? To answer this question, I will first focus on the role of the Women's center in their lives. How does the Women's center contribute to the life of a migrated citizen? I will continue looking at the benefits and struggles migrants' encounters in the Noordoostpolder and close with the three primary category migrants at the Women's center; labor migrants, enforced migrants, and migrants for a family reunion. The different experiences of migration and push and pull factors for each category will also be discussed.

Being a citizen is one thing; being a migrant is another thing. Citizens with a migration background participate in the economic labor force, but sadly it often entails involvement in precarious labor conditions. This thesis will focus mainly on the lives of 'legal citizens'. Meaning, I have documented stories about migrants with legal status or work permits. Despite their legal status of being a Dutch citizen or citizen of the European Union, migration contains many struggles and benefits in their daily lives.

The term citizenship is not only contested in the literature but even in Dutch society, it has different meanings. The first discourse that I encountered in the study of citizenship was in the translation. Citizenship translated in Dutch means *burgerschap*. From a political perspective, *burgerschap* refers to civilians taking a more active role in society by participating in solution making projects for or within their neighborhood, municipality, or country. The government

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<sup>5</sup> Professor Irene Bloemraad is a UC Berkeley sociologist and a leading expert on immigration  
<https://irle.berkeley.edu/affiliates/irene-bloemraad/>

expects citizens to do this without government or market intervention

(<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/burgerschap>). The governmental website explains citizenship as; *the way people participate in society*. In the Netherlands, this is with respect for each other, for democracy and the rule of law, and everyone's freedoms. These shared values are essential for living together peacefully with all kinds of different people' (rijksoverheid.nl 2019). Citizenship refers to the active role of a citizen and not so much to their legal status. The parliament report on integration, binding, and citizenship of 2011 explains these expectations that citizenship brings along:

*Citizenship starts with the participation of every citizen: by building up an independent existence, by being self-reliant and by knowing and applying the rules of Dutch society. Citizenship is thus based on active participation in all relevant facets of society: in the labor market, in education, in one's neighborhood and living environment, by protecting and maintaining the democratic constitutional state, by educating children to become responsible citizens, by being involved with fellow citizens and to respect their rights. Mastering the Dutch language is an essential condition for being able to participate in society as an active citizen. A condition for citizenship is also that the citizen feels himself a citizen of society, identifies with society, feels responsible for it, and wants to belong. The Netherlands is a society based on solidarity (Kamerstuk 2011/16, 32256, 6, p. 13).*

For migrants, the above notion of citizenship is complicated, since there are many other expectations and obligations applicable for them to be able to fulfill their "task" on (active) citizenship. Integration is critical here. To integrate and gain the knowledge needed to fulfill the active role of a citizen is seen as a responsibility of the individual itself. Therefore, it is necessary to keep self-reliant on educating, especially in mastering the Dutch language. The help of family, friends, neighbors, associations, and churches is essential in this process. Not being able to speak the language sufficiently can have a significant impact on the migrant, such as cutting social assistance benefits (Catling 2018). The integration concept is based on the idea that the Dutch society cannot be seen as a random collection of people who live here, but a community that consists of a shared language, values and opinions.

*Anyone who comes to the Netherlands to settle here can at least expect to adhere to the rules, participate in social intercourse, and invest in the skills required. The basic*

*principle of self-reliance translates into the revised Civic Integration Act so that migrants themselves are responsible for achieving the required level of knowledge of the Dutch language and Dutch society (Kamerstuk 2011/16, 32256, 6, p.7-8).*

This notion of citizenship created by the Dutch government can be very problematic to achieve for migrants if we consider the theoretical analyses, where the practice of citizenship is very much based on gender and race divisions, which entails forms of belonging and exclusion. This research aims to understand the different ways migrant citizens gained, lived, and practiced citizenship.

The outline of this thesis is as follows; In the first chapter, I provide the reader with a theoretical framework that I used as a guide for the analyses—followed by the methodologies, including the location and population where the research took place. Thereafter I continue with my three analytical chapters; The Women's Center, Cities of Negotiation, and Migration Typologies. In the concluding chapter, I reflect on my research question: **How is the notion of citizenship lived and experienced by women with a migration background, that visit the Women's center Noordoostpolder in Emmeloord?**

# Chapter 1: Theoretical Framework

## Migration and Mobility

The theories and concepts on globalization, migration, and mobility mostly come from the lecture *thick connectivities* by David Henig, a lecturer at the Utrecht University. Another primary source is the book *Migration Theory* edit by C. Brettell and J. Hollifield. This 3rd edition is a collection of multiple scholars not limited to anthropology, who examine the different approaches on migration.

According to Castles and Miller, we are living in the age of migration (Castles and Miller 2009). The study of migration is a complex phenomenon that attracted many scholars in social sciences (Brettell and Hollifield 2015). Migration and mobility studies, in general, and in the anthropology, mainly approached mobility as individuals move from one place to another (one-way directional)(Henig 2019: L4), and migration as the movement of people from one location to another (Lanz 2013).

In '*Migration theory; talking across disciplines*' ed. by Brettell and Holifield (2015), a range of theories and approaches are presented to study migration. This book provides cross-disciplinary approaches in the field of migration. Theories about migration are shaped by a particular epistemology that generates a specific set of questions. Hence anthropology is a discipline sensitive to place and comparative in its perspectives; the questions formulated are less concerned about the broad demographic scope of migration flows. It is focused on the articulation between the place whence a migrant originates and the place or places to which he or she moves (Brettell and Hollifield 2015).

*This includes an exploration of how people in local places respond to global processes. Equally, anthropology's focus on culture, which includes the study of the interaction between beliefs and behavior, of corporate groups, and of social relationships, has resulted in an emphasis in migration studies on culture change and on forms of social organization that are characteristic of both the migration process and the immigrant community. Finally, anthropology's attention to meaning and lived experience has yielded*

*studies of migrant subjectivities and identities* (Jackson 2008; Horton 2009; Quesada 2011 in (Brettell and Hollifield 2015, 149)).

According to Tilman Lanz (2013), there are two category studies in the field of migration in the anthropology. First, how immigrants are perceived by the societies of the host country and how they respond to these perceptions, second, those interested in the process of migration itself. Lanz argues that anthropologists have frequently taken recourse to scholarship in postcolonial and cultural studies, fields that have developed a productive conceptual apparatus to characterize movements and flows. The contribution of anthropology to the study of contemporary migratory flows through its holistic approach, which can tie together many different aspects of complex migration processes (Lanz 2013). This thesis touches about the perception of immigrants in the host society and how they act upon this, as well as the different forms of migration itself.

### Migration Typologies

As a comparative, cross-cultural science, anthropology depends on typologies as a way to theorize about similarities and differences. Anthropologists have delineated distinct and diverse kinship and marriage systems, classified forms of religious behavior and belief, and distinguished between different types of economic exchange or political organization (Brettell and Hollifield 2015, 150). Nancie Gonzales (1961) uses this tradition, where she offered an early formulation of five types of migratory wage labor and looked at the impact of each of these on family organization. According to Gonzales, migration would be *reflected in social organization in different ways depending on the nature of the sociocultural system affected as well as the type of migration itself* (Gonzalez 1961, 1278). In her research primarily based in the Caribbean region, she identifies these types of labor migration; *seasonal, temporary nonseasonal, recurrent, continuous, and permanent*. According to Brettell and Hollifield, Gonzalez's typology underscores the fact that population movements, especially those across international boundaries, cannot be defined exclusively as one- way and definitive (Brettell and Hollifield 2015, 150). In later research Gonzales (1989,1992) adds another typology *conflict migration*. This type of migration describes population movement that is stimulated by violent conflict in the home society. Others refer to this form of migration as *enforced migration* (Indra 1999).

*All of these types encompass theories about the motivations for migration, about how migration is shaped by local, regional, national, and international economies, about the linkages between sending and receiving societies, about the relationship between migration on the one hand and family structure and household strategies on the other, and about how migration fits into and is given meaning by localized cultural contexts* (Brettell and Hollifield 2015, 150).

Although typologies are still used by an anthropologist to capture different migration strategies, they have also been questioned. Typologies generally display a static and homogenous picture that is flexible during the life of an individual migrant or the domestic cycle of a household, varied within a population, subject to change over time as more enormous contextual conditions change, and loaded with culturally contextualized meanings. Not to say that the analytical typologies formulated by anthropologists have steered research to the complex nature of the process and to the fundamental relationship between sending and receiving societies, either conceived in the macro terms of a global economy or in the more micro terms of social networks and emotional relationships that link households and individuals to both areas. They also contribute to achieving some of the comparative theoretical goals of the science of anthropology (Brettell and Hollifield 2015, 152).

### Analytical Approaches to Migration

Brettell and Hollifield (2015) describe four distinct analytical approaches that have been explored by anthropologists. First emerging from modernization theory; another rooted in a historical-structuralist/political economy that accentuates the impact of global capitalism; the next one connected to the formulation of a "culture of migration"; and lastly the concepts of transnationalism and diaspora (Brettell and Hollifield 2015, 153).

I delineate this theoretical framework to the first and last approach because they are more applicable for this research. In the early work on migration, a concept well used influenced by the modernization theory and a bipolar framework for analyses that divide and opposed sending and receiving countries as well as push and pull factors. Kearney (1986) has noted that this approach appears from the folk-urban continuum, formulated by Robert Redfield (1941). The

modernization framework has pointed out the rational and progressive economic decisions made in response to differentials in land, labor, and capital between where migrant life and the locale to which he or she has chosen to migrate (Brettell and Hollifield 2015). This theory assumes that people move from areas that had abundant labor, but scarce capital to areas with much capital and not enough labor, and this would lead to economic development in both sending and host societies. Anthropologist discovered that migrant savings were often spent on conspicuous consumer items (1), rather than for economic investment, and argued that the skills learned abroad could not be easily applied to the rural home context, (2) the agreement of who is going to migrate is not based on the individual but on a discussion that takes place within the household (ibid. 2015). Nevertheless, push and pull factors are still being used to analyze the different forms of migration. To understand immigrant life and identity, the theoretical construct of transnationalism suits this best.

As a theoretical construct about immigrant life and identity, transnationalism aptly suits the study of population movements in a world where improved modes of transportation, as well as the images that are transmitted utilizing modern telecommunications, have shortened the social distance between sending and receiving societies

## Globalization and Transnationalism

In the late 80's and 90's globalization and transnationalism became a buzzword to characterize the rapid social transformation of the world we live in. Social scientists started using it to describe the interconnectedness and mobility and relations across the scale (Henig 2019: L4). From the 90's, there is increasing appreciation that people move around the globe. People do not necessarily move from one place to another, and they can move back and forward and live at multiple locations at the same time. This shift in perspective and recognition that people have global relationships changed the way the study of mobility and migration is approached (ibid.). Henig explains that grand theories about the globalized world we are living in, from the 90's, had a top-down approach. While ethnography became popular, a bottom-up approach was added, just by going to the field and looking at local responses to experience globalization since the



approaches and the debate about globalization were optimistic in the 90's. The end of the Cold war might be an explanation for this. With the walls disappearing, the world was viewed more as an interconnected place. It was at the end of the 90's when anti-globalization ideas started to rise that people paid attention to the dark side of globalization (ibid.).

The rise of globalization studies in the 90's brought the critical idea of transnationality. Migrants and people on the move live in a transnational social field. Migrants get their meaning and how they relate to others from multiple locations and not just through the nation, where they live. It cannot be reduced to one state or one place. Henig identifies three main reasons why the concept of the transnational social field became very important.

First, it brought a new focus on migration. Research began to focus on ways in which (im)migrants, create and maintain ties to places of origin over time. It is an alternative to and a critique of earlier manifestations of articulation theory that *posit a primeval state of autonomy (usually labeled precapitalist), which is then violated by global capitalism* (Gupta and Ferguson 1992, 8 in Brettell and Hollifield 2015: 158). Second, the public debate is encouraged to learn about the organization of migrant's life in the places where they have moved. It has brought out new ideas about the representation and incorporation of immigrants and the deterritorialization, if not the actual disintegration, of nation-states (Appadurai 1996; Gupta 1992; Hannerz 1992 in Brettell and Hollifield 2015, 158). The third importance is on the social identity of immigrant individuals (Henig 2019: L4). Immigrants in the transnational and global world are concerned in the nation-building of more than one state; thus, national identities are not only blurred but also negotiated or constructed (Brettell and Hollifield 2015, 158).

Lately, anthropologists have argued that the political dominance and cultural authority practiced by the state gets undermined through the transnational arrangements constructed by migrants, their families and friends (Rouse 1995a: 358; see also Appadurai 1996) and are therefore beginning to address the question of citizenship and belonging (Brettell and Hollifield 2015, 168).

## Citizenship and Gender

Studying citizenship has led to many different approaches, even within Anthropology (Rosaldo 1994; Ong 1996; Yuval-Davis 1999). One thing is certain, and that is, there is no such thing as the right or only way to analyze citizenship. Sian Lazar argues that citizenship is used in various ways, but most fundamentally is that citizenship appoints to political belonging, *and how others live with others in a political community* (Lazar 2013, 1).

Ong (1999, 112) writes about "flexible citizenship," which she defines as the strategies and effects of mobile managers, technocrats, and professionals seeking to both circumvent and benefit from different nation-state regimes by selecting different sites for investments, work, and family relocation (see also Fong 2011). This approach on citizenship is not merely a political or legal status or a set of rights and obligations, but a dynamic and contingent cultural and social process (Brettell and Hollifield 2015, 167). The roots of this approach lies in the concept of Werbner and Yuval-Davis (1999).

Yuval Davis describes citizenship as a contested concept that has undergone many changes over the years (Yuval-Davis 1999, 120). Yuval-Davis (1999, 4) makes a distinction between political science definitions of citizenship that derive from the relationship between the individual and the state and those that define citizenship as a total relationship, inflected by identity, social positioning, cultural assumptions, institutional practices and a sense of belonging (Brettell and Hollifield 2015, 169). She has also formulated her concept of citizenship and describes it as a multi-layered concept. In *'The Multi-layered Citizen,'* she describes the various layers in which one's citizenship collectives; the local, ethnic, national, state, cross- or trans-state and supra-state. These domains are affected and often at least partly constructed by the relationships and positionings of each layer in a specific historical context (Yuval-Davis 1999, 121). She argues that this way of analyzing citizenship is fundamental, especially in non-western countries. Yuval-Davis notes that citizenship within the realm of the political community includes different forms of exclusion or exceptions shaped within this notion. For example, she refers to women, excluded from political participation for many years, and in some countries still are. Alternatively, women at least need permission from their male husbands who seems to be the representatives for

women and children (ibid.). An important note that she makes is the importance of including people's intimate lives, their family, and their networks of friendship in consideration when analyzing citizenship because these factors play a major role in how people experience and practice citizenship. *The gendered body is often a site of multi-layered rules and regulations* (Yuval-Davis 1999, 122). I believe it is necessary to be aware of gender construction within citizenship since the ethnography takes place in a very gender-based site with women from different backgrounds. Besides this multi-layer concept (Yuval-Davis 1999), there is also the four-dimension concept of citizenship (Bloemraad, Korteweg and Yurdakul 2008).

For Bloemraad, a sociologist, citizenship is a four-dimension construction that includes legal status, rights, political and other forms of participation in society, and a sense of belonging (Bloemraad, Korteweg and Yurdakul 2008). Bloemraad argues that this concept of citizenship allows us to analyze the extent of incorporation of immigrants and their descendants into receiving societies (2008, 154). Citizenship holds the tension between inclusion and exclusion (ibid.155). Similar to Yuval-Davis, Bloemraad refers to the exclusion of multiple actors in the traditional understanding of citizenship, as women (Yuval-Davis 1991, 122; Bloemraad et al. 2008, 155) and those without property, slaves, and newcomers (Bloemraad et al. 2008, 155). This approach to citizenship can help me understand the participation of the visitors from the Women's center, in different activities as a form of citizenship shaping within this particular group. It makes me sensitive to understand and question how belonging (to the Women's center) plays a part in shaping their understanding of citizenship. Belonging as part of citizenship is also explored by Ong.

Ong powerfully presents the politics of inclusion and exclusion in her formulation of cultural citizenship, where she describes this as a *process of subjectification in the Foucauldian sense of self-making and being-made by power relations that produce consent through schemes of surveillance, discipline, control, and administration* (1996, 737). Moreover, she discusses the institutional practices of non-white immigrants from different migration backgrounds, who are being treated differently in their country of arrival. In her ethnographic approach to citizenship, she explains this as a cultural process of "subjectification" (Ong 1996, 737). She explains that *cultural citizenship refers to the cultural practices and beliefs produced out of negotiating the often ambivalent and contested relations within the state and its hegemonic forms*, who set the

criteria for those who belong or not (ibid.738). *Cultural citizenship is a dual process of self-making and being-made* (ibid.). What she means by this is that to become a citizen depends on how power relations can shape one and how one shapes these power relations (ibid.). This notion of citizenship helps to look at the various actions taken by women with a migration background, within the existing power relation, to gain citizenship. In another study on Cambodian Americans, Ong describes the *social policies and practices beyond the state that, in myriad mundane ways, suggest, define, and direct adherence to democratic, racial, and market norms of belonging* (Ong 2003, 15). She argues that citizenship is exercised in the spaces of encounter, *in the practices directed at newcomers, and the mutual daily interactions that ensue, that the meaning and exercise of citizenship happens* (Brettell and Hollifield 2015, 168).

The concept of cultural citizenship has acquired two somewhat different meanings in anthropology. The first one emphasizes the immigrant's agency and the other processes of governmentality and subject-making. Rosaldo and Flores (1997, 57), formulated cultural citizenship as *the right to be different (in terms of race, ethnicity, or native language) concerning the norms of the dominant national community, without compromising one's right to belong, in the sense of participating in the nation-state's democratic processes*. This concept of cultural citizenship embeds the sense of belonging, whether the Latinos (Latin-American community) did or did not feel a sense of belonging and how these rights of belonging are claimed (Rosaldo 1994, 57). In Rosaldo's understanding, cultural citizenship address *the right to be different (in terms of race, ethnicity, or native language) concerning the norms of the dominant national community* (ibid.) without prejudice to the right to belong, *in the sense of participation in the democratic processes of the nation-state* (ibid.). The latest publication of the social and cultural planning office (SCP) contests this approach on cultural citizenship, where most people with a migration background claim the right of freedom to keep their cultural traditions concerning the Dutch community. To respect someone culture does not imply to participate and engage in all activities or make a new culture their own (Josje den Ridder 2019).

All these different approaches on citizenship draw attention to the different power relations of practice citizenship, focusing on forms of inclusion and exclusion and the sense of belonging, which I draw from in this thesis. I will be taking an intersectional analysis into account, which means looking at gender as a tool of analysis and an object of study that intersects with power

relations such as class, race, age, ethnicity, religion, etcetera. Keeping these different approaches in mind will help me to understand the lived experiences and practices of citizenship among women with a migrant background who visit the Women's center Noordoostpolder in Emmeloord.

## Chapter 2: Methodology

### Who, Where, When

The research population consisted mainly out of female visitors of the Women's center Noordoostpolder, Emmeloord. These visitors are women from all over the world, all above the age of eighteen. From preliminary visits to this center, I already knew half of the visitors had a migration background and would, therefore, be a good fit to conduct ethnographic research on migration and citizenship. I mainly engaged in participant observation, actively participating in different activities, and was able to write down their stories of migration and citizenship. Another actor that I consulted was Bert Scholing, a team leader of a consultant agency at the Municipality. I conducted an interview with him about participation and integration.

Lastly, my key person during this research was the coordinator of the Women's center. She had a significant role in finding suitable participants; however, I choose to leave it open to all women and let them decide whether to engage in the study. Most of the respondents agreed to participate as I kept partaking in small groups and got to know them. The different activities at the Women's center, which are mostly conducted in small groups, gave me the opportunity to create a bond with these women and allowed me in their WhatsApp groups. The WhatsApp groups became a great advantage in the second stage of my research.

The Women's center, which is located in Emmeloord, is the only Women's center of the Noordoostpolder. The Noordoostpolder lies in the Dutch province Flevoland, with Emmeloord as the capital of the municipality. The Women's center Noordoostpolder was established and is active since 2007. Within one year, the center had its own official location, after a period of activities in primary schools or the local 'cultural work' location.

Field research for this thesis was conducted in two ways; first, at the Women's center in Emmeloord, during the period of February 3, 2020, to March 17, 2020. Due to the COVID pandemic, the center had to close her doors, so I had to continue my research from home. I will call this home-based fieldwork, which took place from the 18<sup>th</sup> of February till the 10<sup>th</sup> of May. This allowed for an analysis of the notion of citizenship in the life of migrant women. Prior to the research, I migrated to Emmeloord in September 2018 from Suriname, enabling lived

experiences of migration in my personal life. The research site was not far from my residence, which made it possible to return to “the field” even after the fieldwork ended.

## Research Methods

The primary method I used during my fieldwork was the participative observation. This method was sometimes very confusing for the members. I remember once I sat down to join a group of women to prepare food for an event later that evening when one of the volunteers who was teaching sewing lessons came to me and said not to forget that I was there for research purposes and not just the fun stuff. Participative observation may sometime be seen as an irrelevant method by others because they are used to the more common methods as interviewing. Sometimes, the participative observation made me feel strange and uncomfortable, but it enabled reflexivity and gave me an understanding of how to interpret certain things. I learned intellectually from these experiences of discomfort (O'reilly 2012, 96). This method also gave me advantages in building trust relations and gaining insights on topics that might be difficult to talk about. For example, during the preparation of the cooking event, dissatisfactions and frustrations were expressed. While the same person told me to be completely happy with the cooking event when I asked her a few days later about another cooking event in which she was going to participate. This method helped me to build trust relations, which became very useful after the announcement of the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of precautionary measurements, the Women's center had to close its doors on the 17<sup>th</sup> of march. This occurred in the middle of my fieldwork, which lasted from the 17<sup>th</sup> of March until the 1<sup>st</sup> of June.

Alongside the methods of participant observation and interviews, I have engaged in informal conversations with all my informants. Engaging in informal conversations helped me to build relationships of rapport. These relationships enabled informants to share their knowledge on my research topic. My informants were aware of the fact that the information which I received during the informal conversations could be used in the thesis since I asked them informed consent.

The participatory observation method, which was my primary method in this research, had to make a place for interviews and other new methods. I had already planned appointments with

women before the closure of the Women's center for interviews, which allowed me to continue calling these women via WhatsApp video. During the video calls, I always had an extra mobile on hand to record the calls. To record a video call, I asked the respondent for permission in advance. I was already in WhatsApp groups during my fieldwork period, which made it possible to reach the ladies. It was different from a personal meeting, but this way of communicating has also paid off.

I collected and stored the data in a safe and anonymous place. According to standard practice (DeWalt and DeWalt 2011), I anonymized the respondents' names, except for respondents who permitted to use their real names in this thesis.

During the fieldwork, I transcribed and coded the data as much as possible; this helped me to clarify whether I misinterpreted something or was just missing essential subjects that I would like to investigate. The data consist partly out of voice recordings, field notes, and letters.

### Positionality

Every ethnographer must be aware of his own role in the field and his influence on his informants when carrying out fieldwork (DeWalt&DeWalt 2011, 39), as ethnography is an undertaking of *our own embodied, sensual, thinking, critical self* (O'reilly 2012, 100). I am aware of the fact that who I am as a person, namely highy-educated, colored, female migrant, may quite well have influenced how my informants responded to me. The fact that we share many similarities made my respondents more open and willing to share their personal stories. Although I come from a different migration background and find myself in different power relations, my informants expected a sort of mutual understanding when they shared their stories. As they use sentences as 'you know what I mean right.' Another reflective note I am obliged to share with the reader is the issue of language. As a migrant from Suriname, a Dutch-speaking country, I did not share similar language barriers as most of my respondents. Not being able to speak languages other than Dutch and English forced me to focus mainly on the migrants who could have a conversation in only these languages. With conversation, I mean, talk without the help of translators. Luckily there were quite a considerable number of visitors with a migration background capable of using the Dutch and English languages. Conducting most of the interviews in Dutch while writing the



thesis in English has put me in a position of translating all the quotes and stories of my interlocutors with the risk of losing nuance.

## Chapter 3: The Women's Center Noordoostpolder (NOP)

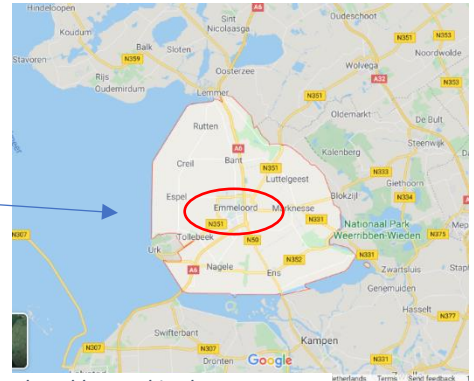
In 2007 the Women's center Noordoostpolder became official-and active. The Women's center finds its origin in a physiotherapy center. Too many migrant women were suffering from the same problems: loneliness, social isolation, homesickness, lack of network and meaning, alienation, lethargy resulting in psychosomatic complaints.

After seven years of using a less suitable location, the Women's center was offered the current building in 2011. This suitable building is an old barn of neighbor and housing Corporation Mercatus and was restored and financed for this "social purpose".

The Women's center is situated in the area, which is known as Emmeloord-Centrum. Emmeloord is the capital of the municipality of the Noordoostpolder, in the Dutch province Flevoland.



*Figure 3 Noordoostpolder on the map of the Netherlands (satellite picture from Google maps)*



*Figure 2 Emmeloord located in the Noordoostpolder (satellite picture from Google maps)*

After many rehousing, the housing corporation Mercatus converted their old shed in 2011 for the Women's center. From this time on, it had its own home for facilitating women for various workshops, language lessons, culinary activities and, guest speakers presenting subjects with new cultural and developmental information.

Along with Mercatus, the Women's center published its own book "Sisterhood" in 2019. This book sheds light on integration and focuses on the experiences of members from the Women's center (Vinkers 2019).



*Figure 4 Sisterhood book, an initiative of the Women's center*

During my fieldwork in February and March, I counted 32 different countries in the logbook of the Women's center in which every visitor writes her (or his) name and country of origin daily. This information justifies the multicultural meaning in the financial annual subsidy application from the municipality. The idea of the women's center started with a desire for women empowerment based on the condition of worldwide meetings. The fundamentals of the Women's center are openness, respect, dignity, and the desire to develop and participate (Vinkers 2019).

The establishment of the Women's center went over a bumpy road. There were many gatherings at the municipality, pleading the importance of a Women's center in Emmeloord. These frequent meetings, which include late-night gatherings, had a significant impact on the life of one of the first board members, who originated from Afghanistan. Due to these meetings, she was very

often away from home, something that is not common in their culture (From an interview with a former board member).

The Women's center makes a compelling case study since this place is a melting pot from different cultures and its holistic approach to integration. This Women's center gains substantial (financial) support (79%) from the municipality, this reciprocal relation, of helping women with a migration background integrating and providing financial aid, on the other hand, might also be taken into consideration when analyzing the way, the visitors of the Women's center shape and experience citizenship. In conversations with representatives of the municipality, it was made clear that the Women's center has a very active role when it comes to integrating into Dutch society. The facilitating role of the Women's center might be very crucial for the municipality because it helps "solving" the integration problem for "free." For example, by voluntarily providing Dutch language lessons.



Figure 5&6 Dutch language lessons at the Women's center

About half of the members in the center have a migration background, where learning the Dutch language is an essential part of the activities within the Women's center. In principle, many activities are based on integrating women with a migration background in the Netherlands. Learning the Dutch language takes a prominent role in the Dutch concept of integration when obtaining the Dutch nationality for migrants.

*Learning Dutch is part of the integration process. Besides, you have to learn how Dutch people live and work. After this, you take the integration exam. If you pass this exam, then you are officially integrated <https://www.inburgeren.nl/en/integration-in-the-netherlands/>.*

When we look at the Dutch notion of citizenship, the connotation expects participating in society. What the government means by this is: learning the Dutch language, having a job, actively participating in the Dutch society concerning the Dutch freedoms and equalities

(<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/regering/regeerakkoord-vertrouwen-in-de-toekomst/4.-nederland-in-de-wereld/4.6-integratie>). In order to be able to participate as a newcomer or migrant, passing the integration exam is obligatory, which is based on learning the Dutch language and culture. As we see in the above statement from the government, integration is a fixed process with a clear beginning and end for the government. The coordinator of the Women's center seems to have an entirely different opinion about this. For the Women's center, integration is a non-ending process that only works when both sides are open for listening and learning. What they mean by this, is in a well-organized community where equal respect and rights are the basis, the community can only function or be balanced when the newcomer and the natives make efforts in getting to know each other's cultures. There is a saying in Dutch 'onbekend maakt onbemind' which means that you cannot love something unfamiliar. The opposite is 'bekend maakt bemind', when you know something/one, you are more likely to love or like it. The Women's center bases its approach of integration on three dimensions: To Meet, To Connect, and To Integrate. This process can only take place when all parties recognize each step (van de Voorde 2020).

Furthermore, when: there is a balance in giving and taking clarity in the organization (places and tasks) and respectful right and place for everyone and everything. The longer, the more conscious use of these necessary handles creates a framework of respect, safety, freedom, meaning, and possibilities, which is the fundament of the Women's center. In fact, these existential wishes are rights for each human being. Together with quite a sizeable primary group of almost daily international visitors, every newcomer feels welcome and free to consider her own needs, wishes, and contributions. A perfect base is created together for integrating everyone's personal life baggage with the Dutch language, people, and culture. This way, it is a non-ending process for migrants and natives (van de Voorde 2020).

This introductory paragraph on the realization of the Women's center displayed how different forms of social responsibilities are perceived. Mercatus, as a housing corporation, acts upon this call of social responsibility by building a Women's. The individual act of the physiotherapeutic center presents a better understanding of the Dutch notion of citizenship, referring to civilians

taking a more active role in society by participating in solutions doing projects for or within their neighborhood, municipality, or country (<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/burgerschap>). It also creates insights into the delineation of responsibilities, where the Women's center is responsible for the integration process of newcomers and the municipality for financial means. Through the different activities, the Women's center fulfills its integrating role, which is not limited to the Dutch language lessons but also other projects. The holistic approach to integration, of the Women's center, influences the migrants and non-migrants.

Many scholars have already criticized the Dutch notion of integration. The Dutch notion of integration entails a force of action from one side to become part of the other (Catling 2018, 8).

*The government consistently monitors the effort migrants make to integrate. If you do not make enough effort, you may lose your resident permit. This will not happen if you have a right to asylum, but even then, you must still make an effort to integrate* (Government of the Netherlands 2018).

This is an individualistic approach where integration shifts from multiculturalism to cultural assimilation (Bloemraad, Korteweg and Yurdakul 2008). Other scholars have also criticized the Dutch integration exam as an individualistic responsibility (Folke & Schedler 2004; Joppke 2007; van Houdt, Suvarierol & Schinkel 2011).

My aim is not to criticize this individualistic approach on integration; instead, looking at the different meanings these women from the center give integration and how developed in the Women's center. What does integration mean for the visitors of the Women's center, and how does the Women's center facilitate citizenship?

### Integration

I asked members from the Women's center with and without a migration background what they understood by the word integration. I felt a need to make a distinction between the ideas of the native women and the migrants because I would like to see if their perception differs. The following quote is from a native Dutch woman, Reen, from the Women's center. She explained



what she thought integration is and how the members in the new country of arrival can help a newcomer integrate.

*Integrating<sup>6</sup> is for me to open up to the country and culture where you come to live. I think that you can be there for the other and help the other feel at ease/home and welcome. As a girl of 8 or 9, I had a Turkish neighbor, who had his family come over after two years. My parents were there for them, and they welcomed us in their life. I can still see myself sitting with the children, literally using hands and feet to teach the Dutch language.*

For Reen, integration is not one-directional coming from the newcomer's side, but the receiving society has their part as well. In her example, they welcomed the Turkish neighbors and helped them where they could. Through the contact, there was interaction from both sides, and they could learn from each other. Although they could not speak a common language, through non-verbal communication, it was possible to understand each other.

Another native Dutch woman explains integration as a process of involvement, understanding, and mutual respect. Consciously or subconsciously 'trying' to fit somewhere, is also mentioned by someone else. In her knowledge, integration is about feeling at home and not being excluded.

*When thinking about integration, I think back to the time I was in Turkey. The integration courses, namely the language course is a favor and not an obligation. It should be like that. Learning stuff about society is not bad, but it is ridiculous that they tell newcomers how to act and such. For example, they will tell you, here, we do not throw trash on the street in the Netherlands as if only in the Netherlands you are supposed to throw your trash in the bin (Lea 2020).*

Lea's above statement, explains how the Dutch culture can be patronizing to newcomers. It is interesting to hear how Dutch natives (from the Women's center) contest about the integration process and the way the Dutch culture is imposed on newcomers.

Words that were often used by Dutch natives at the Women's center for describing integration are; belonging, participation, and involvement from both the newcomer as members of the

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<sup>6</sup> These answer were given by different members in group chats on WhatsApp.

receiving country. To help someone integrate, mastering the language is named. Others believe a social network (family, friends, or neighbors) can be of significant influence. What I also notice from the perspective of the native women, is that they look at it as a two-way street. It is not only the task of the newcomer to make an effort, but also the natives, by making the newcomer familiar with the Dutch culture and show interest in theirs. These ideas on integration are not supported by all Dutch natives (Josje den Ridder 2019). The Women's center's approach to integration influences her member's opinion. Through the involvement of newcomers in the Women's center, native white women tend to think differently. They hear personal stories of the struggles of newcomers daily. This impacts the way they look at things now. There is a difference when you hear stories on the news or the internet, then when you drink coffee with the same person almost every day.

When approaching integration from the perspective of the newcomer, I see a small shift. Integration is also about participation, but the burden is kept on the individual. It is the newcomer who has to learn the language and try to fit in the Dutch society.

*To integrate means to me; learning life again just as it should be in the Netherlands society. Integration is when you are established. I mean learning the language, have a job, living an ordinary life just like natives in a multicultural society (Dina 2020).*

Other migrant women supported the above statement as well and named the Women's center as a place to integrate. The help of neighbors and friends was also mentioned as actors of helping one to Integrate.

The migrant's perspectives depend very much on their position. In a position where you feel like you owe the new country everything, you are more likely to submit. From the different stories of migrants, I could understand their point of view better. They often find themselves in a weak position that very much entails more profound underlying gender ideas and class differences. I could recognize these nonwestern gender ideologies where you do what you are told by your superior, which goes especially for women. The government is seen as a superior whom you need to submit too. Another factor is gratitude, where fear is the push factor. There is a fear of being sent back to your country of origin when you fail to behave like native citizens. This gratitude and fear appear most likely among women who have something to lose as asylum seekers or those living from governmental aid.



## Belonging

During my visits to the Women's center, I could sense a strong feeling of belonging. Women are treated with respect and in a way where you can quickly feel at home. The Women's center is called a second home by many women, and the members are seen as families and friends. This feeling of belonging is gained through personal attention and interest in the newcomer's culture.

According to the Women's center's board, they provide a full package for citizens to integrate. They do this by providing different kinds of projects and activities. The main exercise that actively stimulates this integration is the Dutch language lesson and the Buddy Project. In the next paragraph, I will provide in-depth information about language lessons. The Women's center argues that frequent contact with Dutch natives helps migrants to integrate best. This contact is not only limited to the above activities. One example given by the chair of the Women's center on mutual influence is the variety in the Dutch kitchen of the visitors. By offering newcomers different opportunities to build relations, learning the Dutch language, giving them a stage to present their cultural background and making them familiar with job opportunities, and organizations that might be useful for them, the Women's center tries to deliver full integration packages for newcomers. This full package benefits not only the newcomers but also those who are not. Visitors from the Women's center without a migration background, argue that the Women's center adds on their social relations. The extension of the social circle is named one of the most significant benefits of the Women's center in their life. As much as the multicultural perspectives, they gained through the center. The social circle seems to be a more significant advantage for migrant women, especially those who have no or little families in the Netherlands or close by.

### Dutch Language Lessons and Buddy Project

As a foreigner, to become a Dutch citizen, it is imperative to master the Dutch language. This is a condition that is incorporated within the integration law. For this, you have to take an exam in which you can prove that you have sufficient knowledge, which means that you can read, speak, and understand Dutch ([www.ind.nl/Formulieren/3007.pdf](http://www.ind.nl/Formulieren/3007.pdf)).

The subsidy agreement between the Women's center and the Municipality of Noordoostpolder includes the fact that 20 women are integrated every year. This is not done by means of the integration exam, but by the various activities offered to the women. Learning the Dutch language is one of the essential services offered to foreign women who want to learn the Dutch language.

Very often, I joined a group during the language lessons and participated as a student. I experienced these lessons as pleasant, and so do many others– *I come to the Dutch lessons here because I am treated with respect. The teachers and fellow students will not laugh at you when your pronouncing something wrong. We also get personal attention here; we sit in small groups where you can freely ask questions. I was going to another place before I came to the Women's center, but there you will sit behind your computer and learn the language. There is no or little interaction with the teacher* (interview with a language student). However, sometimes, I experienced the lessons as Eurocentric. One time during the language lessons, we discussed whether it is correct to say jar honey or bottle honey. Back in our native country, it is appropriated to say bottle honey, but in the Netherlands, it is not. The teacher, who is Dutch, corrected us and argued that honey is not sold in a bottle, and therefore we should say a jar honey. This example shows how Eurocentric language is formulated and embedded. Since we live in a multicultural society, it should also be reflected in our language. I see an opportunity here for the Women's center to broaden her way of teaching by using multicultural literature. At the same time, this may be very challenging since the language exam is based on the Dutch culture, and the Women's center offers to help newcomers in preparation for their exams.

A way to help you get through the integration course is to connect you with a buddy. A buddy is someone who will help you learn the Dutch culture, the language, and all-practical things within the Netherlands. You can see a buddy as a friend with whom you talk weekly bases. Some buddies grow into strong, lasting relationships even when one year has passed. Becoming a buddy is an official volunteer function at the Women's center. By offering this service of having a buddy and the Dutch language lessons, the Women's center tries to stimulate and help the newcomer to their legal right to obtain citizenship in the Netherlands.

*I have been Thura's<sup>7</sup> buddy for almost two years now. I helped Thura with her integration course, a bit of language support. Then it quickly appears that she gets letters from the municipality and other authorities that she does not understand. I must honestly say that I recently saw a letter, and I did not understand it myself. It is a drama, unfortunately. How are these people going to understand such difficult letters? As a buddy, we have contact once a week. However, just now, we are in contact with each other much more often. A few weeks ago, I had to help her out with a payment. She showed me a letter of electricity and gas. It said in the letter that after several reminders, her electricity and gas would be shut down within a few days. According to Thura, she did not receive previous letters. The amount had to be transferred immediately; she did not have that. I advanced the amount so that she could pay. I got the amount right back when she had money.*

Through the story of Thura, some of the frequent struggles migrants deal with, are exposed. Not being able to understand the letters is not only a language barrier, since these letters also cause frustrations by natives who are trying to help. During my visits to the Women's center, I heard many complaints about this particular matter. I was even asked to assist with some paperwork that had to be filled in by a migrant woman. The lack of having someone to help you understand official letters, sometimes, can result in serious problems, as shown in the story of Thura. For women like Thura, the Women's center is a vast network that they can rely on.

*I have another buddy, Linda, a young girl. She has a child of 5 years and lives in a village nearby. It sucks because it is a dull village, there is nothing to do there. So, I spent a month helping her find a new place. I met a lady through the coordinator of the Women's center. She had converted her top floor into a house so Linda could go there. We went there together, and we had already signed the lease when she showed me a letter and asked what it was. It was a payment backlog. She had more of those letters. From this information, I could make out that she was running short on money and could not make it through the month. Then I panicked. I would put her in debt if she moved into the new house, which was more expensive than her current residence. We talked about it and then decided that for the time being, it is better to stay at her current place. I do have to be careful not to be too involved and determine things for her (Bea 2020).*

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<sup>7</sup> The story of Thura continues in the next chapter page 41: The story of Thura

Providing Dutch language lessons, a buddy program, and many more activities that involve cultural exchange, a feeling of belonging, and a place where self-esteem is built is all found at the Women's center. The Women's center does a great job of helping women with and without a migration background to find their spot in society. When we look at the above story of Linda, her buddy helps her through the process of finding a suitable house. She believed she was helping her until she saw the letter about the payment. If they proceeded with the rehousing, Linda could come in significant troubles. The buddy, in this case, was able to handle quickly, and she also did self-evaluation when she mentioned not to impose her ideas too much on Linda. Throughout the time I spend at the Women's center, I felt that some ideas are being imposed on the women. Because of their weak and vulnerable position, these women do not resist. The discrepancy here is that women do get an education in matters as speaking out their mind, resistance, resilience and how to stand up for yourself, yet I miss this spirit when it comes to activities at the Women's center. The volunteers who provide the Dutch language lessons are dominantly white native women. From which I conclude that the way these lessons are taught, and ideas projected come mainly from a white perspective. The above story also exposes the frustration of the system. A system where people are mainly in contact through abstract letters. These letters consist of unclear or no explanations. It could be a research on itself to see whether these misinterpretations of letters that they receive from the government or companies accessory them in debt restructuring.

Very often, guests are invited to the Women's center, and sometimes political representations are also amongst them. This is one of the ways the Women's center tries to ensure involvement in the political participation of newcomers. Shortly before the corona-epidemic was announced, some politicians were scheduled. Unfortunately, this got canceled, and I could not take any notices on how and what messages are being preached by them.

In this chapter, I discussed the role of the Women's center. The Women's center is a place where migrants and non-migrants gain feelings of belonging, participation, and education. Therefore, the Women's center can be seen as a domain of practicing citizenship. The next chapter leads us to the different negotiations which exist when practicing citizenship.

## Chapter 4: Negotiating Citizenship

### The story of June

This chapter aims to shed light on the different struggles of migrants encountering in daily practices. What does it mean for one not to be able to speak a language fluently to be part of the labor force? In this chapter, I will analyze the defects during and after succeeding in the Dutch integration exam. Hence this thesis discusses citizenship among women; gender divisions, ethnicity, and social class should not be left out (Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis 1983).

June is a Dutch legal citizen who migrated to the Netherlands approximately 20 years ago, from Africa. I met June during one of the Dutch lessons at the Women's center. She migrated to the Netherlands with her white husband (now ex-husband), when his visa ended in Africa. In Africa, June had an office job where she was a telephonist, receptionist, and copyist. Her life had turned out completely different as she expected she had a great chance in the labor market just by speaking English. She thought English was an international language.

*I have always worked. Even when my son was little, he went to the babysitter. When I came here, I first had to take intensive language lessons, so he went to the creche. I went to work, and I had to find a babysitter and pay for it myself. It was not funded. I did not know any better; I just paid someone what I could afford. I found a friend to look after my son, and it went well. Everything was tough because I did not have a driver's license back then. So everywhere by bike from one work to another, maybe cleaning from one building to another. Especially during the rainy/snowing season, it was very hard. I would not do it now. I would instead do everything for my child, bring him to school every day. But I had no choice. I always say; if I did otherwise, I would do it alone. I mean, do everything for my child. I only saw my son at night, when I showered him and brought him to bed and at the weekends because I was busy working. It was very hard; he did not get much love from me, and I could not enjoy him either. I was pregnant when I started with the Dutch language lessons, after his birth, I took my son to a babysitter, and I went to school. In Afrika, you have your mother or another family member who will help you take care of your little children (June 2020).*

There is so much we can learn from this story—the negotiations on who will take care of her son. In particular, she reflects on how it could be back in Afrika. There is also a lack of close relatives, which weighs heavy on June’s shoulder. The feeling of missing out the best years of motherhood and self-pity for not being able to fulfill the role of being there for her baby. June had to offer the precious time she wanted to spend with her newborn baby, that she missed due to the language obligations for newcomers. June’s story on being a mother and trying to balance the language lessons tells how limited this integration obligation is for newcomers, especially women. Her options are limited, and she does not enjoy the freedom of choosing whether she can start the integration course at a later stage. Her position is weak and vulnerable since there is a timeline in which everyone is expected to pass the course. This limitation and the few options for newcomers, reach far more than passing an integration course in time. She also did not get the opportunities that are promised after successfully finishing your integration exam. Integration, which basically consists of learning the Dutch language and culture, is key for participating in the labor force (rijksoverheid.nl). However, the jobs that were available for her were cleaning and packing jobs. How does the integration course that is obligated by the government prepare you for the labor market? Or maybe the question is, for which labor market does it prepares you? In June’s case, she was prepared for cleaning and production work for almost 15 years. In the last ten years, she got a permanent contract. Sadly, she suffered from a frozen shoulder and had to quit the job, and she ended up living from illness benefits, ultimately leaving her marginalized from society. The concept of citizenship as the complexity of negotiations is applicable here as June tries to submit to these power constructions on learning the Dutch language but is still unable to find a decent job (Ong 2013). The negotiation of participating in economic activities to gain economic dependency, which is most likely precarious or applying for governmental aid. The politics of inclusion and exclusion are formulated in cultural citizenship were Ong describes this as a *process of subjectification in the Foucauldian sense of self-making and being-made by power relations that produce consent through schemes of surveillance, discipline, control, and administration* (1996, 737). To keep getting the social benefits, June has to apply for a job every week. June utters disappointed that she is treated this way. She feels like the government is failing her.

*I have worked very hard for more than 15 years. I never begged for any benefits, and now that I am ill and cannot work, I have to apply every week for a new job in order to*

*keep the benefits. I ask myself if they do not look at my work history. I am a hard-working woman (June 2020).*

June applied for several jobs, but very often, she hears that her proficiency in the Dutch language is not enough. She tried vacancies in English. Unfortunately, the requirements are often both fluent in Dutch and English.

In this case, it is also clear that learning a language is a lifelong process. After 20 years of living in the Netherlands, June still feels the need to educate herself further. Later in the conversation, June talks about the changes she had in the labor market when she was still using her married name, which was Dutch. After her divorce, she had a difficult time finding a job. She thought it might have something to do with the African name. The Chairwoman of the Women's center supports this thought. She proposed during an interview that the discrimination in the labor force on migrants should not be underestimated. Once, she even wrote an application letter for someone, with her name on it, only to increase the chance for an application call. Participating in the labor force for many migrants means having the right name (Dutch or Western) and speaking the national dialect. It also means making compromises and negotiations. Settling for less, accepting a job that you are overqualified for. These jobs are often precarious (Vosko 2010), involve long or irregular working hours, which have an impact on your private life. In June's case, she had to make compromises. Whether she would be financially dependent on her husband after her integration course, to take care of her son, or to settle down for a job that does not bring her joy, she chooses the last. This was a choice she still regrets because she is not only physically suffering from complications; she got from the exhausting working conditions but also emotional. At the workplace, she dealt with many forms of discrimination, bullying, and exclusion that changed her life as she phrases it herself.

*I can lock myself up very easily. Sometimes I would greet them, and no one would reply. Or during the break, they would hide my pen or put my shoes in the hallway (June 2020).*

Just like Mills (2003) phases it, gender inequalities operate simultaneously, but not identically, as systems of dominant meanings and symbolism, as structured social relations, roles, and practices; and as lived experiences of personal identity. The dominant labor market is occupied with Native Dutch people, where you are expected to speak 'properly.' There is a small market left for people with a migration background in the cleaning and production sector. Even in this market, you can

endure forms of discrimination, bullying, and so on. I can clearly remember from my own experience; it was last November 2018 when I applied for a job as a social worker. I went for my interview and got a taster day. I was very moved they give me this opportunity. After the taster day, I received a call that I was not fit for the job. One of the reasons for not being accepted was because I spoke Dutch with a Surinamese accent. The dominant meaning behind not being able to speak Dutch in a 'proper' way contains misperceptions of not being smart or fit for a job. This includes many forms of discrimination and exclusion. I am not arguing that newcomers have no chance of finding a job outside the traditional field for migrants (cleaning or production), but it may take a longer time to get there (with the help of native citizens). Put in the words of Mill, gender hierarchies are produced in the global labor regimes. These are maintained in relation to transnational circuits of labor mobilization and capital accumulation. Very often, international capital depends on gendered ideologies and social relations to recruit and discipline workers, to reproduce and cheapen segmented labor forces within and across national borders (M. B. Mills 2003, 42). This can be found in production and cleaning work, which is primarily staffed by people with a migrant background. Women often enter the cleaning industry with the underlying idea that women are suitable for this type of work because women are already entrusted with such tasks. At the same time, there is a growing number of women who find their financial independence in the modern world, but this too has its cost. As Yuval Davis states, *the processes of globalization often offers women free access to the money economy for the first time, although usually in very exploitable and vulnerable ways* (Yuval-Davis 1999, 30). Production labor often entails heavy physical work with irregular hours. This can lead to chronic diseases and have a significant impact on the relationships between mothers and their kin.

Sadly, June is not the only one struggling with language barriers in the process of finding a proper job that fits with her education and skills and that she enjoys going to every day.



## The story of Thura

On a Wednesday morning, during an interview with a Dutch native volunteer, I hear the story of Thura. A segment of this story was already revealed in the previous chapter, where I discussed the buddy program. Thura is a woman from Myanmar (Birma). This story is told by her buddy Bea. In the case of Bea, she helped Thura during her integration course. Thura has passed the exam successfully but still struggles to find a job. Back in Myanmar, Thura was working in accountancy. Her biggest dream is to continue working in this field in the Netherlands. For people who struggle to find a job independently, there is this work cooperation that can help you find a job along with a customer agent from the municipality. The customer agent and the account manager from the work cooperation can set up a unique trajectory to help someone find a job. According to Scholing (team leader at the municipality), they provide custom work and evaluate each situation personally to see what someone needs to get a job (Scholing 2020).

*Thura has completed a three-month accounting course offered by the municipality. Now I would help her with that, but we went completely in the mist. It contained terms, statements, and I had no idea what these meant. Then you have my husband, an economic teacher. So, he went there a few times, and I joined as a chaperone. I was playing games on my tablet because I had no idea what it was about. It is already difficult because a lot of things were not translated by google into Arabic. It really was not doable. At one point, the exam was in Zwolle when she received a phone call that she had to go to Breda because there was no place in Zwolle. We then asked for a time extension. The exam would take about 3 to 4 hours, and we planned to take Thura to Breda so we could visit Breda. We dropped her off and walked into town, drank a cup of coffee, and mapped out the route when we received a call from Thura (about an hour after we drop her off). I thought, oh dear, she screwed up. Then she said, 'I'm done, I think I got it all right.' She got a 9 for the exam (Bea 2020).*



Figure 5 Chart from Googlemaps

After Thura successfully finished her accounting course, she got an internship at Mercatus (the housing cooperation besides the Women's center). Everyone was hoping she would get a job at Mercatus. Unfortunately, they told her that her Dutch is not sufficient enough to let her work there because they do not have enough staff to work her through the process to work independently. The work cooperation offered Thura a trajectory to get her to work, where she has to take sports lessons and training in job applications. Thura was very surprised about the sports lessons because she has an active social life and already practices sport at the Women's center. When she mentioned this to the account manager, they even told her to stop visiting the Women's center if all the pieces of training are taking too much time since the Women's center is just for fun. Another time when she could not make it to the sport class that was not mandatory, the teacher insisted not to miss any more lessons; otherwise, this would affect her monthly allowance. Thura had also shared her concerns about the sports lessons during the Ramadan since she is a Muslim and would be fasting (Bea 2020). The story of Thura emphasizes the gap which exists in the custom made service the municipality aims and claims to provide. It also shows how passing the integration exam does not always assure someone of participating in the labor force under reasonable conditions.

Passing the integration exam did not adequately prepare her to participate in the labor market. Yuval Davis stated that in patriarchal white societies, it is perceived as 'natural' that men will occupy a higher economic position in the labor market than women and white people than black people (Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1983, 67). Respondents argued that this might also apply to Dutch natives and newcomers as Dutch natives are more likely to get hired for a job than a newcomer based on their proficiency in a language, but not on their knowledge. I do not have enough evidence to prove this argument. This would mean different research upon itself by consulting companies to see on what basis someone gets hired. However, there may be jobs where fluency in language can be a primary requirement, excluding those who lack proficiency. The case of Thura displaces a failure of custom-made regulations by the government. I would not call this a failure of the whole system, yet a failure from her agent. Someone like Thura would not need sport lessons when the municipality claims to provide custom made service, since she already practices sports at the Women's center and has an active and healthy social life.

To answer the central question in this chapter, the integration course, which is for most newcomers an obligation, allows one to communicate in daily life but not to the extent of finding a decent job in life. Therefore, one must continue practicing. Learning a language is a lifelong process with no fixed end and which will gradually grow through practice. When looking at language and labor, gender, ethnicity, and class differences go hand in hand. As for professionals who are often not categorized as migrants, learning the Dutch language is not obligatory. They have a higher chance of getting hired. Language forms a barrier for those at a low social class. Through the stories, we see how migration background, along with social status, can impact the chance of involvement for someone in the labor market. The notion of citizenship is a comprehensive concept that is more than just a relationship between the individual and the state. It also integrated the struggles of women against oppression and exploitation in the name of culture and tradition within their own ethnic and local communities (Yuval-Davis 1997, 22). These stories show the friction in the lives of migrants when claiming cultural citizenship, according to Rosaldo's definition. Rosaldo and Flores formulated cultural citizenship as *the right to be different (in terms of race, ethnicity, or native language) concerning the norms of the dominant national community, without compromising one's right to belong, in the sense of participating in the nation- state's democratic processes* (1997, 57). This notion of cultural citizenship is contested and negotiated in Thura's case as she makes claims to participate in fasting during the Ramadan and will not be able to engage in the sports lessons actively.

The different struggles migrants encounter in their daily practice of citizenship, which is discussed in this chapter, lead me to my final empirical chapter. There, I shall focus on the different typologies of migration and how their role can be understood by using theories as transnationalism. According to Gonzales, migration would be reflected in social organization in different ways depending on the nature of the sociocultural system affected as well as the type of migration itself (Gonzalez 1961: 1278)

## Chapter 5: Migration Typologies

In this chapter, I argue that the different kinds of migration have a different outcome on how the migrants exercise citizenship. The stories are not identical, meaning that I am not making a straightforward comparison between these case studies, and I am not trying to make parallel analyses but look at each case separately. The situations I am considering are different in many ways.

This chapter contains three stories of women who migrated to the Netherlands. These women came from different countries under different circumstances, but share a migration background, same gender, and are all members of the Women's center. As the thesis deals with migration, gender, and citizenship, these stories are an excellent way to analyze the different typologies of immigration and how these women construct their citizenship. I added another dimension to this chapter, arguing that social and economic factors make migration an investment and a belief in a better future. Migration is both a future-orientated and a backward-looking process and one that involves movement between different temporalities, spaces, and regimes of value (Pine 2014, 95).

### Case 1: 'Flexible' Citizen

*'I am a woman, from Poland; I am 44, divorce and have a 19-year-old son,'* Carla said when I ask her to introduce herself. It was around 8 pm when we had this WhatsApp video call. Carla had just arrived from her work, which is about 200 meters from her residence. She works in an onion company for almost four years now.

The migration story of Carla started in March 2016. She worked as an accountant in Poland for a big tax office. After 13 years of working for the tax office, she decided to do something new. Her job at the tax office was well paid according to Polish standards, she could pay her rent and provide basic needs, even saving a bit of money, but she felt tired, and stressed out. Through a friend, she heard about the Netherlands. The Netherlands was presented to her as a country where she could gain economic welfare. Since immigrants struggle with language barriers and language obligations in the host country, the story of Carla is one that differs from the other cases.

*I searched for the Netherlands on Google and looked for a room immediately. I got myself a room and paid for private Dutch lessons. Three times I traveled about 100km for 3 Dutch lessons in the Netherlands. These lessons were to teach me the necessary communication in Dutch. I learned essential verbs and short sentences. After these lessons, I was able to communicate a bit in Dutch. When I applied for the job at the onion company, my language limitation was not relevant. If you have hands and can use them, they will accept you (Carla 2020).*

According to Amado, *migrant communities will be interested in learning one language or another according to their position in the social structure of the host society* (2011, 5). Carla found herself in a position where she needed, at least, the primary education in the Dutch language to navigate herself in Dutch society. Nationals from Poland, as a member of the European Union, are not obligated to follow a Dutch language course when they migrate to the Netherlands (<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/immigratie-naar-nederland/vraag-en-antwoord/moet-ik-als-nieuwkomer-inburgeren>). One way to obtain basic knowledge is through self-education. Since Polish migrants do not need to learn the Dutch language, many choose not to, especially when you can find a job where speaking the Dutch language is not a priority.

Along with Carla, approximately 50 other polish migrants are working at the onion company. In the four years that Carla has been working for this company, she had to take a break after the first two years. This break was mandatory because her contract came to an end. She had to take a break for six months to gain a new contract from them. Despite the insecure work conditions, Carla enjoys the financial benefits which compensate for the physical heavy working conditions.

In comparison with her previous job, Carla smilingly said the following: *My work in Poland was good. I would walk on high heels with short skirts. Here I must work hard; it is physically heavy, but when I am done, I can go home, and I am finished for the day. I do not have to think about work after. I receive almost twice and a half more than what I would make in Poland. I can pay rent for two houses (here in the Netherlands and for my mom and son in Poland), and still save money* (Carla 2020).

The story of Carla reminds me of my own migration history. After many job rejections, I was accepted in a potato factory as a production worker. Pine (2014) researched migration in Poland and referred to migration as *one of the most common alternative strategies in the postsocialist*

*world and beyond since the collapse of the socialist states and the simultaneous acceleration of globalism and fragmented capitalism* (2014; 98). According to Pine, migration was often 'a household strategy,' rather than a personal choice to try something new, 'sending some household members away in the hope of ensuring the future of others.' Through the economic improvement that Carla experienced in the Netherlands, she can save money freely, pay her rent, and provide for her son, who lives with her mother back in Poland. Pine argues that the work of migrants is not highly valued neither in the host country and at home (ibid.). Carla did not mention feeling undervalued in her present job, compared to her previous as one where she would dress nicely in high heels. Meaning she had a good appearance as an accountant, and the economic and social value of an accountant weighs heavier than being a production employee. Nevertheless, she claims to enjoy both the economic and mental freedom under the present circumstances. Carla argues that she does not have to think about work after working hours. She is free, indeed, while this was not the case as an accountant.

Reflecting on my own experience as a production employee, I do recognize Pine's arguments. I felt ashamed to tell my family and friends about the production job because I had been working as an assistant Air traffic controller in Suriname at the main International Airport. This job, as an assistant Air traffic controller, was highly valued among people. One would gain economic and social status by working at the Aviation department. As I migrated to the Netherlands for economic betterment, working in the production was an undervalued job. Compared to what I would receive in payment, it was an improvement, but I could not deal with it emotionally. The job was exhausting, both physical and mental. Pine continues with her analyses saying *migration takes the moral or social value out of work; labor, rather than being valorized as it takes place, becomes something to be endured in the short-term present for a greater good in the long-term future* (ibid.). As in Carla's case, the greater good she is hoping for is the education of her son. Carla explains that she is saving money and hoping to be able to send her son to University or Higher education in the Netherlands. She believes it will be more beneficial if he obtains a degree in the Netherlands than in Poland. The story of Carla sheds light on the different negotiations that take place in the life of migrants, especially in the area of working conditions since the job at the onion factory can be categorized as precarious.

The working conditions of a production employee are not only undervalued but also precarious. References to *precarious employment* or related terms such as *contingent work* and *atypical employment* are increasingly common in popular and scholarly discourse (Vosko 2010, 2). Vosko defines precarious employment as *work for remuneration characterized by uncertainty, low income, and limited social benefits and statutory entitlements* (ibid.). Vosko sums four factors that shape precarious employment. *The relationship between employment status, form of employment, dimensions of labor market insecurity, and social context and social location*. When Carla started working at the onion company, she had to take a break after two years. This is a regulation to keep employees away from permanent employment or better employment benefits. Ending your contract for six months means starting with a new contract all over again once you decide to work for them again. In this way, the company omits social security for its employees. Pine, argues in her research on Polish migrants, *the successful migrant brings home earnings far greater than any local income, which is also the case here. Migration holds the potential for generating (relatively) enormous income, therefore is highly desired, sought after, and valued* (2014, 100), but there is a high price to pay, both from the migrant and from their kindred.

In terms of discussion, Carla's case is compelling because movement and migration characterize economic organization from this century, where Carla travels alone as a female migrant for a new beginning and economic betterment. This case suits the typology of labor migrants and what Ong (1999) calls 'flexible citizen'. Ong writes about 'flexible citizenship', as the strategies and effects of mobile managers, technocrats, and professionals seeking to both circumvent and benefit from different nation-state regimes by selecting different sites for investments, work, and family relocation (Ong 1999, 112 see also Fong 2011). This approach on citizenship is not merely a political or legal status or as a set of rights and obligations, but as a dynamic and contingent cultural and social process (Brettell and Hollifield 2015, 167). In the case of Carla, migration was a free choice, which cannot be said for the next cases. Being a European Union national, it puts Carla in a position where she can move freely across borders, and manage her own integration. Engaging, in this case, is the relation and negotiation within the borders of transnationalism. Carla's son, being raised by her mother in Poland, is a negotiation on who needs to take care of him and where. At the same time, she is working towards a future where he can continue his studies in the Netherlands. Immigrants in the transnational and global world are concerned in the

nation-building of more than one state; thus, national identities are not only blurred but also negotiated or constructed (Brettell and Hollifield 2015, 158).

## Case 2: Finding Refugee

The second case opens with a story of 'conflict migration,' to be using the typologies of Gonzales (1989) or 'enforced migration' (Indra 1999).

Mara is one of the first members whom I met at the Women's center. We were invited to a radio interview for 'international women's day', where she shared her refugee story. As I sat beside her, my eyes even got teary by listening to her because it was my first close encounter with a former refugee.

*It was Christmas eve 1981 when I arrived with my two brothers and my sister in law in the Netherlands, in search for asylum. I was 19 years old when we came here. The streets were filled with Christmas lights and covered with a thick white layer of snow. We spend two days at the police office because there was no place in Amsterdam for young Afghanis refugees who risked their lives several times by crossing the border through Pakistan. The disappearance of my dad was the cutting edge, which pushed us to leave our country of origin (Story of Mara told during an interview at the radio station).*

It was the 3rd Thursday of the month in February when I continued my story with Mara. This evening was dedicated to Kazakhstan. Every 3rd Thursday of the month, a country was the center of interest at the Women's center. The evening would start with a small introduction to the country. The representatives of the country could dress in a traditional costume of their country of origin and play locale music—the room filled with women whom I regularly meet at the center, but also new faces. I got to know that these new faces were all connected to the Women's center away. Sitting at a long table enjoying our food, Mara continued her story as she sat beside me. I asked her to tell me more about her life in Emmeloord.

*We were the first refugees in Emmeloord. People looked at us as strangers. Probably, they had never seen people who looked like us before. Not in Emmeloord, at least. When I*



*think about my first years in Emmeloord, I remember how I was treated very kindly. However, there was this one time, which I will never forget. I already lived a few years in Emmeloord back then. It was in the afternoon, on my way to the Women's center. It was not the Women's center we know today. We did not have our own place, the activities were held at a school. I was not entirely sure about the direction I had to go, but I had an idea. To make sure my idea was correct, I stopped to ask strangers for directions. I saw two teens and an older woman. As I turned to the youngsters and greeted them friendly, asking for directions, the older woman interrupted the conversation. In a harsh tone, she asked what I was about to do at the school. "Cleaning,"? She asked. I was paralyzed for a moment. I thought by myself, are people of color only good for cleaning jobs? The old lady directed me in the wrong direction while the youngsters shook their heads, arguing the school was in the opposite direction (Mara 2020).*

Mara's stories continue as she finds her inner strength back at the Women's center. Mara has three grown-up daughters, all with a university degree that they obtained in the Netherlands. During my conversations with Mara, she told me about her personal developments. Through the Women's center, she had an opportunity to become a childminder. Mara was delighted with this opportunity and praised the center for this, yet her happiness did not last long. She was officially registered as a childminder at a childminder office, but could not get any clients except two, which lasted no longer than a month. The office told her; clients did not want to leave their children with her because of her migration background. Unfortunately, the childminder's office could not change or motivate clients to leave their children in her care, and she had to quit. Mara puts her energy in voluntary work as she could not get any paid work. Today, Mara is a divorced woman who lives from government aid in a lovely apartment on her own in the center of Emmeloord. Mara keeps precious memories of her former homeland but does not long to go back. She had built a life in the Netherlands and has no close families there. She never saw her father again, and the rest of her brothers and mother are living in the Netherlands and other parts of Europe or North America.

The above statements exemplify the politics of belonging in a particular society. The story of Mara shows different forms of belonging and exclusion. The nuclear and extended family of Mara had all built a life in the Netherlands or Europe, which might explain the loose bond with

her former homeland. Bloemdraad argues that the concept of citizenship allows us to analyze the extent to which incorporation of immigrants and their descendants are into receiving societies (2008, 154). Mara was received quite well in Emmeloord, but still, experience forms of exclusion. The efforts of Mara to fit and participate in the Dutch society and the difficulties she experienced can be formulated best in Aihwa Ong's concept of cultural citizenship (1996, 737) a *process of subjectification in the Foucauldian sense of self-making and being-made by power relations that produce consent through schemes of surveillance, discipline, control, and administration*. The story of Mara reveals the institutional practices of non-white immigrant people from different migration backgrounds, who are being treated differently in their country of arrival.

### Case 3: Family Reunion

The last migration case study in this chapter is about Sira. Sira was one of my interlocutors with whom I planned an interview at the Women's center. I met Sira on a Friday morning, during one of the open walk-in events, at the Women's center. On Fridays, there are always different activities. It varies from (book or other) presentations that are meant to require more awareness and knowledge about more autonomy and self-care, relaxation exercises, or breakfast events. They are always exciting activities on Friday's, and that is what interests Sira the most at the Women's center. During the time of the interview, Sira was 45 years old, and she migrated to the Netherlands as a young 8-year old girl along with her parents and other siblings.

*My dad was already working in the Netherlands when we were still with our mother in Morocco. In Morocco, we had a hard life. We were poor, like many others in the village. My dad was working in the Netherlands as a labor migrant. Finally, he could get us over here. I am very happy that he brought us to the Netherlands. In 2014 I visited Morocco for the last time, and I felt like a tourist. I do not feel any attachment to the country or long to go back. Everywhere you can see trash. I would not want to live in Morocco. I am a Dutch citizen and feel like I belong here (Sira 2020).*

Sira had a bumpy start. As a little girl in school, she was always punished for not listening or behaving correctly by the teachers. Her behavior was seen as typical disobedient, while there was an underlying problem. Sira had a terrible hearing, and this was discovered when she went to school in the Netherlands.

*It was my Dutch teacher who took me apart to look at what the real problem was because I could perform well when I sat right beside her. I felt ashamed for many years to tell people that I could not hear clearly. Bad hearing people are often stigmatized, and I was afraid to tell people about my hearing conditions (Sira 2020).*

As Sira tells this story about her hearing conditions, she pushes her headscarf a bit beside her ear to show me the small device adjust to her ear to help her hear better. She explained that it was quite hard during her studies. She always had to ask people to speak louder. This was also the main reason why continuing after her MBO<sup>8</sup> degree was not much of an option. In the last year of her education, she got an internship in a local supermarket in Emmeloord. She worked here for almost ten years and quit the job when the store moved to another location that was not so close to home.

*I grew up in a very traditional home. Even though we lived in the Netherlands, my parents were rigorous, especially my dad. As a girl, I was always tied to home. It felt like a prison to me, and I choose to get married to gain freedom. This marriage was awful. I had to marry my own cousin, which I did not even love. He lived in Morocco, and through marriage, he was able to migrate to the Netherlands. This marriage lasted three years because I could not bear it any longer (Sira 2020).*

As Sira was telling me the story of her first marriage, she leaned a bit towards me and spoke softly *you cannot marry your own family, it is disgusting. Or sleep with someone you do not have feelings for. I could not, I tried, but I failed. There are still women from my culture who still do this* (Sira 2020). After her first marriage, she fell in love with another Moroccan man and married out of love this time. She was delighted in the early years of her marriage, but soon she saw her husband for who he was. He was unfaithful to her, and she decided to divorce him after many years of marriage. Out of this marriage came three children: the eldest 17 and the youngest 6.

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<sup>8</sup> MBO (Middelbaar Beroeps Onderwijs) = Secondary vocational education or community college intermediate.

With the birth of her children, she stayed home to look after them. Her husband back then was the only source of income. Through mismanagement, they got into debt restructuring. Sira now lives from governmental aid. Her ex-husband is still under debt restructuring and is not able to look after the children financially.

Sira explained why she stayed in this marriage so long *when you have children, you will stay and try to work things out*. I still have contact with the father of my children, Sira continues. *He lives close to me. I am trying to find a house in a different area because I am tired of him. He comes and goes whenever he wants. It is like he can still control me. He will always find a way to come to my house. Usually, he uses our children as an argument. I do not want to go to the police or court for him, because the children will not benefit from this. It is better if I find a place to live far away from him* (Sira 2020).

The last case study is interesting in many ways in terms of discussion. According to the typologies of Gonzales (1961; 1989), this case does not fit the scales completely since Sira migrated to the Netherlands as a result of a family reunion. When looking at the reason why her dad was in the Netherlands, Sira's family does fit in the typology of labor migration. This typology is interesting for two main reasons, as it brings us to transnationalism analyses (Brettell and Hollifield 2015: 158). The first interesting development here is the ties that are kept with Morocco through marriage. The second importance is on the social identity of Sira as she makes claims of feelings of belonging to the Dutch nation. Another factor that adds to the richness of case 3 in terms of analyses is gender. Looking at gender as a tool of analysis and an object of study that intersects with power relations such as class, race, age, ethnicity, religion, etcetera, Sira story has it all. A young girl growing up, obeying the power structure of the father in a household, which only escapes, is through a marriage where the husband becomes the next power actor to submit to. Sira founded herself in a weak position of dependency as she stopped participating in economic activities.

By placing the different forms of migration in typologies, a clear distinction can be made. The cites, forms of longing and belonging, and ties with the home vary in each situation. Categorizing migrants is often part of the cultural fabric of host societies and hence must be explored for its impact on the lived experience of those migrants. Typologies help anthropologists to capture *different migration strategies. However, they also recognize that typologies generally offer a*

*static and homogeneous picture of a process that is flexible over the life course of an individual migrant or the domestic cycle of a household, varied within a population, subject to change over time as larger contextual conditions change, and laden with culturally contextualized meanings* (Brettell and Hollifield 2015, 153).

Through the different stories, I aimed to create a better understanding of the theories on migration. This chapter touched on migration itself, whereas the previous one provided more knowledge on the way migrants are perceived by the receiving society and how they act upon it.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

As I stated in my Introduction, being a citizen is one thing; being a migrant is another thing. Throughout this thesis, I have discussed the way a number of women in the Women's center with a migration background navigate their way in the host society. The empirical research in this thesis provides the reader to engage with the different theories on migration, gender, and citizenship. As a mode to conclude, I critically analyze migration citizenship in Dutch society, mainly in Emmeloord. The central question of this thesis is: How is the notion of citizenship lived and experienced by women with a migration background, that visit the Women's center Noordoostpolder in Emmeloord? How migrants experience citizenship depends on many factors.

The different life experiences of migrants in this thesis question the Dutch notion of citizenship, which is based on integration and participation. According to the Dutch government, integration (a fixed process) leads to (economic) participation. There are many examples which not only disprove the fix process of integration, as a life-long process but also display how passing an integration exam does not always lead to economic participation. Furthermore, economic participation does not always ask for language qualifications. As for the role of the Women's center in the life of migrants in Emmeloord, the following can be said. The Women's center creates a community space of belonging. Through the center, migrants gain an active social life, which impacts their wellbeing. This was also the main reason for the establishment of the Women's center. Relations are being developed and maintained. The multiple ranges of different activities organized by the Women's center enable women to communicate and participate better in Dutch society. The social contribution of the Women's center not only impact the life of newcomers but also those without a migration background.

The cases in this thesis demonstrated how immigrants in the transnational and global world are concerned in the nation-building of more than one state; thus, national identities are not only blurred but also negotiated or constructed (Brettell and Hollifield 2015: 158). The different experiences and practices of citizenship have shown how citizenship is not merely a political or legal status or as a set of rights and obligations, but as a dynamic and contingent cultural and social process. Yuval-Davis (1999), argues that citizenship is multi-layered. The various layers in

which one's citizenship collectives are the local, ethnic, national, state, cross- or trans-state and supra-state. These domains are affected and often at least partly constructed by the relationships and positionings of each layer in a specific historical context (Yuval-Davis 1999, 121). She notes that citizenship within the realm of the political community includes different forms of exclusion or exceptions that are shaped within this notion. Despite the efforts made by migrants, such as learning the Dutch language and culture, they still face many forms of discrimination and exclusion. Significant is the factor of gender when analyzing migration citizenship. It helps to understand their involvement in the labor force, economic (in)dependency, and power relations structured in their private lives. As the stories demonstrate, often migrants participate in economic activities, but sadly they find themselves in precarious working conditions.

Through the different typologies of migration, we could see how migrants have different motivations and linkages with their home and host countries. Migration is about relationships, family structures, and household strategies. The different cases prove that each situation is different. Using typologies might be tempting to draw a general conclusion. Therefore I argue that it is only to capture different migration strategies which steer research to the complex nature of the process and to the fundamental relationship between sending and receiving societies, either conceived in the macro terms of a global economy or in the more micro terms of social networks and emotional relationships that link households and individuals to both areas (Brettell and Hollifield 2015, 152). By using the typologies together with transnationalism, I demonstrated the complexity of migration. When dealing with migration issues, each situation must be analyzed independently. The concept of transnationalism captures a social process whereby migrants operate in social fields that transgress geographic, political, and cultural borders (Brettell and Hollifield 2015, 156).

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