



Universiteit Utrecht

**JUSTICE AND THE PRIORITY RIGHT TO HOUSING:  
THE CASE OF THE MOLUCCAN NEIGHBORHOODS  
IN THE NETHERLANDS**

by

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## Abstract

In this research an answer has been given to the question: is the continued prioritization of Moluccan community members in the allocation of housing in the Moluccan neighborhoods ethically justified? The reason for this investigation is the contemporary debate within Dutch society where the justifiability of these neighborhoods is questioned. The Moluccan neighborhoods are concentrated places within the Netherlands where members of the Moluccan community live together. There, they have their own church and a community building, and in most of the neighborhoods, the members of the Moluccan community receive a priority right to housing over non-Moluccans. This unequal access to housing in those neighborhoods based on ethnicity raises questions about fairness. However, the Moluccan community did not receive this priority treatment and neighborhoods designated just for them solely based on their ethnicity. The Moluccan neighborhood policy resulted from a complex history in which the Moluccan community experienced multiple injustices related to Dutch government action.

This research shows that the Moluccan priority right to housing in the Moluccan neighborhoods continues to be justified, given (1) the negative consequences of neutral treatment related to misrecognition and cultural inequality; (2) the historical context that gave rise to the demand for preservation; and (3) given that the increase in housing opportunity for the rest of Dutch society is relatively insignificant and does not outweigh the important interest of the Moluccan community in these houses. As such, it is concluded that the preservation of the Moluccan neighborhoods, which includes a priority right for the Moluccan community, continues to be justified as long as Moluccan community members live in the Netherlands and have these additional identity-based interests in housing in the neighborhoods in comparison to non-Moluccans. Fairness requires recognition, and recognition requires the preservation of the Moluccan neighborhoods.

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## 1. Introduction

In 1951, 12.500 Moluccan soldiers and their families were brought to the Netherlands by the Dutch government for what was intended to be a temporary stay. These Moluccan soldiers fought in the Dutch colonial army and after the decolonization of Indonesia, the Moluccans were no longer safe there. Their request to go to the Moluccan Islands was not granted, the Dutch government gave them two options: they could either demobilize in Indonesia or they could come to the Netherlands for several months, until their safe return would be possible. As such, they came to the Netherlands.

The continuous prolonging of the stay of the Moluccans forced the Dutch government to take further measures (Smeets & Steijlen, 2006, p. 156). The residential centers where they lived were not built for a long-term stay: they were socially isolated, far away from employment opportunities and not resistant to all the seasons of the year (Steijlen, 2021, p. 226). As such, Moluccan neighborhoods were built, to which the Moluccans were relocated. In 1986, the Dutch government made an agreement with the Moluccan community that the "Moluccan character" would be maintained in these neighborhoods (Becker et al., 2020). In most Moluccan neighborhoods, Moluccans continue to receive priority in the assignment of houses. Only when no Moluccan would be able to, or would want to live in a particular house in the neighborhood, can the house be assigned to a non-Moluccan.

The justifiability of this priority treatment for Moluccan community members in the assignment of particular houses has been a widely discussed and contested topic in public discourse for over several decades now. The Moluccan community continues to fight for the preservation of their neighborhoods, claiming that they have a right to these neighborhoods which should be respected. Critics, on the other hand, contest this claim, arguing that the Moluccan community has been in the Netherlands long enough to integrate and let go of historical injustices, and that the unequal opportunity to housing in the neighborhoods is no longer justified. This differential treatment in the assignment of houses based on one's ethnic background clearly raises questions of fairness. In the case of the Moluccan neighborhoods, these questions are best addressed through a contextual approach, and this involves judgements about the appropriate weight of contrasting claims. On the one hand, there are claims about equal access and neutral treatment, while on the other hand there are claims about community rights based on cultural and historical considerations.

This issue leads to the question central to this research: is the continued prioritization of Moluccan community members in the allocation of housing in the Moluccan neighborhoods ethically justified? This research is of great relevance, due to the central importance of the preservation of the Moluccan neighborhoods for the Moluccan community and the existing criticism within Dutch society against this preservation. Issues about the fairness of preservation are intrinsically ethical, strengthening the importance of this research. Moreover, this investigation is of social importance, as it gives the issue of Moluccan neighborhoods a place in the academic discourse. Furthermore, this research could potentially inform government policy and it could contribute to the general understanding of the Moluccan case and the issues involved. Finally, this thesis aims to contribute to broader discussions on justice, ethical governance and reconciliation.

This thesis will be structured as follows. First, I will provide an overview of the Dutch-Moluccan history. Second, I will discuss the contemporary characteristics of the Moluccan neighborhoods. Then, I will examine whether the establishment of the Moluccan neighborhoods was justified.

Subsequently, I will argue why the preservation of the priority right to housing in the Moluccan neighborhoods continues to be justified and finally I will discuss potential objections to this claim, showing that these objections do not hold.

By examining the unique historical and cultural significance of these neighborhoods, the morally important interests of the Moluccan community, the historical context and potential this thesis argues that the preservation of the Moluccan priority right to housing in the Moluccan neighborhoods is indeed ethically justified. The analysis will address potential counterarguments and demonstrate why priority access for Moluccans to these neighborhoods is both necessary and ethically justified.

I will argue that cultural recognition and cultural equality should take precedence over equal housing opportunities, given the unique historical context and moral responsibilities involved and given that the increase in housing opportunities for the rest of Dutch society by lifting the Moluccan neighborhoods is relatively insignificant. This will lead to the conclusion that the preservation of Moluccan neighborhoods is ethically justified, despite potential objections related to equal housing opportunities and segregation.

## 2. Historical Background

### 2.1 Decolonization

The Moluccan-Dutch history goes back to 1600, when precious herbs growing only on the Maluku Islands motivated the Netherlands to travel to the region and enforce a trade monopoly (Steijlen, 2016, p. 220). During their colonial period, the Dutch government appealed to the Moluccan people under control of the Dutch East Indies (now modern Indonesia) and recruited them for their Royal Netherlands East Indies Army (KNIL), by giving them all sorts of privileges (Steijlen, 2016, p. 220). The Moluccans that were recruited, originated from islands that had already been in contact with the Netherlands for a long time (Manuhutu, 1990, p. 35). Partly due to their shared Christian religion, the Netherlands thought of the Christian Moluccans as loyal allies (Manuhutu, 1990, p. 35). After the Second World War in 1945, Indonesia declared their independence. However, the Dutch government did not accept this proclamation, and tried to restore their colonial power using military violence (Smeets & Steijlen, 2006, p. 37). With Moluccan soldiers in the KNIL, a large group of Moluccans fought on the Dutch side against Indonesian independence. After a four-year war and under great international pressure the Dutch government granted sovereignty to Indonesia in 1949, leading to the establishment of the Federation of Indonesian States, which included the Moluccans and the Republic Indonesia (Smeets & Steijlen, 2006, p. 37).

Every state in the Federation of Indonesian States had certain autonomous powers. However, in the years that followed, Soekarno, the president of the Republic Indonesia, started to militarily conquer the different states to establish one unitary Indonesian state. Fearing the consequences of their support for Dutch colonial rule, the Moluccans did not want to come under Indonesian rule and responded by declaring their own independent state 'Republic Maluku Selatan' (RMS) in April 1950 (Steijlen, 2016, p. 221). The Netherlands who did not want to risk their relationship with Indonesia decided to remain 'neutral' and has to this day never acknowledged the RMS. During the proclamation of the RMS, the Moluccan KNIL soldiers were on the island Java where they wished to be sent back to the Maluku islands, possibly to support the RMS. The Indonesian and Dutch

government did not support this as it would only strengthen the RMS-movement (Steijlen, 2016, p. 222).

The Dutch government remained responsible for the Moluccan KNIL soldiers until their formal resignation (Steijlen, 2016, 222) and gave the Moluccan KNIL soldiers two weeks to choose between two options: they could either choose to demobilize in Indonesia and be given hand money or they could be temporarily sent to the Netherlands (Manuhutu, 1990, p. 41). The Moluccan KNIL soldiers held on to their request to be sent to RMS-territory or otherwise to New Guinea (Manuhutu, 1990, p. 41). Their request was not granted by the Dutch government, partly because the Indonesian government prohibited relocation to RMS-territory and because New Guinea lacked basic livelihood opportunities and posed a great malaria danger (Bosscher & Waaldijk, 1985, p. 55-56). The Dutch government, as such, did not facilitate the return of the KNIL soldiers to the Maluku islands or New Guinea, neither did the Dutch government support their political aspirations of having an independent Moluccan state (Manuhutu, 1990, p. 41).

As the Moluccan wish to go to a destination of their choice was not one of the options given to them, most of the Moluccans refrained from choosing (Smeets & Steijlen, 2006, p. 66). Later, the Dutch government gave the additional instruction that if the Moluccans would not decide between the two options given to them, they would be given the service order for embarkation to the Netherlands (Manuhutu, 1990, p. 41). If they would not follow this order, their military employment would be ended on the spot (Manuhutu, 1990, p. 41). A day before the announcement of this instruction, the Dutch government had already decided to fire the Moluccan KNIL soldiers upon their arrival in the Netherlands (Manuhutu, 1990, p. 41). As demobilization in Indonesia would be life threatening for the Moluccan soldiers and their families, due to their support for the Netherlands, the Moluccans did not really have a choice and the only option left was temporary relocation to the Netherlands (Manuhutu, 1990, p. 40). The Indonesian government stated to be willing to let the Moluccans return to Indonesia in due time (Smeets & Steijlen, 2006, p. 64), after this guarantee was also acquired in writing, the Dutch government considered the temporary solution of relocation as acceptable (Manuhutu, 1990, p. 40).

## 2.2 Coming to the Netherlands

Consequently, 12.500 Moluccan soldiers and their families arrived in the Netherlands by boat in 1951 (Manuhutu, 1990, p. 35). Their coming to the Netherlands was an emergency solution and everyone involved – the Moluccan soldiers and the Dutch and Indonesian authorities – spoke of their stay in the Netherlands as being of a limited duration (Manuhutu, 1990, p. 35) of several months (Steijlen, 2016, p. 222). The Netherlands was a "stopover on their way home" (Manuhutu, 1990, p. 43). After their arrival, the Dutch government fired the Moluccan soldiers from their military service, making them statusless citizens (Manuhutu, 1990, p. 42). The immediate dismissal laid the foundation for a great distrust towards the Dutch government (Steijlen, 2021). The Moluccans were now displaced and without a job, making them completely dependent on the Dutch government. Though the decision to fire the soldiers was made long before, the Dutch government purposefully decided not to let the Moluccans know about this until their arrival in the Netherlands in order to prevent uprisings in the camps (Bosscher & Waaldijk, 1985, p. 59). The immediate dismissal from service upon arrival came as a big surprise for the Moluccan soldiers (Manuhutu, 1990, p. 42). They did not accept this collective dismissal and sued the Dutch state before the military civil service judge (Steijlen, 2016, p. 222). The claimants argued that the dismissal was unlawful, and that dismissal was only allowed to take place if the final place of destination was reached, which was not

in the Netherlands (Manuhutu, 1990, p. 42). The military civil service judge decided that the dismissal was indeed unlawful, but after the Dutch State went to appeal, this judgment was overturned (Steijlen, 2016, p. 222). The military civil service judge, it was stated, was not authorized to make this verdict as under a certain Dutch law, the Moluccan soldiers could not be officially recognized as military officials (Manuhutu, 1990, p. 42). The Moluccans did not take any further steps by going to the civil judge, as that could endanger the position of the RMS (Steijlen, 2016, p. 222).

The Moluccan soldiers were informed of their dismissal via "an extremely short written note" (Smeets & Steijlen, 2006, p. 82), and on that same day of their arrival they were brought to Amersfoort where they were medically checked and checked for weapons. After that, they were put back on the bus and brought to residential camps (Pollmann & Seleky, 1979, p. 124). From a Moluccan perspective, their reception was cold and bureaucratic, and it left many Moluccans feeling betrayed and disrespected (Smeets & Steijlen, 2006, p. 81-82). Their dissatisfaction revolves around a feeling of unfairness and betrayal given the historical relationship they had with the Netherlands (Steijlen, 2021). This relationship was characterized by great loyalty towards the Dutch government. They had fought for the Netherlands for centuries, risked their lives to protect Dutch citizens and supported Dutch political policies. A testimony reflects this loyalty saying that Moluccans had been beheaded during the decolonization war for refusing to walk over the Dutch flag or to spit on the picture of the Dutch queen Wilhelmina (NOS, 2017). Given their sacrifices and contributions, the Moluccans foresaw a reciprocal commitment from the Dutch government upon their arrival in the Netherlands. They expected a festive welcome and words of acknowledgment for their service and contribution, neither of which took place.

The Netherlands was considered to be a temporary place of residence for the Moluccans, and as such, the Dutch government initially had no plans for any active integration of this community (Smeets & Steijlen, 2006, p. 84). In fact, there was a clear intention for them not to become part of Dutch society (Smeets & Steijlen, 2006, p. 118). This approach was evident in their housing, employment and education. The Moluccans were explicitly allocated to so-called "residential centers", such as former concentration camps, barrack camps, monasteries and prisons. These centers were socially isolated and far away from employment (Steijlen, 2016, p. 227). A special commissariat responsible for the organization of these centers was established: "het Commissariaat Ambonezenzorg" (CAZ) (Steijlen, 2016, p. 223). The Moluccans received complete care in the residential centers: they were given food from the central kitchen, coupons for clothing and some pocket money (Steijlen, 223).

While there was no explicit prohibition on Moluccans working, it was not stimulated either, it was even actively discouraged by the Dutch National Labor Office (Smeets & Steijlen, 2006, p. 131). The policy was rather to bring employment to the camps with the goal of preparing the Moluccans for civilian life in Indonesia (Smeets & Steijlen, 2006, p. 31). Nevertheless, there were insufficient employment opportunities for all the Moluccans within the camps (Steijlen, 2016, p. 223). Moluccans found their own way to the Dutch labor market, taking up unskilled work at farms and factories (Smeets & Steijlen, 2006, p. 132-133). As an increasing number of Moluccans started working, the CAZ implemented the so-called 60% rule in 1954. Anyone who worked was required to give up 60% of their salary as compensation for the centralized care the Moluccans received (Steijlen, 2016, p. 225). This rule led to many conflicts and in 1956 it was replaced by a Self-Care arrangement (Steijlen, 2016, p. 225). This meant that the Moluccans would no longer receive complete care in the residential centers and that they would have to support themselves (Steijlen, 2016, p. 225). Those who were not yet employed had to register at the employment office (Smeets & Steijlen, 2006, p. 146).

Regarding education, the Dutch government initially wanted to keep the Moluccan children outside the Dutch education system, proposing a form of "return education" that would match the education in Indonesia (Smeets & Steijlen, 2006, p. 97). Many Moluccans resisted this "Indonesian education" due to their allegiance to the RMS and though their stay was supposed to be temporary, they preferred to receive Dutch education (Smeets & Steijlen, 2006, p. 97). Children from smaller residential centers went to Dutch schools, while the largest centers had their own elementary school (Steijlen, 2016, p. 224). The CAZ decided which further education the children could attend, which was almost always the lower technical school for boys and the household school for girls (Steijlen, 2016, p. 224). A report from 1958 indicates that in comparison to Dutch students, the Moluccan students were overrepresented in the lower-level, practical education programs and completely missing in higher education programs (Smeets & Steijlen, 2006, p. 160). The CAZ also organized adult courses with a specific focus on preparing Moluccans for their eventual return (Smeets & Steijlen, 2006, p. 161). As such, no Dutch language courses were offered, and the CAZ-diplomas barely enabled the Moluccans to start working for Dutch companies (Smeets & Steijlen, 2006, p. 161). This integration policy caused great socio-economic disadvantages for the Moluccan community. Their isolated living combined with the idea of temporality stimulated the development of their own Moluccan community (Steijlen, 2021).

### 2.3 To the Moluccan Neighborhoods

The initially temporary stay of the Moluccans was prolonged, due to deteriorating Dutch-Indonesian relations which made a safe return for the Moluccans impossible (Smeets & Steijlen, 2006, p.156). The continuous prolonging of their stay forced the Dutch government to take further measures (Smeets & Steijlen, 2006, p. 156). The residential centers were not built for a long-term stay; they were socially isolated, far away from employment opportunities and not resistant to all the seasons of the year (Steijlen, 2016, p. 226). After research done by a Dutch commission, the concept of 'residential neighborhoods' was put forth as a solution to the bad living circumstances and the socio-economic disadvantages related to the residential centers (Smeets & Steijlen, 2006, p. 157). Consequently, in the late 1950s, Moluccan neighborhoods were built, to which the Moluccans were relocated (Steijlen, 2016, p. 226). In 1960, the first Moluccan neighborhood was ready and in the years that followed over sixty more such neighborhoods were built (Straver, 2005). This marked the transition "from wood to stone" (Smeets & Steijlen, 2006, p. 175). The neighborhoods were located all over the country. The requirements of these neighborhoods were that they were not bigger than fifty houses, close to employment opportunities and not at an isolated location (Smeets & Steijlen, 2006, p. 176). In negotiations with Moluccans, the new neighborhoods also included a Moluccan church and a community building (Smeets & Steijlen, 2006, p. 183). The Moluccan neighborhoods were destined for Moluccans, partly aimed at improving the great economic disadvantages the Moluccans faced.

Despite the improvements in living conditions brought about by the establishment of Moluccan neighborhoods, their socio-economic position continued to be disadvantaged (Steijlen, 2016, p. 227). The main reasons for this were the Moluccan disinterest in integration, grounded in hopes of returning to the Maluku Islands, coupled with discrimination on the Dutch employment market (Steijlen, 2016, p. 227). Moreover, the Moluccans remained to be a relatively isolated group, despite their relocation to the neighborhoods (Steijlen, 2016, p. 227).

Conflicts over the Moluccan desire for autonomy and recognition of their political aspirations regarding RMS further complicated their relationship with the Dutch government. It was especially



the second generation of Moluccans that took the lead, motivated by the pain and grievances of their parents related to Dutch government actions. This tension culminated in several violent actions in the 1970s, including train hijackings and hostage situations, which were desperate attempts to draw attention to their plight and demands for political recognition (Steijlen, 2016, p. 228), following years of peaceful demonstrations with no result.

Thirty years after their arrival, the conviction that the future of the Moluccans would be on the Maluku Islands disappeared and shifted to the realization that their temporary stay in the Netherlands had turned into a permanent one (Steijlen, 2016, p. 229). Thereby, the Moluccan position changed from exile to migrant and their integration process could really only start after that (Steijlen, 2016, p. 229). By then, their socio-economic position was greatly disadvantaged. The Moluccan actions in the 1970s gave rise to negotiations between the Dutch government and a Moluccan interest organization (Nieuwe Wegen, n.d.). Recognizing the need to address the persistent issues faced by the Moluccan community and the uncompensated past wrongs related to Dutch government action, the Dutch government, in 1986, reached an agreement with the Moluccans aimed at improving their socio-economic position. This agreement focused on better integration policies, education, and employment opportunities, and restoration (Steijlen, 2016, p. 230). In recognition of their commitment to the Netherlands, the first generation of Moluccans received a medal of honor and an annual benefit. A Moluccan historic museum was established, and a project was set up to combat unemployment. For the latter, the 'Thousand Jobs Plan' aimed to assist one thousand Moluccan youths in securing employment (Steijlen, 2016, p. 231). Additionally, funding was allocated for the renovation of houses in Moluccan neighborhoods, which were then transitioned into private ownership of housing cooperations (Steijlen, 2016, p. 231). Given the transfer to housing cooperations, the Moluccans feared that they would lose their priority right regarding housing in the Moluccan neighborhoods that were initially destined for them (*De Molukse Wijk Als Houvast*, n.d.). Therefore, the Dutch government made an agreement in 1986 that the "Moluccan character" would be maintained in these neighborhoods (De Molukse Wijk Als Houvast, n.d.). In most Moluccan neighborhoods, Moluccans continue to receive priority in the assignment of houses (Becker et al., 2020).

### 3. About Today's Moluccan Neighborhoods

The historical background sets the stage for understanding the current situation in Moluccan neighborhoods. As mentioned before, the Moluccan neighborhood policy includes that members from Moluccan communities receive priority in the assignment of houses. It is only when no Moluccan is able or willing to live in a particular house in the neighborhood, that the house can be assigned to a non-Moluccan. It is this priority aspect of the policy that is our research's primary concern. In this section I will elaborate on some characteristics of the Moluccan neighborhood policy and its implications, and I will discuss current community perspectives on these neighborhoods.

The current allocation policy of housing in the Moluccan neighborhoods entails that people must meet two types of criteria in addition to the general conditions for housing. The first criterium is needs-based: people applying for a house in the Moluccan neighborhoods must meet the general requirements for social housing, such as income and family size (Ministerie van Algemene Zaken, 2024). The additional criterium is ethnicity-based; people must meet the requirement of being Moluccan and/or occupying the house with someone who is Moluccan. Being Moluccan can be understood in the biological sense as having Moluccan ancestry. There is no hierarchy or sequencing

regarding ethnicity, someone whose both parents are Moluccan would not receive priority over someone who has one Moluccan and one non-Moluccan parent. If there are no interested candidates who meet both the needs-based and the ethnicity-based requirements, then the house can be assigned to someone who only meets the needs-based requirement. The neighborhood policy thus implies the differential treatment between Moluccans and non-Moluccans.

When there are multiple interested candidates who meet both requirements, there are additional priority rules in the assignment of the houses. The first priority rule concerns whether the house qualifies as a candidate's "Rumah Tua" (*Woningtoewijzingsbeleid Woongroep Molukse Wijk Breukelen*, 2023). Rumah Tua, which could be translated as "original family house", is a Moluccan tradition brought over from the Moluccans that entails that houses are passed on from generation-to-generation (Van Vijfeijken, 2021). The Rumah Tua stands for the house of origin, which is very important to the Moluccan community (*Hoe De Molukse Rumah Tua-traditie Zorgde Voor Beroering in Moordrecht*, 2019). A house in the Netherlands qualifies as Rumah Tua if descendants of the original inhabitants, those are Moluccan KNIL-soldiers and other first-generation Moluccans who came to the Netherlands in 1951, have been continuously occupying that house (*Woningtoewijzingsbeleid Woongroep Molukse Wijk Breukelen*, 2023). The Rumah Tua's in the Netherlands can be seen as a replacement for the Rumah Tua's on the Moluccas, which they had to leave behind (*Woningtoewijzingsbeleid Woongroep Molukse Wijk Breukelen*, 2023). Thus, those for whom the house is their Rumah Tua are the first who are eligible to take over the house. The second priority rule is whether a house qualifies as one's Parental house, which is a house that has been inhabited by one's parents or grandparents directly prior to the next assignment of the house. This entails that all children and grandchildren of the last inhabitant hold priority over other house seekers of whom the house is not a Rumah Tua (*Woningtoewijzingsbeleid Woongroep Molukse Wijk Breukelen*, 2023). Following these first two priority rules are various other priority rules, that include those already living in the municipality and the position on the waiting list for the neighborhood. We can see that these additional priority rules are intrinsically interest-based, exemplifying the importance of community values. The current allocation system is thus needs-based, ethnicity-based, and interest-based. If the Moluccan neighborhoods policy were lifted, it follows that the houses would be equally accessible to all citizens who meet the needs-based requirements, without any ethnic considerations.

It should be noted that the Moluccan claim is not a claim to just any neighborhood where they can live together, but it is the specific claim to maintain the existing Moluccan neighborhoods as these have an important meaning for them. Both residents and former residents are working hard to preserve their Moluccan neighborhoods. The Moluccan community emphasizes the importance of the neighborhoods as an integral part of their identity, due to the historical meaning of the neighborhoods and its roll in preserving their cultural identity. The Moluccan neighborhoods provide a space where the Moluccan community can sustain and engage in their traditions. They are not only seen as integral to the transmission of culture and identity but also as an essential part of this identity (Matulesy, 2021). Both Moluccans living inside and outside these neighborhoods strongly identify with them, as they provide an environment that supports daily cultural practices and communal living (Ouweneel, 2011).

Regarding culture, the Moluccan neighborhoods are of great importance for the community, as they provide a place where cultural traditions can be maintained and transferred to subsequent generations. The neighborhoods are the cornerstone of the culture, and their important function in

maintaining the Moluccan cultural identity cannot be replaced by other means. One of the Moluccan cultural traditions is the previously discussed tradition of Rumah Tua. All Rumah Tua's are situated in the Moluccan neighborhoods, which implies that the continuation of this tradition requires the preservation of the Moluccan neighborhoods.

Moreover, the neighborhoods are of historical significance as they represent the connection between the Moluccan community and the Netherlands and the past contributions of the Moluccan people to Dutch society. The neighborhoods are seen as Moluccan heritage and as the last tangible remnants of a shared history between the Netherlands and the Moluccans (Buiten, 2022). The history of a community is important to its members, as collective remembrance plays an important role in forging one's identity. Past injustices faced by the community inevitably play a role in how current members understand their identity and place in the world (Thompson, 2015, p. 50). A community member notes that the neighborhoods stand for broken promises (Matulesy, 2021). Other community members note that the Moluccan neighborhoods are "the last tangible remnants of a shared history between the Netherlands and the Moluccans" (Buiten, 2022) and that "they are an important part of my identity" (Matulesy, 2021). Therefore, the neighborhoods are a part of the collective memory of the Moluccan community. Even if future generations at some point may no longer feel the impact of past injustices, the role of historical memory in shaping cultural identity remains significant. For the Moluccan community the current justification for the Moluccan neighborhoods is partly historical: an agreement was made that the Moluccan neighborhoods would maintain their "Moluccan character" and as such the Moluccan community claims their right. This demand is rooted in a dissatisfaction with the treatment of the first generation of Moluccans and the unfulfillment of the promise to return home, the Moluccan neighborhoods are a form of compensation for these past events, they feel that it is their community right. As such, the Moluccan's claim for the right to maintain the Moluccan neighborhoods is not solely about a historical agreement, it is about the events that led to this agreement and about what these neighborhoods have come to signify for them. The neighborhoods are a representation of their community history, a history that partly constitutes their identity.

Thus, members of the Moluccan community emphasize the importance of their neighborhoods as being a vital part of their identity. The relation between the neighborhoods and community identity is grounded in the cultural and historical meaning of the neighborhoods. Both culture and history are important and interlinked aspects of community identity, and both these aspects are embodied and maintained in the Moluccan neighborhoods. Lifting the neighborhood policy of priority rights would consequently make it more difficult for Moluccan community members to maintain the values and historical connections that they consider to be important to their identity. The neighborhoods as such are viewed as an important condition for the preservation of their own Moluccan identity (Rinsampesy, 1992).

#### 4. Justifying the Establishment of the Moluccan Neighborhoods

Before examining the ethical justifiability of preserving the Moluccan neighborhoods, it is important to investigate whether the initial establishment of these neighborhoods and the agreement in 1986 to maintain the Moluccan neighborhood policy—including the Moluccan priority right to housing in those neighborhoods—are justified to begin with, and if so, on what grounds. The ethical justification for the establishment of the Moluccan neighborhoods and the initial agreement to preserve them is deeply intertwined with the historical context of unfulfilled promises and the resulting harm to the Moluccan community. This background provides essential context for understanding the ethical

implications of their establishment. In this section, I will first examine this historical context and then I will discuss the consequent justification of the establishment of the neighborhoods.

#### 4.1 Temporary Relocation Without Return

It must be noted that the Moluccan community did not have a choice but to relocate to the Moluccan neighborhoods (Smeets & Steijlen, 2006, p. 185). Some Moluccans did not want to relocate, as they were used to the residential centers and saw the relocation as a way of the Dutch government to not keep their promise of return. Others were positive about their relocation, as it significantly improved their living conditions. Though these mixed reactions are significant, the focus of this argument is on the broader ethical justification for the establishment and preservation of the Moluccan neighborhoods in itself, acknowledging the necessity of addressing the harms caused by the Dutch government's broken promises.

Contrary to the Dutch government's perception of voluntary relocation, it can be convincingly argued that the relocation of the Moluccans to the Netherlands was involuntary. The analysis of the legal and historical aspects of the demobilization by C.N.J. Kortmann and A.A. al Khatib (2013) supports this claim. They state that when looking at the Dutch government decision to prevent the KNIL soldiers from demobilizing from Java to the Maluku Islands or to other territory unoccupied by Indonesia, and instead bring them to the Netherlands, we can conclude that the KNIL soldiers never accepted the option of being relocated to the Netherlands, nor can this circumstance be attributed to them (Kortmann & Al Khatib, 2013, p. 219). Furthermore, the service order to temporarily relocate to the Netherlands was issued just ten days after the court ruling that prohibited involuntary demobilization in Java, and this short timeframe and lack of options for demobilization elsewhere demonstrate that the measure was sudden and coercive (Kortmann & Al Khatib, 2013, p. 218). This sudden and unforeseeable decision highlights the lack of genuine choice given to the Moluccans. Therefore, we can ascribe significant responsibility to the Dutch government for the relocation of the Moluccans.

From the perspective of the Moluccan community, their experience of injustice regarding the displacement is based on the perception that the Dutch government (Smeets & Steijlen, 2006, p. 66) brought them to the Netherlands with the condition of a temporary stay of several months and that the government 'broke that promise' as they never returned home. The conviction of a temporary stay was maintained for both the Dutch government as well as the Moluccans for many years, leading to decades of uncertainty and statelessness for the Moluccans. This is reflected in the Dutch government policy that was centered around the temporariness of the Moluccan stay for about twenty years, thereby purposefully aiming to avoid the integration of this community into Dutch society (Smeets & Steijlen, 2006, p. 173). Given the significant influence the displacement had on the life of the Moluccan community, the lack of fulfilling the promise of a temporary stay bears substantial moral weight.

The idea that promises ought to be kept is an intuitively evident and widely accepted moral judgement. In ethical theory, promises are generally understood as producing moral obligations. Besides the moral intuition on promissory obligations, an accepted moral judgement is that if one contributes to causing harm, she or he is ethically responsible for bearing the costs of that harm, which means compensating the person harmed. A promise invokes expectations and planning around the future performance of that promise, and breaking a promise could harm the people who relied on it. Following the two moral judgements concerning one's responsibility regarding promises and harm, and recognizing that breaking a promise can cause harm, it follows that if individual A

breaks her or his promise to B, person A should bear the responsibility for redressing the harm caused to B resulting from breaking the promise (Perez, 2012, p. 87).

The inability of the Dutch government to keep their promise of a temporary stay had multiple harmful consequences for the Moluccan community. First, the unfulfillment of the promise harmed the trust of the Moluccans in the Dutch government and thereby their already deteriorated relationship. Their relocation to the Netherlands with the condition of a temporary stay involved not only forming beliefs or expectations about the future but also actively depending on and planning around this promise. Family members were left behind (Smeets & Steijlen, 2006, p. 128), suitcases remained closed, and educational commitment was focused on return. The promise produced trust in the Dutch government and cooperation of the Moluccans, thus, not keeping that promise, given the great implications it had, reasonably harmed the Moluccan trust. If they would have known that their stay would have become a permanent one, they might have not cooperated in going to the Netherlands, despite the fact that the other options given to them were highly unattractive. Moreover, the planning around the promise of return can also be seen in the lack of integration in the first years, which led to great socio-economic disadvantages within Dutch society.

Second, the harmful consequences are related to the losses suffered due to the unforeseen and involuntary permanent displacement. I will name a few. First, there is the loss of the 'home environment' (Santi Amantini, 2024, p. 26). The breaking of the promise of return and the unforeseen permanent displacement that it implies, is harmful because the Moluccans were forced to leave behind their house and the larger familiar, social and cultural environment surrounding it. There are many cases of family members who had to be left behind (Smeets & Steijlen, 2006, p. 128). Consequently, there are Moluccans who have unexpectedly never seen their family members again. Furthermore, there is a loss of control (Santi Amantini, 2024, p. 23). Not being able to go back implied that the Moluccans lost control over their future, as they were deprived of the future plans they had made.

Another important harm is the damage to mental health (Santi Amantini, 2024, p. 30). Psychological harm is caused by the cumulation of all the harmful consequences of the unexpected permanent displacement: the betrayal of trust, the loss of land and social network, the loss of control, and so on.

## 4.2 Dutch Government Responsibility

The Dutch government's role in bringing the Moluccans to the Netherlands and failing to fulfil the promise of a temporary stay imposes a moral obligation to address the resultant harm. This responsibility is demonstrated by the involuntary nature of the Moluccan relocation, the unfulfilled promise of return, and the significant harmful consequences following this unfulfillment. Even if we assume, for the sake of argument, that the unfulfillment of the promise was beyond the Dutch government's control and that the government could not have done more, there is still the responsibility to make amends given the harms caused and the relative responsibility of the Dutch government in relocation and fulfilling the promise.

Given the bad living conditions in the residential centers and the socio-economic disadvantages these centers upheld, relocation was necessary. In her discussion on territorial justice, Anna Stilz (2024) says that "relocation processes need to (a) relocate communities together and (b) allow for the affected community's democratic participation in designing their relocation process" (Stilz, 2024, p. 210). Meeting these conditions is necessary to protect the community's interests regarding occupancy and self-determination (Stilz, 2024, p. 210). Occupancy refers to the need for a stable

living environment that people can use for their social, economic and cultural practices (Stilz, 2024, p. 199), while self-determination in this case refers to the opportunity to make decisions about their living conditions and maintaining their cultural and social practices, and it refers to the ability to control their relocation process and have their shared values and commitments reflected (Stilz, 2024, p. 210). Stilz's understanding of just relocation is relevant and persuasive in the case of Moluccan neighborhoods, because it involves the moral judgement that those who are affected by a decision must have the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process while it also addresses some important interests that were harmed by the breaking of the promise of return, such as the loss of home environment and the loss of control over their future. The neighborhoods provided the Moluccans with a stable and supportive environment where they could rebuild their lives and maintain their cultural identity and community traditions. The Moluccan community that, for a duration of twenty years, planned their life around the expectation of returning home, lost control over their future when this expectation was never met. Thus, the establishment and preservation of neighborhoods especially destined for the Moluccan community ensured that they had some new solid grounds on which they could plan their future while their community traditions were protected. Moreover, the Moluccan community was involved in designing their relocation, as their specific requests for a church and a community building were granted, ensuring their cultural and social needs were respected.

Justification for the establishment and initial preservation of the Moluccan neighborhoods is also supported through its aim to address the socio-economic issues faced by the Moluccan community. Due to the lack of integration in the first years of their stay, caused in part by the isolated locations of the residential centers, the Moluccan community had a significant socio-economic disadvantage within Dutch society. The establishment of the Moluccan neighborhoods was partly aimed at improving the socio-economic position of the Moluccan community, by locating them closer to employment opportunities (Smeets & Steijlen, 2006, p. 181) Socio-economic justice understood as requiring that significant economic inequalities are addressed, as such supports the establishment and initial preservation of the Moluccan neighborhoods.

In summary, the Dutch government's responsibility for the involuntary relocation and the failure to fulfill the promise of a temporary stay imposed a moral obligation to compensate for the harm caused. Although the significant harms from the unexpected permanence of their stay could not be fully compensated through these neighborhoods alone, the neighborhoods are ethically justified by their improvement of living conditions, provision of a stable environment, and intention to address socio-economic disparities.

## 5. Justifying the Preservation of the Moluccan Neighborhoods

We have seen that the grounds for initial justifiability of Moluccan neighborhoods are related to claims about causal responsibility, compensation for caused harms, promotion of socio-economic position, and just relocation. Such claims might lose their normative force in the future, as concerns about compensation might no longer hold. However, potential objections against the continuing preservation of the Moluccan neighborhoods that are based on the passage of time, rest on the assumption that the Moluccan neighborhoods solely derive their justification from a mode of repair for past wrongs. Nevertheless, even if future generations are no longer negatively affected by historical wrongs, the justification for Moluccan neighborhoods can evolve. The important interest that makes the Moluccan claim to the specific houses in the Moluccan neighborhoods unique,

relates to the importance of those houses to their identity. Their identity is in this sense understood as comprising two main aspects: cultural and historical significance. In recognizing these identity-based interests, it becomes clear that the Moluccan claim to housing in their neighborhoods is distinct from similar claims by non-Moluccans. This recognition, along with the historical context form the moral foundation for justifying the community's priority rights in housing assignments within these neighborhoods.

## 5.1 The Intrinsic Importance of Preservation

We can distinguish two kinds of arguments in favor of preserving the Moluccan neighborhoods: arguments supporting preservation in relation to the interests of the Moluccan community, and arguments supporting preservation due to the intrinsic value of this preservation itself. The latter kind of arguments do not rely solely on the interests of group members but focus on how larger societies can benefit from group-differentiated rights, such as benefits from cultural diversity or historical remembrance (e.g. Kymlicka, 1995; Pendleton, 2015). In this section, I will briefly discuss this latter kind of argument to show that it cannot independently justify the preservation of the Moluccan neighborhoods. I conclude that the justification of the Moluccan neighborhoods should always be grounded in its relation to the interests of the community members.

A way to understand the support for preserving the Moluccan neighborhoods due to their intrinsic value is in relation to their historical significance. This idea is grounded in the symbolic importance and historical memory intrinsic to the neighborhoods. The neighborhoods represent the Dutch-Moluccan history and as such can play a crucial role in educating broader society about this history and preserving historical memory, which is vital for ongoing understanding. The justification of preserving the neighborhoods can be understood as grounded in an ethics of remembrance (Neumann & Thompson, 2015) and the neighborhoods can be seen as living monuments. The intrinsic historical meaning of the Moluccan neighborhoods serves as a remembrance of the Dutch-Moluccan relationship and the community's struggles, consequently their preservation is an act of moral recognition and respect. Though there are other ways to pursue historical remembrance, the Moluccan neighborhoods have an irreplaceable historical meaning, as they represent an independent and significant part of history.

Though the Moluccan neighborhoods might be viewed as an irreplaceable way of historic remembrance, and they could be of importance to maintain collective historical memory, this symbolic importance cannot independently justify the preservation of the neighborhood policy. This is substantiated by the argument that the members of the Moluccan community should be treated as an "end" in themselves and not merely as a means to maintain historical memory and to represent a certain history. It is morally wrong to treat a minority group differently and maintain a policy that physically sets them apart from the rest of society solely because they represent a history whose remembrance is deemed morally important. This moral wrongness is grounded in the potential negative effects of segregation (see section 6.2 Residential Segregation as Harmful). Considering the potential negative effects of segregation, basing the argument for preserving the Moluccan neighborhoods solely on historical remembrance would do a disservice to the Moluccan community and imply treating them merely as a means. The community members should not serve as some living historical monuments that need to be maintained for others to see, when it does not necessarily serve them and potentially even harms them. Thus, individuals and communities should not be instrumentalized for purposes that do not align with their own interests. Such argumentation

equally holds against the idea that preservation can be based on the benefits of cultural diversity, independent of the group's interests.

If the Moluccan community argues for the maintenance of the Moluccan neighborhoods because they believe it is important for historical remembrance and public awareness, the justification for preserving the neighborhoods is still grounded in its relation to the interests of the members and not solely independent of it.

This discussion serves to demonstrate that the justification of the Moluccan neighborhoods should always be rooted in its relation to the interests of the community members. Therefore, while historical remembrance is important in itself and for educating broader society, it is the relation to the community's interests that ultimately justifies the preservation of the neighborhoods.

## 5.2 Neutral treatment

To understand the moral justification for differential treatment of the Moluccan community in the assignment of houses, it is essential to first explore the opposing concept of "neutrality". According to the ideal of neutrality, fairness requires treating individuals abstractly, considering only generic human interests rather than any particular identities and commitments (Carens, 1997, p. 814). The ideal of neutrality advocates for a hands-off approach to culture and identity, where the state remains neutral and does not get involved in supporting or opposing any particular identity or culture besides what is required by liberal democratic principles (Carens, 1997, pp. 815-816).

Neutrality is supported by liberal egalitarians such as Brian Barry. Generally formulated, neutrality means that personal differences that are politically irrelevant must be disregarded in political action to treat all individuals as equals (Galeotti, 2002, p. 28). Neutral principles of justice are not based on claims about the value of different conceptions of the good (Caney, 1998, p. 88). The term 'conception of the good' refers to individual's judgements about what makes life worthwhile and important and consequently it refers to which activities and ideals are valuable and rewarding in support of that conception of the good life (Caney, 1998, p. 88). Such conceptions of the good can, for example, regard one's religion and a valuable activity in support of that conception of the good could be doing a daily prayer. An impartial conception of the good, Barry states, does not give any special weight to one's interests or concerns but rather treats them in the same way (Barry, 1995, p. 20).

The ethical core of neutrality is an attitude of "anti-perfectionism", which entails a blindness to personal differences and holds that the state and political agencies have no business in trying to make citizens better off according to any particular perception of what is valuable in life (Galeotti, 2002, p. 28). This anti-perfectionist attitude serves two purposes: first, it limits religious and moral disagreements from influencing political affairs; and second, it ensures that no set of beliefs or lifestyle receives preferential treatment, which could lead to unfair advantages in one's social position or standing (Galeotti, 2002, p. 28).

The ideal of neutrality is thus rooted in ideas about fairness and equality and advocates that the state must refrain from supporting any particular way of life over another. As such, neutrality avoids exclusion of individuals who do not conform to a dominant culture or identity (Carens, 1997, p. 815). An example is the promotion of a state religion, thereby excluding people with a different religious beliefs. Such exclusion conflicts with commitments to equal citizenship and individual freedom (Carens, 1997, p. 815). Given that people can have different conceptions of the good, non-neutrality, such as supporting one particular lifestyle over another, would constitute inequality and would



undermine people's freedom to establish and pursue their own conception of the good. Neutrality then ensures two things: the individual freedom to pursue any conception of the good; and the equal treatment of citizens, regardless of their ideas, moral judgements, and way of life (Galeotti, 2002, p. 59). People can then themselves freely establish what is worthwhile and will not be treated differently in their commitment to achieve that good.

Neutrality would not support the preservation of the Moluccan neighborhoods, because fairness would require the equal treatment of individuals without consideration of their specific cultural backgrounds, advocating that the state must refrain from supporting any particular way of life over another. This implies that housing policies should not favor one ethnic group over another, ensuring equal access to housing opportunities for all citizens. By giving the Moluccan community, a special right in the assignment of housing, this public policy is giving special weight to the Moluccan perception of the good which, for the Moluccan community, is linked to the neighborhoods. Such preferential treatment is unjustified. The Moluccan neighborhood policy would have to be lifted, to ensure equal consideration in the assignment of housing and to ensure that no lifestyle or culture receives preferential treatment that could result in disadvantages in one's social position. With such a neutral approach, the Moluccan community would not be treated differently in their commitment to achieve what they consider to be valuable but would rather be treated equally as any other cultural group. No special weight would be given to the Moluccan interests, and everybody would be equally free to establish their own perception of the good.

The argument for neutrality seems to be particularly significant given the scarcity in housing in the Netherlands. General criticism against the preservation of the Moluccan neighborhoods is that with the significant scarcity in housing the priority treatment of one group over another in housing allocation is unjustified (Becker et al., 2020). The neutrality approach would emphasize that given the importance of housing and the great difficulty of finding a house due to scarcity, unequal treatment in the assignment of houses constitutes a significant unfair form of inequality. Given the great housing scarcity in the Netherlands and its impact on people's life's, the neutrality argument is not only of theoretical interest but also of practical importance.

### 5.3 Differential treatment

Despite its aim to promote equality and fairness through impartiality, neutrality has several critiques that show its limitations. First, pure neutrality is impossible, as the state inevitably makes decisions that have important implications for specific identities and cultures (Carens, 1997, p. 816). Joseph H. Carens notes, for example, that any state will have to use one or a few languages for official affairs and set political boundaries, and such choices inevitably impact different identities and cultures differently (Carens, 1997, p. 816). That state decisions inevitably affect particular groups makes complete neutrality impractical. Carens states that the argument from inevitability does not have to be too problematic for the ideal of neutrality, but rather highlights that neutrality "can never be fully achieved and will always serve only as a regulative ideal" (Carens, 1997, p. 817). As such, Carens argues, this inevitability leads to an approach of neutrality where cultural biases are as limited as possible (Carens, 1997, p. 817). Due to inherent cultural biases in state decisions, which implies that state decisions inevitably affect particular groups, pure neutrality is thus unrealistic and impractical.

Anna Elisabetta Galeotti critiques the dominant interpretation of neutrality for being fundamentally insensitive to social differences, and thereby failing to address the unique challenges faced by minority groups, strengthening social inequalities (Galeotti, 2002, pp. 59-60). Institutional blindness caused by a complete neutralization of the public sphere results in citizens being stripped of their particular identities (Galeotti, 2002, p. 69). The neutral public sphere, Galeotti states, "is in

fact already inhabited by particular and partial identities – those of the majority – so the rigorous exclusion of different identities seems straightforwardly unfair. " (Galeotti , 2002, p. 76). Rather than preventing the exclusion of people, neutrality thus causes the exclusion of minority identities. As societies are biased toward practices of the majority culture, Joshua Broady Preiss argues that "minority cultural groups are right to demand protections from, or compensation for, such bias" (Preiss, 2009, p. 240). As Iris Marion Young (1990) argues, a commitment to neutrality and formal equality does not eliminate social differences, but rather makes it impossible to identify how these differences structure privilege and oppression (Young, 1990, p. 164).

According to the ideal of pure neutrality however, people are themselves responsible for bearing the burdens of their cultural traditions (Song, 2007, p. 48). Sarah Song critiques this view and argues that claims about the unfairness of differential impact should not just be dismissed without investigating the circumstances that give rise to those claims (Song, 2007, p. Song, 49). According to Song, "the claim that uniform treatment constitutes equal treatment is empty without attention to the circumstances..." (Song, 2007, p. 49). All these critiques aim to show that indifference towards differences can sustain, exacerbate, or create injustices. In conclusion, pure neutrality is impossible to achieve as state decisions inevitably have differential impacts on different cultures and identities. Moreover, neutrality is insensitive to social differences, it fails to address the unique needs of minority groups and it causes their exclusion from the public sphere. Therefore, the ideal of neutrality is inconsistent with normative commitments to justice and inclusiveness (Galeotti, 2002, p. 78).

This discussion on the limitations of a neutral approach sets the stage for a deeper exploration of the morality of differential treatment. Carens' discussion of the "ideal of evenhandedness" can be a relevant introduction here. In his essay "Two conceptions of Fairness" (1997) Carens extends on an essay of Veit Bader and discusses the ideal of neutrality and the ideal of evenhandedness, two contrasting concepts of fairness related to national identity and culture. The ideal of evenhandedness is opposed to neutrality, and views fairness as entailing the careful balancing of competing claims for recognition and support related to culture and identity (Carens, 1997, p. 818). Rather than trying to abstract from particularity, all the different particularities should be embraced in a way that is fair to those particularities (Carens, 1997, p. 818). According to the ideal of evenhandedness, Carens states, "being fair does not mean that every cultural claim and identity will be given equal weight, but rather that each will be given appropriate weight under the circumstances and given a commitment to equal respect for all. History matters, numbers matter, the relative importance of the claim to those who present it matters, and so do many other considerations" (Carens, 1997, p. 818). Evenhandedness requires immersion while neutrality requires abstraction (Carens, 1997, p. 815). Though he did not have the space to elaborate his claim, Carens supports a balanced approach where both conceptions of fairness play important roles in what justice requires (Carens, 1997, p. 819). Neutrality as the sole concept of fairness, Carens states, is a very radical ideal (Carens, 1997, p. 819). Carens' discussion highlights the importance of considering different circumstances, affirming that fairness might require differential treatment that is not indifferent to differences. In the contextual judgement of the Moluccan case, complete neutrality should be morally objected to, as it would overlook significant distinctive interests among people and thereby create unjust inequalities. Some minimal account of what Carens calls evenhandedness is a more convincing approach, given the weight of history and culture in relation to their identity.

For the Moluccan case, thus, neutrality in the assignment of houses in the Moluccan neighborhoods is unjustified given its differential impact entailing significant negative consequences for the

Moluccan community. These negative consequences are related to the misrecognition of the Moluccan identity which the neighborhoods are part of, and the resultant unequal opportunity in preserving and promoting their identity. I will explain the moral justification of differential treatment by directly applying ideas about recognition and equality to the case of Moluccan neighborhoods. First, the concept of recognition emphasizes the moral importance of acknowledging the distinctive identities and interests of different cultural groups. What must be recognized is someone's identity, which means recognizing what is different and distinctive about that person (, Squires, 2006, p. 478). The recognition I am concerned with implies not just accepting one's distinctive characteristics, but actively acknowledging the particular worth of one's identity. Such active acknowledgement means treating someone in a way that is appropriate to her or his distinctive identity, for example by giving that person a special provision. Recognition which is morally important to show respect for one's moral worth. Disregarding that someone is Christian, for example, and while knowing so, not giving that person the space to do his prayers before a shared diner, shows a failure to respect the worth of that person and respect that aspect of his identity, namely his religious beliefs and related religious practices. The concept of recognition is often understood as intrinsically normative: being recognized means being treated justly (Squires, 2006, p. 454). Recognition theorists such as Charles Taylor (e.g. 1994) and Axel Honneth (e.g. 2002) rightly assert that a failure to recognize someone's identity can harm that person, as this person can see himself as less valuable. This assertion is built on the recognition of how identity is formed, which is in relation to other people. Recognizing one's unique identity does not require that everyone has an identical set of rights, but rather the acknowledgment of the equal worth of each (Squires, 2006, p. 478) From the perspective of a politics of recognition, then, equality requires a respect for differences (Squires, 2006, p.479).

In the Moluccan case, the neighborhoods are related to an issue of recognition, because they are interlinked with the Moluccan community identity. Both culture and history are important and interlinked aspects of community identity, and both these aspects are embodied and maintained in the Moluccan neighborhoods. What must be recognized is the importance of the houses in the Moluccan neighborhoods for the Moluccan identity. The neighborhoods not only promote and preserve certain aspects of the Moluccan identity, but they are also an inseparable part of this identity. Stating that the houses in the Moluccan neighborhoods should be neutrally assigned would disregard the significant importance of the neighborhoods for the Moluccan community and for their cultural identity. The failure to recognize this particular importance for this specific group constitutes a failure of respect towards the Moluccan community. Misrecognition would not only undermine the Moluccan identity it would also make the preservation of the cultural tradition Rumah Tua directly impossible (see section 3. About Today's Moluccan Neighborhoods) and thereby directly harm that aspect of their identity which they themselves consider to be important. Lifting the neighborhood policy would not only show a failure to respect their identities, but it would also show a failure to respect the cultural traditions that are valuable for the Moluccan community. It would imply that, provided that there are no other significant interests oppressed by the preservation, their cultural traditions and this aspect of their identity are not significant enough to consider. Recognition in the case of the Moluccan community thus means assigning the houses in a way that is appropriate to the distinctive morally important interests in these houses related to cultural identity.

Furthermore, actively recognizing people's cultural identity is important to ensure that they have the equal opportunity to pursue their conception of a meaningful and fulfilling life (which can be intimately connected to their cultural traditions). As was already highlighted in the discussion on the limitations of neutrality, while neutrality is aimed at equal treatment regardless of people's ideas about the good and at ensuring their freedom to pursue their own conception of the good, such equal treatment rather creates inequality and consequently undermines the Moluccan community's

freedom. The moral reasons for a neutral approach regarding equality and freedom do not apply to the Moluccan case.

First, neutrality in the Moluccan case is not equality enhancing for the Moluccan community, because such neutrality would make it harder for them to get to the same level of meaning and fulfillment in life as everybody else, given their distinctive culture and history intrinsically linked to the neighborhoods. Non-Moluccans do not have the same distinctive need tied to these specific neighborhoods. Neutrality would therefore cause a significant inequality in opportunity for Moluccans to pursue their important commitments. Moreover, regarding cultural equality, lifting the neighborhood policy on the grounds of neutrality would make it even more difficult for the Moluccan community to protect their cultural traditions in comparison to members of the dominant culture, as they are a minority group and would be forced to live in houses surrounded by other cultures, mostly the dominant Dutch culture. As a minority group, the Moluccan community is already vulnerable to cultural oppression. This also affects those Moluccans who already live outside the neighborhoods, as they cannot go back to a concentrated area where community members live and uphold their culture. They then need to work harder for their cultural commitments than members of the dominant culture. Neutrality's aim for equality would thus actually undermine the possibility of equality in the Moluccan case.

Consequently, neutrality also undermines a person's freedom to pursue their conception of the good as neutral treatment can cause people to lack the resources needed to support their commitments regarding a fulfilling life. This idea is supported by Will Kymlicka (1995), who argues that freedom involves the ability to choose amongst various options. Kymlicka states that having access to a culture is essential for an individual's freedom of choice, as the individual would be less limited in the number of options to choose from. Rather than promoting the freedom to pursue one's conception of the good, neutrality actually undermines this freedom as it could diminish the opportunity to fulfil these commitments for minority cultures. Therefore, cultural recognition can require differential treatment in the pursuit of equality and freedom.

The argumentation on equality and preservation of identity in the Moluccan case is supported by historical considerations, by going even further back to before the decolonization war to when the Netherlands first colonized the Moluccans and the surrounding region and occupied it for over three hundred years. Their traditional Moluccan languages were not allowed to be upheld, and their traditional religion had to be replaced with Christianity. Along with their languages and religion, other Moluccan traditions most likely disappeared during these centuries of Dutch occupation. Then, supported by the idea of the moral importance of a culture for its members, it seems to be a fairly plausible conclusion that the Moluccan community which was brought to the Netherlands by the Dutch government, should have some special right to concentrated neighborhoods where they can protect and uphold their Moluccan culture, after centuries in which it had been oppressed. Providing them this special right does not outweigh the great historical impact of the Netherlands on the Moluccan culture and identity and is even relatively insignificant given the duration and amount of impact. This historical context strengthens the claim that the Moluccan community should maintain their right to their Moluccan neighborhoods.

Kymlicka (1995, p. 109) argues that if a group's minority status is unchosen, as undeniably is the case for the Moluccan community, it is unfair that they must devote more resources to fulfil their cultural commitments in comparison to members of the dominant culture. Such a claim might, however, be problematic: first, because it might be difficult to determine what falls within the category of unchosen minority status; and second, as Sarah Song (Song, 2007, p. 56) notes, focusing on unchosen cultural inequality could cause many people to be seen as entitled to special treatment,

which could be untenable. An idea of unchosen status is relevant in the Moluccan case when relating it to the historical context and recognizing the cultural disadvantages it caused. Their cultural disadvantage can be directly explained with reference to the long history of domination and relocation to the Netherlands. In line with a neutral approach, Sarah Song (2007) endorses James Griffin's suggestion that the fact that causal conditions for certain goods to be able to exist should not be conflated with claims about the value of those goods, and then argues for three circumstances in which cultural accommodations (such as the Moluccan neighborhood policy) are justified. One of these circumstances that is relevant to our discussion is historical injustice. The argument is that present disadvantages stemming from historical injustice provide strong justification for additional support for minority cultural groups. At the heart of the historical injustice argument is the demand to remedy injustices that people have experienced based on their group differences. Song gives a clear example and says that "central to the historical injustice argument is that indigenous peoples were once self-governing communities and that colonizing powers forcibly incorporated them, depriving them of their institutions of self-government." (Song, 2007, p. 60). According to the historical injustice argument, such injustice must be remedied through restoring some form of self-government (Song, 2007, p. 60). I agree with Song that while present individual members of a collective might not be guilty of past injustices, such absence of causal responsibility does not mean that citizens in virtue of their political membership should not bear the collective responsibility for remedying the consequences of past wrongs (Song, 2007, p. 55). This claim is strengthened by James Waldron's (2000) argumentation on civic responsibility, which involves the duty to participate in ways that promote peace and justice and pay proper attention to the interests, wishes, and opinions of all the inhabitants of a country. The importance of paying attention to other people's valued interests, instead of being indifferent to them and focusing only on one's own interests, seems evident in a society where people live together and attach importance to peace.

In the Moluccan case, we see that their cultural identity has been oppressed due to the history of colonization and relocation. The relocation to the Netherlands has made the possibility for the Moluccan community to maintain their culture even more vulnerable. Even if certain negative consequences arising from historical injustices and relocation may no longer persist in the future, the cultural disadvantage will do so. The Moluccans were brought to the Netherlands as a minority group and are therefore vulnerable to cultural oppression and as a minority group they will continue to be so. The unfairness of cultural inequality for the Moluccan community can thus be explained with reference to the history that gave rise to this inequality. Given the historical context of cultural oppression and relocation without return, the right to the Moluccan neighborhoods should continue to exist as long as the Moluccan community remains to exist in the Netherlands and remains to have their identity and the possibility to protect their culture intrinsically connected to these neighborhoods, provided that no other significant interests that are more important than these Moluccan interests are too much oppressed by the maintenance of the neighborhoods.

For the Moluccan case, the limitations of the ideal of neutrality show that a more nuanced approach is needed when addressing the needs of minority groups. However, the objections against neutrality do not directly solve the argument regarding housing scarcity. Regarding scarcity in housing, differential treatment based on ethnicity would oppress another fairly important interest, namely the interest in having a house, which we can accept to be of great significance. Though neutral impact might cause cultural inequalities and undermine one's identity, it does ensure equal opportunity in housing access. Thus, while differential treatment might be persuasively supported based on ideas of equal respect and recognition, it does cause problems given the real issue of housing scarcity. Neutrality in the assignment of housing would cause an increase of the social housing opportunity for the rest of the Dutch population.

Jeremy Waldron (2000) rightly says that if one's rights claim (such as a claim for special treatment) significantly disrupts the possibility of securing peace in society, its legitimacy needs thorough investigation. Regarding housing scarcity, however, the neighborhood policy does not constitute any significant disruption within Dutch society. While the issue of housing scarcity is an important one and frequently forms one of the bases of critique against the Moluccan neighborhoods (Becker et al., 2020) it is not a justified reason to lift the neighborhood policy. It must be noted that the number of houses in the Moluccan neighborhoods that fall under the priority policy is set. As the Moluccan community in the Netherlands grows, more members of this community do not have a choice but to look for housing outside the neighborhood. When lifting the neighborhood policy and giving equal access to the houses in the neighborhoods, the total number of houses available in society would remain the same and the number of Moluccans looking for a house would also remain the same, they would just have to look for housing elsewhere. The outcome would be that there will be some reshuffling of the characteristics of individuals living in different places. The shortage of housing would thus not be a compelling objection as the shortage would not be solved by lifting the priority treatment of Moluccans. Moreover, the ratio of Moluccan houses compared to the overall population would not make a significant difference to the overall level of equal housing opportunity. Furthermore, even if it could make a difference on an individual basis for a non-Moluccan who gets assigned a house in the Moluccan neighborhood and who otherwise might have needed much more time to find a house, this still implies that a Moluccan who is equally looking for a house would need to look elsewhere. This house elsewhere could be equally valuable for the non-Moluccan who now lives in the Moluccan neighborhoods, as her or his main purpose is to live there. For the Moluccan on the other hand, there is a significant difference in value between the house inside the neighborhood and the house outside of it, for all the reasons already discussed. The increase in housing opportunity for the rest of the Dutch population is therefore negligible, especially given the negative consequences on the opportunities of the Moluccan community.

This brings us back to the arguments supporting differential treatment. Though neutral assignment of housing in the Moluccan neighborhoods might increase the housing opportunity of non-Moluccans, it will actually take away important opportunities for the particular vulnerable part of the population, the Moluccan community. This way, neutral assignment would be an unequal measure and a policy that leads to less equality. Then, when comparing members of the Moluccan community to non-Moluccans, it is more likely that Moluccans should have a right to live in a house in Moluccan neighborhoods, as they have more morally important interests in living in those houses and as a neutral consideration of both groups would have significant negative consequences for the Moluccan community. The increase in housing opportunities for non-Moluccans by lifting the policy is negligible and does therefore not outweigh the importance of the identity-based interests of the Moluccan community. The differential treatment in the assignment of housing does not disrupt the possibility of peace in society. Housing scarcity should be addressed, without undermining the cultural and historical rights of the Moluccan community. When discussing the justifiability of the Moluccan neighborhoods, we should therefore consider the morally important interests in those houses and the negative consequences of neutrality, rather than consider equal opportunity to those houses and thereby disregarding important differences.

It might happen that some cases occur in which a non-Moluccan really needs a house and that her or his interests do outweigh the interests of Moluccans. Such issues need contextual judgement. It might be plausible to argue that some urgency priority should also be applied to housing in the Moluccan neighborhoods, however, it is important to establish the conditions for urgency that should be met beforehand, to prevent the importance of the identity-based interests to be overlooked or go unrecognized.

In conclusion, differential treatment in the assignment of houses in the Moluccan neighborhoods is ethically justified, given (1) the negative consequences of neutral treatment related to misrecognition and cultural inequality; (2) the historical context that gave rise to the demand for preservation; and (3) that the increase in housing opportunity for the rest of Dutch society is relatively insignificant and does not outweigh the important interest of the Moluccan community in these houses.

## 6. Potential Objections

So far, I have argued that the differential treatment of Moluccan community members is justified, given their important identity-based interest in housing in the neighborhoods, the historical context, and that preservation does not constitute a significant disruption of the possibility of peace. In this section, I will discuss potential objections against this claim by investigating ideas about the formation of identity and the harming of the Moluccan community's interests by the preservation of the neighborhood policy. I will argue that these objections are not compelling, and that the preservation of the Moluccan neighborhoods continues to be justified.

### 6.1 The Limitations of Identity

One objection is that identity-based interests should not be a factor that justifies the preservation of the Moluccan neighborhoods, for two main reasons. The first reason regards that identity is formed through action and interaction, consequently arguing that future members of the Moluccan community cannot be harmed by the non-existence of the neighborhood policy and can thus not have additional morally important interests in houses in those neighborhoods. The second reason is that the maintenance of a certain identity causes the imposition of that identity on future members, which is morally wrong, because this imposition limits their freedom.

#### 6.1.2 The Formation of Identity: An Ontological Objection

First, there is an ontological reason that argues that the identity of future Moluccans will not be constituted by the neighborhoods if they no longer exist, hence they will have no significant additional morally important interests in these houses. The formation of identity is a dynamic and interactive process. As Sarah Song argues, "identities do not exist prior to and independent from human action and interaction but are constituted through them" (Song, 2007, p. 20). Song states that recognition as knowing who someone already is overlooks facts about the relationship between human action and identity and facts about social and political life (Song, 2007, p. 20). The identity of future members of the Moluccan community is partly constituted through the existence of the neighborhoods; it did not exist prior to and independent from them. Therefore, the non-existence of the neighborhood policy would not harm the identity of future members, as the neighborhoods would not be part of their identity. It is thus a self-sustaining cycle: the Moluccan identity is

maintained in a certain way because the neighborhoods are maintained, but if the neighborhoods no longer existed, the community would adapt and form a different identity. Because members of the community are born and grow up in these neighborhoods, they are socialized into a specific recognition order: the space and preservation of the neighborhoods shape their practical identity and their normative expectations spring from that identity (*Recognition (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)*, 2019). An example of such practical identity that gives rise to normative expectations is a person who forms his identity within a Christian family and now values his own identity in relation to that religion, consequently forming his ideas on how things ought to be done based on that identity. If one's identity is formed through one's interaction with the outside world, why would it be morally important that a specific cultural identity related to the neighborhoods is protected? Understanding the formation of identity as such, it could be contested that there is no reason to support the maintenance of a certain aspect of some identity, especially given that future members of the Moluccan community will live in different times with different circumstances.

Of course, history is irreversible and the houses in the Moluccan neighborhoods will always be part of the history of the Moluccan community. It might be argued that justice requires that one's identity as perceived morally important by that person must be recognized and respected but that does not mean that justice requires some active support to preserve a certain aspect of a community's identity for its future members. Though the houses in themselves carry a history related to Moluccans, that does not mean that the identity of future members of the Moluccan community is not partly constituted through the preservation of this historical relationship.

By breaking this self-sustaining cycle, some generations might indeed feel harmed and betrayed if they have lived in the neighborhoods and experienced the lifting of their special treatment. Subsequent generations, however, would not be harmed in such a way as they would develop a new identity in the absence of these neighborhoods, shaped by different spaces and social interactions. Moreover, lifting the policy to break the self-sustaining cycle does not mean that all community members must leave their houses, but rather that the subsequent assignment of houses in the neighborhoods would no longer consider ethnic background. As such, the Moluccan character of the neighborhoods will not suddenly disappear at once but will rather decrease slowly and naturally, as more non-Moluccans integrate into the neighborhoods. Thus, the argument that the neighborhoods should be preserved because they form an integral part of the identity of the Moluccan community does not hold

The ontological objection is problematic for several reasons. First, the objection underestimates the importance of the immediate identity-based interests of current generations. Though the objection does acknowledge that current generations, might be harmed by lifting the policy and says that this harming would not be the case for future generations, the objection overlooks the importance for current generations to carry over aspects of their identity that they consider to be important. As such, the reasoning that future generations would have no morally significant interests in the neighborhoods if those neighborhoods would not exist, undermines the autonomy of current generations to carry over their identity and it undermines the moral importance of their identity-interests. Disrupting the continuity of the Moluccan neighborhoods leads to the loss of control over the transmission of culture to future generations and such disruption would be problematic as it shows a failure to recognize the importance for current generations to transmit their culture. By preserving the neighborhoods, we are not taking some snapshot of the Moluccan identity, but rather preserve a space where identity can continue to change and evolve naturally.

Furthermore, such an approach would cause unjust identity-based inequalities as society automatically already provides more resources that support the continuation of the dominant culture. Without the neighborhoods, the community would be at a significant disadvantage in



preserving their cultural heritage, saying that such preservation does not have to be supported from an ontological perspective underwrites this as it would lead to the unequal support of the different cultural groups. Consequently, this would constitute a failure to recognize and respect the cultural heritage of the Moluccan community. It would be implausible to say that we do not have to support someone's culture only on the grounds that if all cultural traditions would be gone, future generations would no longer identify with it and thus would not be harmed by the insufficient possibility to pursue certain traditions of that specific culture. What must be recognized is the current identity and though this might be different without the neighborhoods, living generations must be supported in their commitments to pass on aspects of their identity that they consider to be important to ensure equitable support.

Thus, in recognizing the importance of the neighborhoods for current members, we also recognize the importance for them to pass on their identity. The ontological objection regarding identity formation overlooks the significance of continuity for current generations and the disadvantage in preserving cultural identity for future generations it would involve. The preservation of the Moluccan neighborhoods does not imply the preservation of some rigid cultural identity, but rather ensures a more equal opportunity for the Moluccan community to have a space where their identity can evolve and flourish.

### 6.1.2 The Imposition of Identity: A Moral Objection

The second reason is that the preservation of the neighborhood policy causes a specific identity related to culture and history to be imposed on the members of the Moluccan community, leading to involuntary identification with an ethnic background. Such an imposition is unjustified, as it could potentially harm the members of the Moluccan community by undermining their freedom.

As mentioned before, being born in a Moluccan neighborhood and growing up there causes members to internalize a specific identity related to their Moluccan background. As Song states, "If the importance of a social identity to an individual is assumed and some singular value is attributed to that identity, then an individual's freedom in relations of identity is diminished" (Song, 2007, p. 31). Moluccan community members raised inside the neighborhood are forced into an identity related to history and culture, which might moreover not be the most beneficial or desired identity relation for them. This imposition can limit their freedom as it partly shields them from the wide range of other identities the member could explore, such as social, political, or professional identities. This enforced identity can be restrictive and may prevent individuals from fully exploring and expressing other facets of their identity. Therefore, the preservation of the neighborhoods can be seen as coercive, limiting the freedom of individuals within the community by tying their identity too closely to their ethnic and cultural background.

Though this objection raises valid issues about the imposition of a specific identity and the resulting potential limitation of freedom, it overlooks the inevitability of such identity formation through one's environment. People always form their identity in relation to their surroundings and it is their surrounding community that decides what to pass on to their offspring. Communities naturally transmit cultural values to future generations. Moreover, from the identification with a certain group it does not follow that one cannot detach from certain groups and enter new ones. The imposition of a specific identity does not prevent individuals from exploring other aspects of their identity but rather ensures that they have the opportunity to engage with their cultural heritage in a way that is

considered important by their parents. Even more so, the preservation of this particular identity can enhance one's freedom, as there are more possible identities to explore and relate to.

## 6.2 Residential Segregation as Harmful

One general objection against residential segregation concerns the negative socio-economic consequences of segregation, which could also be applied to the case of Moluccan neighborhoods. In this context, segregation refers to the residential separation of Moluccan community members based on their ethnicity. The objection posits that ethnic concentration neighborhoods hinder the development and integration of citizens living within these neighborhoods. This objection argues that rather than protecting the Moluccan community by preserving their neighborhood, the policy might be harming them economically and thus could be seen as unjustified. In support of this objection is the argumentation that accommodation rights, such as the Moluccan priority right, are only justified when they support the general integration of minority groups or when they are aimed at restoring inequalities (*Culture (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)*, 2020). Though meeting both these conditions were the aim of the initial establishment and preservation of the neighborhoods, the continuation of this neighborhood policy will no longer meet these conditions but could rather block further integration and uphold socio-economic inequalities.

An investigation in 2011 (Ouweneel) concluded that Moluccans who live outside the neighborhoods have better paid jobs. Although a later investigation by the Central Bureau of Statistics (2020) found no conclusive evidence that the neighborhoods impact the socio-economic position of Moluccans, it suggested that more detailed research might be necessary to fully understand the specific socio-economic effects of living in the Moluccan neighborhoods. For the sake of this ethical analysis, I will assume that the socio-economic position of Moluccans is indeed negatively impacted by living in the neighborhoods. The question then is whether differential treatment of a community on the grounds of cultural identity is justified if such treatment causes the socio-economic position of that group to be significantly worse? This debate involves weighing the autonomy to choose one's living environment against the societal goal of promoting integration and socio-economic equality.

Given the social housing policy, the Moluccans seeking to live in the neighborhoods or already living there are not stimulated to look for a higher paid job, as housing in the neighborhoods does not require a high salary (Ouweneel, 2011). Looking for high-paid jobs is arguably even discouraged, as Moluccans with a higher income than social housing allows do not have the possibility to find housing in the neighborhood (Ouweneel, 2011). Consequently, the neighborhoods do not enable any socio-economic improvement, given the social housing requirement that puts limits on one's income level (Ouweneel, 2011). Moreover, some Moluccans do not want to exchange their living in the neighborhood for a higher income, as they do not want to give up all the experienced benefits of living there (Ouweneel, 2011). Regarding integration, it was found that mixing the composition of the population does not necessarily mean that the Moluccan community would get more involved with non-Moluccans as people continue to seek others with the same lifestyle, no matter how far away they live (Ouweneel, 2011). As forementioned, Moluccans who live outside the neighborhood have better paid jobs. It is not clear whether people leave the neighborhood to find better paid jobs or whether living outside the neighborhoods simply made it easier to find a better paid job (Ouweneel, 2011). Economic disadvantages are morally problematic, as they restrict one's freedom and opportunities, which are both important conditions for one's well-being. Then, if living in the Moluccan neighborhood hinders socio-economic improvement, this could constitute structural inequality.

The concept of paternalism is relevant here, which involves interfering with individuals' autonomy against their will under the justification of advancing their good. Autonomy is one's ability to decide. In this context, advocating for lifting the Moluccan neighborhoods solely on the grounds of improving their socio-economic position can be understood as paternalistic if it disregards the community's preference for living inside the neighborhood and preserving their cultural identity. Moluccans can themselves decide to live in the Moluccan neighborhoods and might even consciously choose to do so over a higher income. Moluccans who choose to stay in the neighborhoods despite potential socio-economic disadvantages are exercising their autonomy. This voluntary choice suggests that the cultural and communal benefits they derive from living in the neighborhoods are considered more important than potential economic gains. Lifting the neighborhoods, even if well-intentioned, can undermine the Moluccan community's autonomy and their capacity to make meaningful choices about their own lives. Respecting the Moluccan community's choice to prioritize cultural values over economic benefits is crucial to respecting their autonomy.

Given the role of autonomy and voluntary decision, the objection that the neighborhood policy harms the socio-economic position of the Moluccan community is not compelling enough to justify lifting the policy. However, that does not mean that potential socio-economic disadvantages caused by the neighborhood policy should just be an accepted by-product for those deciding to live in the neighborhoods. Socio-economic challenges should be addressed without lifting the neighborhood as a means to do so. Given the lack of incentive to look for high-paid jobs and the income-based unequal opportunity to houses within the Moluccan community, it could be considered to lift the social housing requirement. The social housing requirement could be transformed into one of the priority rules (see section 3. About the Moluccan Neighborhoods) and the impact would be that community members do not have to exchange the possibility of a better economic position for the possibility of a house within the neighborhood. This could then result in a greater incentive to improve their socio-economic position without being forced to give up their neighborhoods. Having a higher income would then not be 'punished'. Moreover, it could result in more equality between members within the Moluccan community, as important community traditions, such as Rumah Tua, can then be equally maintained by all members, regardless of their income. There are other policies that could be implemented to address significant socio-economic inequalities, such as creating more economic opportunities near the neighborhoods, or providing educational programs. I will not discuss the different implications of these measures as this is outside the scope of this research. In support of the claim that the preservation of the Moluccan neighborhoods is justified, it suffices to conclude that socio-economic disparities potentially caused by living in the neighborhoods do not justify the elimination of these neighborhoods as this would undermine the community's autonomy, preferences and voluntary decisions. Significant socio-economic disadvantages must be addressed, without undermining the community's autonomy and the (cultural) benefits they experience by living in the neighborhoods.

## 7. Conclusion

This research has answered the question: *is the continued prioritization of Moluccan community members in the allocation of housing in the Moluccan neighborhoods ethically justified?* To answer this question, I first examined whether the establishment of the Moluccan neighborhoods was justified to begin with. I concluded that it was justified, on the grounds of the Dutch government's responsibility for relocating the Moluccans to the Netherlands and compensating the harm that resulted from the unfulfillment of the promise of return. Subsequently, I determined that the

justifiability of the Moluccan priority right can exist independent from the initial grounds of justification for the establishment of the neighborhoods, and that such justification must always be grounded in its relation to the interests of the Moluccan community members and not solely independent of it. Then, regarding the research question, I concluded that the preservation of the Moluccan neighborhoods, which entails the priority right for the Moluccan community members and implies their differential treatment, is ethically justified for several reasons.

First, the opposing approach of neutral treatment is unjustified due to its significant negative consequences on the Moluccan community. The Moluccan neighborhoods form an integral part of the Moluccan identity, comprising both culture and history. A neutral attitude towards this distinctive identity that is inseparable from the Moluccan neighborhoods would constitute a misrecognition of the moral worth of their identity. Treating Moluccans and non-Moluccans in the same way in the assignment of houses in the Moluccan neighborhoods, thereby disregarding the importance of those houses for the Moluccan community, would be a failure to respect their worth and thus be morally wrong. Furthermore, neutral assignment of housing in the neighborhoods would create unjust inequalities and undermine the freedom of Moluccan community members, as it would make it more difficult and partly impossible for them to protect their cultural traditions within the dominant majority culture. Culture is morally important for its members, due to its intrinsic relation to one's commitments to a valuable and fulfilling life. Neutrality is thus unjustified as it undermines the Moluccan identity and creates unjust cultural inequality.

Second, the historical context of cultural oppression and relocation to the Netherlands supports the claim that the Moluccan community should maintain their right to their Moluccan neighborhoods in order to protect their cultural traditions. The cultural identity of the Moluccan community had been oppressed due to the history of colonization. The subsequent relocation to the Netherlands causes the culture of the Moluccan community to continue to be vulnerable to oppression given that they continue to be a minority group within Dutch society.

Finally, the preservation of the priority right to housing in the Moluccan neighborhoods does not cause any significant disruption within Dutch society. Regarding the existing issue of housing scarcity, lifting the Moluccan neighborhood policy would not make an important difference, as Moluccan community members would still need housing and would consequently need to look for housing elsewhere. Though lifting the neighborhood would cause some increase in housing opportunity for the rest of Dutch society, this increase is insignificant given the ratio of Moluccan houses and given the previously discussed negative consequences it would cause for the Moluccan community. Housing scarcity should not be addressed by lifting the Moluccan neighborhoods.

Potential objections against the preservation of the priority right for the Moluccan community regard the limitations of identity-based arguments and the potential harms of residential segregation for the Moluccan community. These objections do not undermine the justification for the preservation of the Moluccan neighborhoods, on the grounds of ideas about cultural transmission, autonomy and voluntary decisions.

In conclusion, the priority right to housing in the Moluccan neighborhoods should continue to be justified as long as the Moluccan community lives in the Netherlands and continues to have their identity and the possibility to preserve their culture intrinsically connected to these neighborhoods, and provided that no other more morally important group-based interests are oppressed by the preservation of these neighborhoods. Such potential other morally important interests that might justify giving non-Moluccans a priority right must be evaluated in that context.

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