# International Institute of Social Studies

## In-Betweenness:
## Exploring the Narrative of Being and Belonging of Malukan in the Netherlands

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*For Bapak—the sorrow for losing you never ends from 18 years ago, but here I am, growing because Mamah works untiringly for us. All this journey has been easier and possible with the support I got; I hope you see us proudly wherever you are.*

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| | |
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| KNIL | *Koninklijk Nederlandsch-lndisch Leger'* (Royal Netherlands Indies Army) |
| LTS | *Lagere Technihsce School* (Lower Technical School) |
| NKRI | *Negara Kesatuan Republik Indonesia* (Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia) |
| RIS | *Republik Indonesia Serikat* (United States of Indonesia) |
| RMS | *Republik Maluku Selatan* (Republic of the South Maluku) |
| TNI | *Tentara Nasional Indonesia* (The Indonesian National Armed Forces) |
| WPS | Women, Peace, and Security |

# Acknowledgement

# Abstract

This research paper explored how Malukan in the Netherlands positioned themselves in Dutch society with special attention to gender, race, religion, and the Malukan's ancestor struggle in the Netherlands. I used the autoethnography method, so I, as a brown muslim woman researcher from Indonesia living and studying in the Netherlands, was actively involved with my embodied experience, reflection, and subjectivity in this research. The key topics are discussed with the analysis tools of the coloniality of power and intersectionality. Through this lens, we found three main findings: (1) the first is about identity—which showed that the identification process of Malukan in the Netherlands because of their gender, race, religion, and ancestor struggle, both individual and collective, is complex and takes a long journey; (2) is about exploring Malukan's "in-betweenness" position, which results from a complex identification in a world with borders and exclusion, thanks to colonialism, (3) is about exploring the homemaking of Malukan in the Netherlands, which showed that food, hospitality, and relationships are the key points for their definition of home.

## Relevance to Development Studies

This research paper contributes to the ongoing discussion about Dutch colonialism and its "legacy" that still exists today in their biggest former colony. It provides insight into Malukan's "forced" migration and how it affected their descendant's being and belonging in Dutch society. By highlighting their identity negotiation, the feeling of "in-betweenness", and their home narrative, the research speaks to the development issues such as colonialism, nationality, border, migration, Islamophobia, binary, and white innocence. I hope the stories, reflections, and analyses offer a better perspective—not only for a policy or program but also for a mutual understanding for each of us.

## Keywords

Being, Belonging, In-betweenness, Malukan

# Foreword

*Stories make us relate to one another, building relations between the reader and writer. Stories also have no answer; they cannot be coded or quantified (Zuleika Sheik, Liminagraphy, 2021, pp. 100-108).*

The quote from Sheik (2021, pp. 100-108) makes me realize I want to write this research chapter as a set of stories—because I build the research puzzle from the stories of me, my friends, and my participants. Moreover, I still wonder about the significance of this research, so making it a set of stories will at least benefit me, as I can reflect on my thoughts and experiences. Make me understand more about myself, and hopefully, I can understand others (Ellis, 1999, p. 672).

Before going further, I will disclaim the pronoun that I use in this writing; mostly, I will use the pronoun "I" because, hence, this is my embodied experience and because sometimes I can't talk on behalf of other people's experiences. However, I will also use the "We" pronoun. The use of "we/our" is to avoid individual-oriented research because, as Cairo (2021, pp.80-84) mentioned, we tend to forget communal aspects that shape us. Moreover, using the 'we' pronoun is also a way to show the 'plural self'—a self where we, as colonized, represent our ancestors and our solidarity (Sheik, 2020, p.3). This is also a way to honour those who helped along this research journey. I will use 'we' pronouns spontaneously, especially when other (not limited to people) contributions are a big part of building the knowledge that I write.

Moreover, this research paper will have six chapters. The first chapter will discuss my positionality—why I chose this topic and the context of Malukan in the Netherlands. The second chapter will delve into the tools that I use in this research: the approach, methodology, theories, and how I connect to my hard-to-find participants. The third until the fifth chapters are my main findings: identity, in-between, and the narrative of home. The last chapter is the conclusion. We will put an overview at the beginning of each chapter. Hopefully, it can help to provide the structure and the key points for each chapter.

# Chapter 1: Positionality & Contextuality
## *Situating the Researcher within the narrative*

**Overview**
This chapter is the Introduction chapter. In this chapter, firstly, I will discuss my positionality—the reason why I chose this topic and how my position impacts and influences the result of this research. Then, we will move to my research's general background or context, where I introduce the history of the Malukan people in the Netherlands, blending the written story with the oral stories from my participants, sometimes to emphasize, sometimes to show the contrast between them. After that, I will end this chapter with my research question.

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As a visible Muslim brown woman from Indonesia, studying and living in the Netherlands—a country that colonized my country for more than 350 years, it has opened many colonial wounds that I did not know I had. When I first arrived here, I wrote in my medium[1] how I was so excited to be here—the land where many women in my country, including Kartini, one of the brightest woman heroes in Indonesia, have dreamed to study of. I feel proud.

However, the mind-blowing lectures at ISS have changed my perspective. I went from being proud to be in Europe to being reflective and sometimes sad about the unfair conditions here and there. For example, I can breathe healthy air in the Hague, while it is polluted in Jakarta, but at the same time, the Netherlands is the biggest exporter of plastic waste to Indonesia (Plastic Soup Foundation, 2022, p.8). Oh, this gap and inequality.

Studying in the Netherlands, with its embeddedness in colonial history as a former imperial metropole and all the complex relations with Indonesia, also opens another perspective about my country, including Maluku and its history. I read and listened to many about them. One of my friends who studied in Groningen, for example, told me:

> *'You know what? I went to Vismarkt in Groningen; it was a beautiful Friday. I asked the seller to give me a pack of 'rawit' (hot chili). After paying, the seller said "Terima kasih" (thank you in the Indonesian and Melayu language) to me, and then I said to him: "Oh, are you Indonesian?" The seller smiled and answered, "No, I am Malukan". I was startled lah.'*
> *---My friend*

The story of my friend displays the complexity of the Malukan's identity in the Netherlands. My friend categorized them as 'Indonesian,' but they identified themselves as 'Malukan', born and living in the Netherlands. As a person who grew up in Java, a developed island in Indonesia, when I hear about the history of Maluku, part of me wants to challenge my privilege by trying to understand and listen to more Maluku stories because most of the stories about Maluku in Indonesia are about how they were being the traitor to Indonesia. The high school history class will call the South Malukan Republic (RMS) proclamation as Rebellion of RMS[2]. When listening to Malukan's story directly, I hope that I understand my identity and history better, which does not come from the dominant view. Another part of me, as a woman of color who now lives in the Netherlands, also wants to legitimize my

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[1] Blogspot writing by Istianah (2023) [In Indonesia Language] https://medium.com/@tia.istianah/from-the-hague-d0c8e68c1d01 (Accessed: 05 August 2024)
[2] The example of how high-school history in Indonesia wrote RMS as a group of rebels https://sma13smg.sch.id/materi/pemberontakan-republik-maluku-selatan-rms/ (Accessed: 22 August 2024)

experiences with them—Malukans, who were born and lived here in a Western country that colonized Indonesia. I want to learn how Malukans in the Netherlands position themselves in Dutch society.

Moreover, the reason why I chose this topic is that I have been working on women, peace, and security (WPS) issues; I reflected along this journey that the WPS program mostly focuses only on 'state security', where the goal is to maintain 'peace' in Indonesia, not to let people be separated from Indonesia nationality—to refuse the independence of Malukan. So, listening to Malukan's story, I hope, will also make me reflect on and criticize my professional journey. Maybe it will enhance my understanding that peace is political, as mentioned by Shinko (2022, p.1399), or that the 'state security' paradigm used in Indonesia and has been a reason to categorize RMS as a 'traitor' is not always working to make our homeland better.

Within the research of Malukan, I do realize that I am an outsider or might even be perceived as a 'colonizer' in the history of Maluku because I am Javanese (people from Java Island) and Indonesian (I will explain more about this history in the next subchapter). Furthermore, the possibility of me being tone-deaf or biased on what is happening in the Malukan context and culture is big because, since basic education, I was exposed to the idea of Non-negotiable Sovereignty of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia *(NKRI harga mati)*. For Malukan research, I am aware that my gender as a woman, my identity as a visible Muslim (because I am wearing hijab) from Indonesia, my values (social justice), and my agenda (making it a thesis) will impact the research. Haraway (1988, pp.581-584) pointed out that the researcher's position, like gender, race, and class, shapes knowledge, so knowledge is inherently situated. As I understand my position of the knower, I am aware that this research is not neutral; the knower's position influences it and will only explain the specific context of Malukan. So, this research, as also mentioned by Harding, is socially situated; it cannot break free from "original ties to local, historical interests, values, and agendas" (Harding, 1992, p.438).

## Contextual background of Malukan in the Netherlands

**Map 1.1**
Indonesia map, with the South Maluku shown in Red



*Source*: OpenStreetMap, Wikipedia (2018)[3]

Maluku is an area that is now located in Indonesia's territory and one of the islands with the longest colonial rule—425 years (Chauvel, 1990, p.14). From the telephone conversation

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[3] The image is taken from OpenStreetMap Wikipedia. Available at: https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Maluku_in_Indonesia.svg (Accessed: 13 August 2024)

with Tamara Soukotta on 12 November 2024[4], I know that most Malukan people who "migrate" to the Netherlands are Central Malukan people; however, Steijlen (2022, p.557) called them Ambonese society—they are called Ambonese because the main island is named Ambon, but now, as the political idea of RMS (*Republik Maluku Selatan* or Republic of the South Maluku), they call themselves South Malukan (Steijlen, 2022, p.557). Ambonese society itself includes people from Ambon, Saparua, Nusa Laut, Haruka, Seram, and Buru Island (Chauvel, 1990, p.13).

In 1950, Malukan wanted to separate from Indonesia and proclaimed RMS. Thus, because, firstly, Malukan wished to maintain the power that the Dutch colonial government gave them as they served as a special army or—*een bevoorrercthe positie*—in the KNIL or '*Koninklijk Nederlandsch-lndisch Leger*' or Royal Netherlands Indies Army during decolonization (Steijlen, 2010, p.143; Chauvel, 1990, pp.15-21). Second, religion was mobilized as another reason for separation because, during Dutch colonization, Christian people were given many privileges compared to Muslims because they had the same religion as Dutch; however, in the Japanese colonization in 1942, the Japanese replaced the *Raja in Negeri* (King in Region), who was mostly Christian with the Indies government, which was mostly Muslim, which resulted in the Christian Church suffering considerable repression, and many of its pastors were killed (Chauvel, 1990, pp.20-21). Thereafter, the collapse of *Republik Indonesia Serikat* (RIS) or the United States of Indonesia—a federal system that the Netherlands government forced has been triggered the proclamation of RMS (Steijlen, 2022, p.553)

**Map1.2**
Maluku map, with South Maluku shown in dark grey.



*Source:* Rutgrink et al. (2018, p.2)

Malukans were transferred by the Dutch government to the Netherlands in 1951 with a total of 12.500 people. So, most Malukans in the Netherlands right now were linked to the 1951 "migration". Malukan, who moved to the Netherlands in 1951, mostly the ones who worked in KNIL, but there are also a small number of pastors and teachers, as mentioned by Soukotta in the telephone call on November 12, 2024[5]. They refused to join The Indonesian National Armed Forces or TNI *(Tentara Nasional Indonesia)* or were demobilized in Indonesia because of Indonesia's occupation of Maluku after the independence of RMS and due to their 'separatist' position. Initially, the Dutch government moved the Malukan people to the Netherlands for only a temporary solution, and they are expected to leave the country after six months (Steijlen, 2022, p.553).

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[4] Tamara Soukotta, telephone call with the author, November 12, 2024
[5] Ibid

Given this context, Malukan were seen as loyal-indigenous soldiers by the Dutch (Steijlen, 2022, p.555), and by the Indonesian government, the Malukan people were seen as separatists and betrayers. However, the idea of "betrayal" from Indonesia of the Malukan people needs to be questioned, as research indicates that most Malukan in 1945-1949 joined KNIL for pragmatic reasons—to secure jobs and flee from Maluku Island after 3,5 years of Japanese oppression (Oostindie and Steijlen, 2021, p.496). This is also what Aunt Dina[6], a second-generation[7] Malukan in the Netherlands, told me about her KNIL soldier-father. I know Aunt Dina from one of the Malukan Mosque committees in the Netherlands. After I explained about my research, she agreed to be interviewed. She tells the story of why her father chose to be a KNIL soldier:

*"Jepang came to Maluku; they wanted to take young girls for their armies. World War two, right? So, the parent then asked their girl to marry if they had a boyfriend. They can marry their cousin and hide if they do not have a boyfriend. So, my mother and my father marry. They like each other. Then, my father applied to be KNIL because they need money to live"*
*–Aunt Dina*

Moreover, in our second meeting, in her peaceful home, with the smell of Indonesian spices, Aunt Dina told me that her father chose to go to the Netherlands because he did not want to fight with the Malukan people. In 1951, the Republic of South Malukan (RMS) had just been proclaimed. The Indonesian government saw the proclamation as a threat. Then, the government sent many Indonesian soldiers to Maluku.

*"How can I be an Indonesian soldier if I must fight my people (Malukan people)? I don't want to, so I choose to come here (to the Netherlands)"*
*– Aunt Dina tells stories about her father*

In Maluku itself, Uncle Paul, the Ambonese whom I met at the Indonesia Festival in the Hague on 02 June 2024 and who agreed to share his stories for my research, told me about his experience when he was in Ambon. After graduating from college, he moved to the Netherlands and worked in Indonesia for several years. He was eight years old when RMS was proclaimed in Ambon. With her wife giving me the warm vegan croquette in their family room on the outskirts of the Hague one day after the Indonesia festival, he talks about his past-sad story. All the Maluku Islands were closed and invaded by Indonesian armies because of the RMS proclamation. From Makassar to Halmahera, to Banda Island.

*"My tears might come out if I tell this story. There is no food. My mother must give food to 5 of her children. My mother told my older brother when she needed salt to cook, "you must swim into the sea with a bottle". The water ranges from brown to green and blue. You must swim until blue, and take it (the sea water), and put it in the bottle. No rice left. Just fish, vegetables, potatoes, tallas, and cassava. Thus, must continue to be produced. But it can't anymore (in war conditions). Another day, when the sound (of military) from the sea and the air stops, we look for food up to the mountain. There is a group of people with a barrel. They asked, what are you doing? We said we wanted to eat, and then they gave it (food in the barrel). Do you know what is it? It's a dog. There are no fish left, they are no beef left, we eat dogs! This group of people said, bring that home. Imagine! We eat snake, we eat bird, I eat you, you eat me. For two years! War!"*
*—Uncle Paul*

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[6] All names are used pseudo name for the safety of participant
[7] The first generation of Malukan people in the Netherlands is the people who moved from Indonesia to the Netherlands. When I asked Malukan people which generation are they, they would answer based on this category.

I saw tears in Uncle Paul's eyes when he told the stories. I stayed silent; I could not imagine being in a war as children. The whole family of Uncle Paul is about to be shot by the Indonesian military. They asked, where is your father? But Uncle Paul's father—the KNIL mayor, has been killed by Japan in front of his mother years before. A Japanese soldier beat Uncle Paul's father; the family kept hugging him; the Japanese soldier brought the father and beheaded the father. Uncle Paul hates the colonizers (Dutch and Japanese), which is why he is on Indonesia's side. Uncle Paul also said many of his friends in Ambon hate the colonizer; he gives an example of how his friend never bought Japanese technology products. Uncle Paul is also asking me why the colored people (Malukan in the Netherlands) defend the colonizer. "I don't understand; they are not white, but why do they defend the colonizer?" he said. In his home, Uncle Paul also complains about how many Malukans in the Netherlands, who are supporters of RMS, hate him because he is on Indonesia's side. 'They don't even want to know me anymore,' he said. However, Uncle Paul realizes that some of the Malukan also still respect him because he is the mayor's son.

The poor conditions, however, were not only experienced by the people in the Maluku islands but also by Malukan, who "chose" to go to the Netherlands. Malukans were discharged from the army when they arrived in the Netherlands, housed in former NAZI concentration camps with poor conditions, separated from Dutch society, and without jobs (Oostindie and Steijlen, 2021, pp.498-499).

**Figure 1.1**
The photo of Wyldemerck camp, taken in the winter of 1954/1955.



*Source:* Ghani (No Date)

Aunt Dina remembers she was still three when she moved to the Netherlands. The big boat brought her and her parents. For a month, she was in the sea, with the destination of a land that she did not speak the language of. When she was still a child, her mother often fought with her father in the camp because the mother wanted to go home.

*"My mother said to my father: I don't want to come here, why did you ask me to come? Coming to a strange country with this miserable condition. My father said: Yes, the Dutch promised that it would only take 6 months, and we would go back to Indonesia; that's the agreement"*
*—Aunt Dina*

From Aunt Dina, I also know how the Dutch treated the Malukan people poorly. All the camps are in the middle of the forest, isolating them from Dutch society. They sleep with the wood wall; in the winter, it will be so freezing. They are forbidden to work or get higher education. Aunt Dina, for example, only studies how to sew, and the men within her age go to LTS *(Lagere Technihsce School)* or lower technical school, where they can get basic jobs after

graduating. Moreover, many of the young generations are addicted to drugs because they see the everyday struggle of their parents; "Drugs was a big problem in the Malukan community at that time because many young people got depressed", Aunt Dina said. They will sleep with more than three people in one room. The toilets are outside the house. They eat from one big kitchen that has been provided; that's also why the camp of Malukan Christians and Muslims are separated at the end because they were conflicted about "halal" food in the kitchen. The Dutch Government will only give them 3 gulden (currency before euro) for a week. They are forbidden to work. They also did not have Dutch citizenship (Oostindie, 2012, p.50).

**Figure 1.2**
Map of the Wyldermerck camp (Camp for Malukan Muslims) in Friesland, near Balk, one of Maluku's camps in the Netherlands.



A- L woonbarakken
1 electriciteitshuisje
2 beheerdersbarak
3 kraamkamer–ziekenzaal
4 school
5 school
6 kantine
7 kleuterschool
8 wasbarak
9 kolenopslag
10 volkstuinen
11 waterpomphuis
12 moskee
13 speeltuin
14 vijver
15 opslagruimte
16 weiland
17 weg van Balk naar Rijs
18 1e, 2e en 3e pad
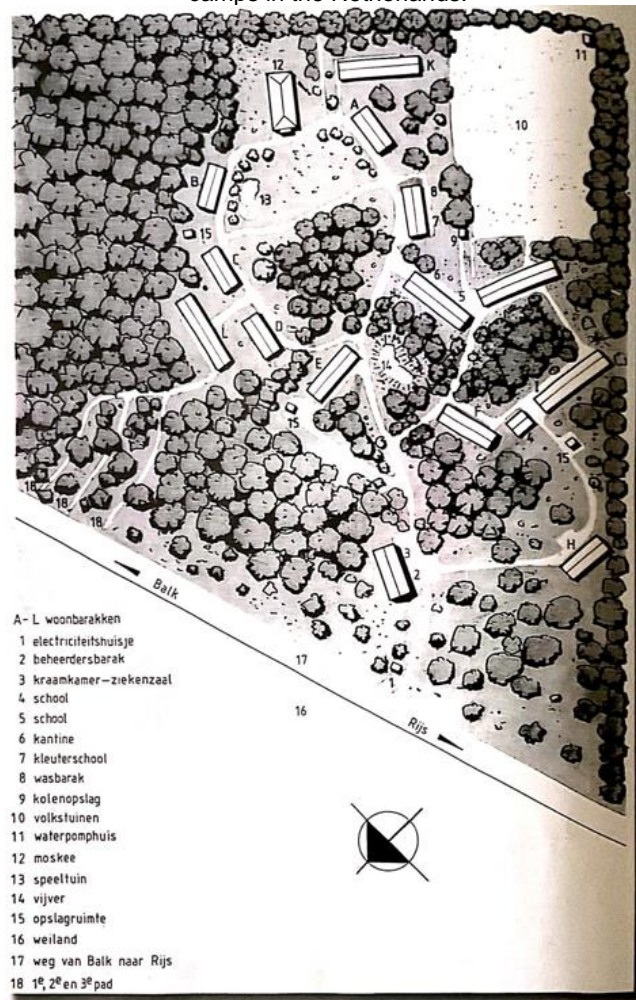
*Source:* Ghani (No Date)

The poor condition led to various violent actions by the second generation of Malukan in the Netherlands; in 1970, they occupied the Indonesia Ambassador Residence in Wassenaar; in 1975, they hijacked the train near Wijster; and in 1977, they hijacked a train near De Punt, and at the same time hostage-taking student in Bovensmilde's school (Stigchel, 2022, pp.10-34). Regarding the occupation of the Indonesia embassy, Uncle Paul told the story that his friend, the Indonesia embassy staff, was stripped naked by the Malukan. Until now, when Indonesia celebrates independence in Wassenaar, Malukan stays in front of Wassenaar to protest. Moreover, these violent acts showed that the Malukan people do not consider having their future in the Netherlands (Steijlen, 2010, p.144). The violent act also

prompted many better policies for Malukan in the Netherlands and integrated them into Dutch society (Oostindie, 2012, p.50). As also mentioned by Aunt Dina, "We are moving here, with better housing, because of the protest that the RMS movement has done."

**Figure 1.3**
The road in the Malukan complex in Capellan is the name of the island in Maluku, like Banda Neira and Seram (Ceramstraat)



*Source:* Fieldwork, 6 July, 2024

As the Malukan came to the Netherlands, the community was an imaginative RMS nation; they built *kumpulan*, a village structure from Maluku that has been translated to their diaspora condition (Steijlen, 2022, pp.559-560). In the wedding ceremony, for example, as Om Paul told me, the Malukan would help each other and cook together, "as in the village," he said. When I went to Capellan—one of the housing areas for the Malukan community in the Netherlands, I read all the names were taken from Maluku's island's name, like Banda Neira and Seram (see figure 1.3). The feeling of longing for a home was common for Malukan people; it was part of their daily lives. For example, they apologized for partying and celebrating weddings because they imagined people in the Malukan were suffering (Steijlen, 2022, pp.559-560). Nowadays, whenever I go to Malukan events, they always sing the song, where the lyrics are about the longing for home.

**Figure 1.4**
The Malukan family party where we sing together the "Ambon Island" song.



*Source*: Fieldwork, 29 June, 2024

From all of this complex history of Malukan in the Netherlands—being the army of a Dutch colony, migrating to the Netherlands, being seen as a "traitor" in Indonesia, being treated badly by Dutch officials, doing some violent actions, being seen as "terrorist" in the

Netherlands, and their longing for home, I am interested in how Malukan conceptualize "home" with special attention to gender, race, religion, and their ancestor struggle. I will explain more about this research focus in the next sub-chapter (research question).

## Research Question

To understand how Malukan conceptualizes their being and belonging, this research paper tried to answer this question:

"How do ancestral struggles, gender, race, and religion intersect in Malukan's conceptualizations of being and belonging to the Netherlands?"

The focus on race is because Malukan are brown people, and now they live in predominantly white countries—the Netherlands. Furthermore, the focus on religion is because among the Malukan who migrated in 1951, the Muslim community is in the minority position; only about 2,5% are Muslim (Smeets and Steijlen, 2006, p.99). Moreover, the intersection of gender, race, religion, and ancestor struggle is important because we need to start thinking from the marginalized lives to maximize 'objectivity' and to provide a better starting point to see the problem and solution (Harding, 1992, pp. 451-470).

I am not using the sub-question because the question above has examined four complex intersections: ancestral struggles, gender, race, and religion. In the main findings, however, I am not differentiated by this analytical intersection (gender, race, religion, and ancestor struggle) because these four factors are often intertwined, interrelated, and complex. In fact, I tried to connect the dots between one story and another and then analyze with respect to the complexity of these intersections. I hope this writing approach will give a more holistic and nuanced understanding.

After the contextual background and the research, we will move to the "tools" chapter. The next chapter will delineate the methodology and theory that I use in this research and how I (as an outsider) connect with the Malukan community, my hard-to-reach participant in the Netherlands.

# Chapter 2: Searching, Listening, and Analysing
## *Methodologies and Theories that Guided*

**Overview**

The second chapter engages with my research tools: the approach, methodology, theory, and how to connect with my hard-to-find participants. I began with the approach I would use and delineated some methodologies and theories that helped me analyze and reflect on my conversation with the Malukan people I met. In the end, I also used this chapter to show my experience approaching the hard-to-find participants as an outsider of this community.

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At the beginning of August, when the weather in the Netherlands is so sunny, and all the shops in the center show you the fashion for going to the park or beach, I feel anxious about my research. Only one woman that I have been interviewed from the target of five. My imagination goes uncontrollable; how, if there are no women who want to be interviewed again, how would my research be?

Waiting for the participant after I tried all the ways I knew to contact them also made me reflect on how the first generation of Malukans have been experiencing the feeling of "waiting" to return to their home for more than twenty years. They lived in camp, missing their homeland, friends, and families.

However, recalling the decoloniality class assignments made me strong along this 'searching' journey, where I had to write my research plan. I re-read the assignment again. I remember planning to make the research as ethical, reflective, and beautiful as possible. So, in this chapter, I will delineate my approach, methodology, and theories that guide me to enjoy this bitter-sweet research journey.


**Approach**

*Non-Oppressive Research*

> *Being an anti-oppressive researcher is about paying attention to and shifting how power relations work in and through the processes of doing research (Karen Pots and Leslie Brown, Being anti-oppressive researcher, 2005, p.255)*

Sandra Harding, in her Feminist standpoint, posits that research that claimed to be objective often has a "rampant sexist and androcentric bias" (Harding, 1992, p.437). Moreover, the realization that knowledge is a means of domination is why we should think about how to change the power imbalance in knowledge (Gaventa and Cornwall, 2006, pp. 469-470) makes me want to work with a non-oppressive paradigm or research. However, as Pots and Brown (2005, p.255) mentioned, this choice is not easy because we need to take active action for change. Hopefully, writing this 'no-oppressive research' in my methodology can be one of my active actions to remind and guide me along this research process journey.

Another important thing for me after I find my participants is building a relationship with them, a relationship for life (Pots and Brown, 2005, pp.257-258), even after the research is done. So, I tried to communicate with them via WhatsApp, even after the interview was done. Moreover, I will send the results to the participants in this research. So, participants knew what I wrote; it was also a place for me to be accountable.

# Theories

As my research paper is an autoethnography, besides looking at my own experience and vulnerability, I am also tackling the story with the theories in my research. Consequently, there will be many theories and research, from migration and nationality to belonging and being. However, here I will delineate my foundational theories tool, which informs the analysis lens and makes me understand the experience of the people that I interviewed:

## Politic of belonging

Being and belonging are central to my research. I focus on the theory from Yuval-Davis, who mentioned belonging as a way to self-identify and is always a dynamic process (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p.199). Moreover, Yuval-Davis's important touch is how she acknowledges the colonial supremacy and power dynamic in her theory. We can see it, for example, from one of her analytical levels of belonging: ethical and political values (Yuval-Davis, 2006, pp.199-204), where she emphasizes the nation's influence on building the dirty work of the politics of belonging. So, with this theory, we can analyze the complexity of the Malukan in the Netherlands, within their dual status as Malukan and also as people who grew up in Dutch— their former colonizer.

## In-betweenness or liminality

Limin denotes the "nepantla" state, something "in-between", the borderlands (Sheik, 2021, p.97). Moreover, the in-betweenness allows us to see double (Sheik, 2021, p.97). Liminality provides a tool to analyze beyond the Western binary logic like Indigenous versus Western, men versus women, or good versus bad. "In-between" also allows us to encompass our research "beyond the logic of coloniality" (Sheik, 2021, p.117). So, liminality—as a way of knowing, helps me describe and explore Malukan's position as individuals or as a community because of their unique position, which is neither here nor there.

## Intersectionality

Another important concept in my research is intersectionality. As a black scholar, Crenshaw (1991, pp. 1241-1299) posits that each person has various identities, which can lead to discrimination or privilege in certain contexts. In Maluku's context, their skin color, race, and history can lead to discrimination, but at the same time, it could be a tool for resilience and empowerment. Moreover, Crenshaw (1991, pp. 1241-1299) also recommends that we see systemic and structural analysis, like legal, economic, coloniality, and social status, which perpetuate inequality. So, within the framework of intersectionality, I can analyze the stories of Malukan with all the different axes of power (race, gender, colonialism, nationality, rules, tradition, etc) that are embodied within them.

## Coloniality of Power

Quijano explains "coloniality of power" as the process of producing conquering and conquered population (2000, p. 215), which affected the racial distribution of work that justified the domination of Europeans because the whites had privileges to control gold and silver in the "Far East and Near East" (2000, p. 217). Moreover, Quijano explained the nation-state question, arguing that nationalization utilizes the definition of territories and population based on colonization (2000, pp.217-219); then, the homogenization process has been shaping how we build the nation. Within Quijano's theories, I can analyze how Western-centric ideas have been shaping racial distribution in society and work while simultaneously asking how they influence the nation-state question of Malukan—as perceived as "the other" race in the Netherlands.

### *White Innocence*

Gloria Wekker's book white innocence (2016) highlights how the Dutch think of themselves as "being a small, but just, ethical nation; color-blind, thus free of racism" (Wekker, 2016, p.2); this ordinary whiteness self-representation is being their blind spot, while in reality, they use this whiteness for colonized other territory for four hundred years which they "forget" (Wekker, 2016, pp.1-17) including Maluku as a part of Dutch East Indies, the biggest colony of Dutch. "Innocence" exposed the Dutch smug ignorance, and they refused to know (Wekker, 2016, pp.17-18). This ignorance speaks to aggressiveness and not wanting to be intimidated. Wekker's works are an important lens for this research, as the research is located in the Netherlands, and the people that I talked to are from the longest colonial region in the Dutch East Indies, Maluku.

## Methodology

### *Subjectivity and Autoethnography*

Harding highlighted that all knowledge is socially situated; it cannot break free from original ties to local, historical interests, values, and agendas (Harding, 1992, p.438). Haraway also possesses that a knower's position, like gender, race, and class, shaped knowledge, so knowledge is inherently situated (1988, pp. 581-584). So, in this research, I will not be "objective"; instead, as Ellis (1999, pp.669-672) mentioned about autoethnography, I also am looking at my vulnerable self, personal experience, emotion, body, and spirit, which features diverse voices from me and my participant. I know that my experience with my participant is different, but as we have the same characteristics, Brown people (or the descendants of them) living in the Netherlands, reflecting on my own experience will make me understand myself more and consequently come to understand others (Sheik, 2021, p.100; Ellis, 1999, p.672). By doing so, as I agree with Ellis (1999, p.672), I hope I can make a more meaningful journey for myself and others.

Within this methodology, I do deep interviews offline, all the interviews mostly two times, each of them taking between 1 and 1,5 hours. I will see the transcript of the last interview, and I will compile all the follow-up questions for the next interview. Most interviews are conducted in participant houses around the Netherlands, except for Fatima, Azzam, and Aunt Kiki, which are conducted in the mosque, and for Lili, conducted in her parent's house. I used interactive interviews (Ellis, Kiesinger, Tillmann-Healy, 1997, pp.146-149), so I welcome when participants want to ask me personal questions; if it is proper, I will also explain my opinion or experience. We prepared 13 questions, which are used merely as a guiding question because I will let the conversation flow naturally. However, I am also open if they want to pass the question or want to discuss anything more important. That's why I did not quote all the participants equally, because the interview flowed naturally, and I welcome if one person wants to focus more on their history or belongings. For example, I quoted Om Paul mostly in the introduction because he mostly talks about his history. Furthermore, I also give the consent form, usually one day before the interview, so they can read it and ask if they have questions. Most of the interviewees used *Melayu* or Indonesian language; occasionally, they used English when they preferred. All the interviews are recorded on my phone or tablet and transcribed with online tools (Turboscribe). For

analyzing the data, I code it manually. Moreover, I also observed some Malukan events or places; I wrote field notes after every visit and analyzed them.

However, using qualitative methods (autoethnography) does not mean I closed my eyes to the limitations of this methodology; black women have criticized qualitative methodology as Eurocentric theory and decreasing the intellectual identity of women of color by only using Eurocentric philosopher theories (Summerville et al., 2021, pp.462-464). Moreover, I do understand that ethnography is insufficient for anti-oppressive research. There were many cases, including in Indonesia, in which ethnography was used as a tool to colonize, for example, what has been done by Christian Snouck Hurgronje—an ethnographer from Leiden who is using his knowledge for the colonial advisor in Indonesia. So, I will consider this critique by working with the approach of non-oppressive research and with the feminist and decolonial theories, as I mentioned before.

### *The other important question: should I pay the participant?*

Following the work feminist care perspective, I know that we should pay the participant (Warnock, Taylor, and Horton, 2022, pp. 195-202) because this is a way to avoid unpaid labour. Moreover, in times of "inequality, precarity, and austerity" (Warnock, Taylor, and Horton, 2022, pp. 195) for both participant & researcher, paying participants is urgently needed. However, as a master's student with an income from a scholarship under the minimum wage of the Netherlands, I tried to compensate for the payment with souvenirs and food because if I gave the money, it seems that the price of the stories is money. I calculate the payment, as Sullivan, Chain, and Gelinas recommended in Warnock, Taylor, and Horton (2022, p. 198), where it should reflect the burden of participants, and time refers to the wage rates. Furthermore, as a part-time worker, I know that the regular payment in the Netherlands is 15 euros/hour, so I use this as my calculation for the souvenir. However, I know the souvenir that I gave is worth nothing to their stories and experiences, but this is just a symbol of respect for their time and kindness.

### *Limitation*

A limitation of this research is that this research only showed the opinion and experience of Malukan, who are supporters of Indonesia. I tried to reach out to Malukan, who is a supporter of RMS on Facebook and LinkedIn, but I did not get an answer from them. One person responded, and we wrote intensively in WhatsApp, but he always refused to have an offline conversation and even refused to be the respondent. This might lead to one-sided stories. Another important limitation I need to point out is my lack of Dutch; sometimes, they forget some words in Indonesia and speak Dutch instead of English because most of my respondents' first language is Dutch. This lack of Dutch skills might lead to misunderstandings in the context of our conversation.

## Data Generation: searching the voices, a relational journey.

> *From the moment you are born on this earth and exude breath, you are born into a narrative that places you in a relationship with others in a certain position without any effort or fault of your own (Icaza and Vázquez, quoted by Aminata Cairo, 2021, p.81)*

I put the "relational" quote here because my 'searching' process cannot be made without the help of many—not limited to people, but everything. Om Paul and his wife drove me to my dorm after our conversation about Maluku and gave me one full bag of Indonesian food from their home. Aunt Dina cooks Indonesian food when I said I wanted to visit her. My friend introduced me to the Malukan family and accompanied me for one full day in Tilburg. Om Idris and Aunt Tati picked me up at Tilburg station and gave me all the food and many things from their home. Om Edward, who did not want to be interviewed but gave me a lot of information about the Malukan community and always asked me how the research was going. Ka Nana, who connected me to the Malukan network, even escorted me to Dorus after one Malukan event in Tilburg while her house was in Breda.

As I realized I was an outsider of the Malukan community because 'ethnically' I am not Malukan, I tried to contact as many Maluku networks as possible. I used some snowball sampling techniques to meet with my hard-to-reach participants (Dosek, 2021, p.651), and I used two ways to connect with my initial respondent, thus are:

1. Offline Observation (Joining Maluku events or visiting Maluku's place)

    The nearest Maluku place from me is the Museum Maluku, only a 5-minute walk from my place. I went to Museum Maluku on the 20th of June. The google maps said it was the place. A white building with a door in the middle is welcoming me. The building is not big enough for a museum and may only be 30 meters long. It looks like a house, not a museum; I whisper that in my head. I asked the receptionist how to contact them and make an appointment with them, and they gave me their email. I emailed them. Unfortunately, they are busy with everything that must be done before the summer holiday. A friend also helped me by talking to those of Indonesian descent in the Netherlands that I am searching for Malukan people. They gave me Uncle Paul's name, and we met first at the Indonesia Festival on the 2nd of June. I hope that Uncle Paul can make me understand the context better and can give me another connection with the Malukan people.

**Figure 2.1**
Indonesia Festival, where I meet Om Paul.



Source: Fieldwork, 2 June 2024

I also tried to contact two Malukan mosques in the Netherlands. I found their Instagram and website. One mosque provided its WhatsApp number, and the other

only offered its email. However, the latter did not answer my message. After explaining my research and who I am, the official WhatsApp gave me one woman's number: Fatima. We made an appointment on the 25th of June at 17.00. When arriving at the Mosque, I saw about 15 children. Some speak Arabic, and some speak Dutch; this shows that the Malukan mosque is not exclusive to only the Malukan community. One daughter with long curly hair saw me with a smile and asked who I was. After praying, Fatima brought me to another room to meet her husband. After explaining my research, they brought me to Aunt Dina's house.

**Figure 2.2**
Malukan Mosque an-Nur Walwijk, Tilburg.



Source: Fieldwork, 25 June 2024

For the other Malukan Mosque, I do not get an answer. However, on their official Instagram page, I see one picture of my friend as the speaker. So, I asked him if they had someone that I could contact. He gave me the contact information of the man who is on the mosque's committee. I contacted him and asked him to introduce me to women. Then they give me Aunt Kiki's number, which is his sister. I meet Aunt Kiki on the 16th of August.

**Figure 2.3**
Malukan Floating Market in Maritime Museum, Rotterdam.



*Source:* Fieldwork, 15 August 2024

Additionally, I tried to join Malukan events. At every event, I try to talk with Malukan women; they are welcome and nice. Unfortunately, when we shared the contact & I asked them after the event to have a conversation the other day, they

refused. My hypothesis suggests that there are two reasons why they refuse to have a conversation with me. Firstly, it's because they already planned their summer holiday, as my interview is between July and August, which is the peak season for the summer holiday in the Netherlands. The other reason is that maybe this was a sensitive topic for them. Sometimes, they invited me to parties or Maluku events, but unfortunately, when I asked for time for a conversation, they refused. However, here are some events or places that I visited to find my participants and to do observation:

**Table 2.1**
An event or place that I visit for observation and to find my participant

| No | Name of Event / Place | Location |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Museum Maluku | The Hague |
| 2 | Malukan Family Birthday Party | Kaatsheuvel |
| 3 | Anton Pieck Festival | Kaartsheuvel |
| 4 | Malukan Charity Program | Capellan |
| 5 | Malukan Housing | Capellan |
| 6 | Maluku Floating Market | Rotterdam |
| 7 | Malukan an-Nur Mosque Event | Walwijk |
| 8 | Bait al-Rahman Moluks Mosque | Ridderkerk |

2. Online (Social Media Engagement)

Another thing that I do is to reach out from the online network. I made one WhatsApp announcement, which I sent to two of my friends who have Malukan friends. In addition, I join the Malukan Facebook group to find my participants. From this group, I contact women who often write about their longing for Malukan. Unfortunately, I did not get an answer. I also tried to contact people on other social media like LinkedIn and Instagram who work in Malukan organizations or are part of the Malukan community. Unfortunately, I also did not get an answer.

**Figure 2.4**
Whatsapp announcement that I sent to my friend who has a Malukan friend.



**Needed: Research Participant**
Hi, my name is Tia Isti'anah. I am a student at the International Institute of Social Studies, Erasmus, The Hague. I am currently researching to understand the being & belonging of Moluccan women in the Netherlands.

My research aims to collect individual narratives and lived experiences of Moluccan Women in the Netherlands.

Who am I looking for:
· Moluccan Woman who was born or raised in the Netherlands. Good in English / Melayu / Indonesia (as the conversation will be used in this language)
Details:
Participant identities can remain confidential. Research participants agree to interview from 1-1,5 hours (once / twice), both online / offline (as preferred)

**Share your story** 🧏🌸☀️
Contact me at:
+6289609115553 (whatsapp)
648628ta@eur.nl (email)
+31686449007 (telephone)

Source: Author's phone screenshot

Here are the final people who agreed to share their stories with me. At first, I wanted to focus on women. Unfortunately, because of the difficulty of reaching my specific respondents (Muslim, Women, and Malukan), I interviewed two men and one Christian person. However, instead of deleting their conversation from my data, I include it because it can give nuances, and what they said is also important for me to understand the Malukan in the Netherlands:

**Table 2.2**
The participant lists

| No | Psedonyme | Age | Pronoun | Religion | Generation | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Uncle Paul | 83 | He/him | Christian | Second Generation | Born in Indonesia, he is living in Ambon between age 8-9 years old when RMS proclaimed |
| 2 | Aunt Dina | 76 | She/Her | Islam | Second Generation | Born in Indonesia, moved to the Netherland in 1951 with her parents when she is three years old |
| 3 | Aunt Kiki | 63 | She/Her | Islam | Second Generation | Born and raised in the Netherland |
| 4 | Uncle Idris | 74 | He/Him | Islam | Second Generation | Born in Indonesia, moved to the Netherlands in 1951 with his parents when he was one years old |
| 5 | Aunt Tati | 67 | She/Her | Islam | Second Generation | Born and growing up in Maluku, moved to the Netherlands after married with Malukan man (Uncle Idris) |
| 6 | Lili | 36 | She/Her | Islam | Third Generation | Born and growing up in the Netherlands (children of Aunt Tati & Uncle Idris) |
| 7 | Fatima | 36 | She/Her | Islam | Third Generation | Born in Maluku, growing up in Java, moved to the Netherlands after married Malukan men (KNIL descendants) |
| 8 | Azzam (Fatima's Husband) | 43 | He/Him | Islam | Third Generation | Born and growing up in the Netherlands |

## Final Remarks

In this chapter, I hope I have already outlined my approach (non-oppressive research), methodology (autoethnography), theoretical framework, and how to find my hard-to-reach participant. The next chapter will depict the first main findings of this research: the complexity of identity. I put identity as my first finding because this 'embodied narration' is crucial for the collective identity narrative—for being and belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2010, p.267)

# Chapter 3: Identity
## *Being a Brown Muslim Malukan in the Netherlands*

**Overview**
This chapter explores my first main finding—identity. I followed the work of Yuval-Davis (2006), who saw identity as an important tool for understanding the intersection between personal and communal experience or belonging. Here, I connect the stories of Malukan about the complex process they need to go through to reclaim their identity because of their race, religion, gender, and their ancestor's struggle with all the embeddedness of white supremacy, Islamophobia, and colonial history in the Netherlands.
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There were many times when I imagined how easy it would be if I were born as a white person in the Netherlands. Maybe my mother would not only graduate from elementary school or marry at a young age. Maybe my friend will not pass away because of giving birth. Maybe I don't need to read ISS's reading material twice or more because it's written in my third language. Maybe I can have a decent job without working so hard. For many non-white people, colonialism and racism are our embodied experiences; it's not something in the past or something to be discussed in the conferences only.

I realized that some of my colored friends often imagine the same way. We experience challenges because we are not white. The hidden desire to be white, a desire to have power and domination, as discussed by Bell Hooks, is an internalization of white supremacy, where one must "conform to the norm" to remain safe (Hooks, 1992, pp.367-368). Aunt Dina—a Malukan brown woman in her 70s who already lived in the Netherlands since she was three years old, shares her stories as a non-white woman in the Netherlands:

> *"Many times, people see me as an "allochtoon" or an immigrant. When I went to the market, the seller talked in Dutch like a foot in the head. I said to him: I can speak Dutch well. Your government asked me to come, not me who wants to come to this country."*
> *-Aunt Dina, 76 years old*

*Allochtoon* is a term used to show 'ethnic' lines in which one's own and one's ancestor were not born in the Netherlands, whereas *autochthon* is the opposite; they are the one's own, and their ancestor was born in the Netherlands. This binary of *allochtoon* and *autochtoon* was a surrogate for race discourse in the Netherlands (Yanow and Van Deer Haar, 2013, p.227). Aunt Dina, as a brown woman, is categorized as '*allochtoon*' because Western knowledge constructs 'her' as 'other' and different from the white (Said, 2003, p.1). The boundaries of the politics of belonging are the boundaries of the political community, which separate the world population into 'us' and 'them' (John Crowled in Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 204).

Quijano explains this phenomenon as the coloniality of power where the white race is superior to other races: 'brown', 'olive', 'yellow', 'black', and other skin colors (Quijano, 2000, pp. 217-218), then 'white' become the "canvas of the original arts" (Sathi, 2023, p.326). This mental category was introduced in colonial periods in the nineteenth century and affected the entire distribution of work worldwide; it broke the world in half, where slavery was

organized to produce for a specific race—the white (Quijano, 2000, pp.219-221; Wekker, 2016, pp.2-3). Whites or Europe were privileged in the Atlantic Basin, where they could control gold and silver in the Near East and the Far East (Quijano, 2000, p.217). The superiority of 'white' enables the process of othering, which is created from the process of erasure of what existed before (Balkenhol, 2016, pp. 10-14) and the process of binary, where they all put non-West culture as one—as "the other", or in Edward said word is as "orient" (Said, 2003, p. 237). Orient is everything the West is not, a binary that essentializes the other (Clifford, 1980, pp.207-208) as "lazy, backward, always available, and sexually insatiable" (Wekker, 2016, p.3). Aunt Dina's story shows that she is erased from her place of growing up because she is the 'other'—the non-white skin color. I think the poem from James Lockhart below portrayed clearly the misery of being a colonized citizen in the age of exclusion (Lockhart in Dussel et al, 2013, p.216)

*"that our misery was wealth for a few,*
*that a house had been built for the powerful*
*upon the bones and dust of our ancestors and our children,*
*and that our footsteps were barred from entering it,*
*and that the abundance of its table was filled with the emptiness of our stomachs,*
*and that its luxuries were bred by our poverty,*
*and that the power of its roofs and walls was raised over the fragility of our bodies,*
*and that the well-being which filled up its spaces flowed directly from our death,*
*and that the wisdom that resided there had been nourished by our ignorance,*
*and that the peace that enveloped it meant war for our people."*

However, as Crenshaw (1991) reminds us, race is not the only axis of power; there are also gender and other layers of individual characteristics, like religion, that influence our privileges or marginalization. Lili, a visible young Malukan Muslim brown woman who was born and grew up in the Netherlands in her black hijab, talks about how her intersection of identity in the Netherlands affected the marginalization that she feels in everyday life.

*"They always asked, where are you coming from? Were you born here? Because they see me, I have (skin)*
*color. Especially when I wear hijab. At a party, when they know I am muslim, sometimes people don't want*
*to talk to me. But when I come with my white Dutch husband, it's different; they will talk to me"*
*-Lili, 36 years old*

People at the party did not want to approach Lili "because I have colour," she said. Moreover, when she wears the hijab, her 'othering' layer is added, and people do not want to approach her anymore. Then, her husband—a white man, with respect to him, is like the male in the Disney films Cinderella (1950) and Sleeping Beauty (1959), which rescue the woman and become the hero. Disney films, however, are a fantasy, and they have transformed into a more progressive idea of women (Garabedian, 2014, p.24) while the reality of Lili in the Netherlands, because of her skin color and religion, is still the same—she requires her white-Dutch-husband to survive in her predominantly white-social society.

In fact, 80 years ago, most people in the Greater Netherlands were Muslim because the Dutch were the colonial nation that governed the biggest Muslim populations, as Henri

Bousquet mentioned in a prologue for French View of the Netherlands Indies, 1940. Unfortunately, the story from Lili shows how her identity as a muslim brown woman makes her marginalized. Although the Dutch government helped to build two mosques for the Malukan muslim community in the Netherlands, it was because of the "debt of honor", not because they cared about the muslim population, as it contradicted with the other policies; the government who refused the fund request for another minority's mosque, and the law which did not allow the Dutch government to fund the religious building (Maussen, 2009, pp.104-105).

Aunt Dina and Lili have a 40-year age gap; they lived in the Netherlands almost all their lives. However, their experience of being 'the other' is almost the same. The marginalization that they felt is not only because they are brown women but also because they are muslim. The violence that many women experience is indeed often shaped by another dimension of identities (Creshaw, 1991, p. 1242). "There is no single-issue struggle because we do not live in single-issue lives", as Audre Laudre stated in the celebration of Malcolm X in Harvard[8], which speaks to me as I reread the conversation with Lili. Lili is 'the other', not only because she is a woman of color but also because she is visible muslim—she wears a hijab. The discrimination is also a reason why Aunt Dina does not want to use the hijab when she is working

> *If I use hijab, I will get questioned, I will get emotional myself, and it makes me want to fight. They will say if you use the hijab, you are backward. If you want to be free, you need to take off the hijab. Until now, it's still debatable in the Dutch government; they argue that if you use this (hijab), you are not free*
> *-Aunt Dina*

When I listen to Aunt Dina's story about how she gets emotional or angry, as a 'visible muslim brown woman' myself, I feel related. I recall the experience when my friend questioned the Islamic symbol that I wear—the hijab. I think this can also be an example of how 'white' people see muslim. "Why are you using hijab? At the same time, talking about feminism? The hijab is a symbol of gender oppression." If I remember correctly, more than three times have people questioned this. When I received this question from my feminist friend, I tried every effort to prove to them that, even if I wear the hijab, I still have the same freedom as them.

However, when I read about non-Western feminist scholars in ISS, I realized that these expectations mirror feminist-white standards, in which they see them as subjects of knowledge and we as objects (Spivak, 1988, p.1). They see us as pity (Mohanty, 1988, pp.67-68)—that we are the victims of religion or the victims of people who forced us to wear hijab. Nothing in their expectation that we Muslim women wear the hijab in Western countries because we want to show them that we exist here, we have the right to be here, and we should be treated equally (Ahmed, 2011, p.8). I found that I am tired of constantly trying to prove that the hegemonic construction of hijabi women or 'Muslim' identity is wrong.

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[8] More about Audre Lodre's essay on Malcolm's X celebration: https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/1982-audre-lorde-learning-60s/ (Accessed: 8 Oct 2024)

In fact, unfortunately, a Western country that advocates "freedom" finds its paradox when it comes to Islam. I arrived in the Netherlands in 2023. At that time, the Party for Freedom (PPV) (*Partij voor de Vrijheid*)—the far right-wing party, won the election with 37 seats out of 150 seats in the legislative. Geert Wilders, who led the party, was historically notorious as an anti-Islam and anti-immigrant politician. This was post-election blues; my lecturer said after the class with his flat smile when knowing Wilders might be the next Dutch Prime Minister.

> *"It is unacceptable for people to cover themselves on the street completely. It threatens public order and security. Plus, it is a terrifying sight. Get rid of that woman-humiliating Islamic symbol."*
> *–Wilders, quoted from BBC News[9].*

Above is one of Wilder's statements about hijab that I quoted from BBC, where he said it was a "terrifying sight, woman humiliating, and threatens public order." After the murder of Pim Fortuyn, a right-wing Dutch politician, in 2002 and Theo Van Gogh, a filmmaker, in 2004, many Dutch people never shy to express their humiliating and offensive statements toward muslim (Wekker, 2016, pp. ix-x). The process of "othering" the Muslim community is clearer when we see the data. In 2014, there were 230 incidents recorded of discrimination against Muslims by the Dutch police, which is a stark increase from 2013, when 150 incidents were recorded (ENAR, 2016, p.5). Moreover, Muslim women are likely to be more vulnerable to many aspects of life, like flexible working hours, unemployment, discrimination based on their Islamic dress, and attacks (ENAR, 2016, pp. 3-5).

**Figure 3.1**
Greet Wilders tweet about Islam in 2021.



*Source:* Wilder's Twitter account. Available at: https://x.com/geertwilderspvv/status/1381608651690 029059 (Accessed: 8 October 2024)

Maybe the discrimination they felt every day is why the Malukan that I interviewed always identified themselves as 'Indonesian' or 'Malukan,' never, in my experience, Malukans

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[9]    Quotation about Islam from Wilders, the far-right Dutch politician: https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-11469579 (Accessed: 9 October 2024)

identify themselves as 'Dutch' citizen. History has also shown Malukan's faithful commitment to the Dutch was unwelcome. Instead, Dutch officials put them in camps, kicked them from the army, and treated them as a nuisance after their militancy toward the Dutch (Bartels, 1990, p.7). Moreover, the discrimination from the 1950s onward toward Malukan people made young Malukan build a collective response that was inspired by "Black is beautiful" and "Black power" in the US; they learned to be proud and stand up for themselves (Steijlen, 2020, no page). When I went to some Malukan events, I saw many Malukan accessories, which showed they were proud to be Malukan. For example, the hanging baby clothes below caught my attention during my fieldwork at the Malukan Floating Market at the Maritime Museum, Rotterdam. The pink baby clothes on the right portrayed a checklist in the Maluku option and left the other (Belanda or the Netherlands) blank.

**Figure 3.2**
Souvenir Sale in Maluku Floating Market, Rotterdam.
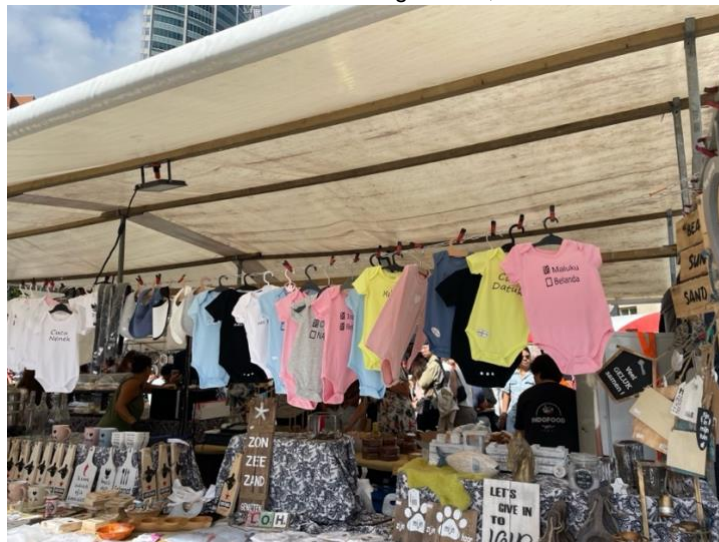


*Source:* Fieldwork, August 2024

Although the Muslim Malukan community is proud to be Malukan, all muslim Malukan that I interviewed do not support the South Malukan Republic (RMS); however, I need to emphasize here that some of the Malukan Muslims are the leaders of the RMS movement; like Ibrahim Ohorella and Umar Santi (Matanasi, 2019). However, the Malukan Muslims I met understood that Maluku is their cultural identity, not a political one. Fatima, the first Muslim Malukan I met, accompanied me to talk with her husband, Azam, in the Malukan Mosque office in Tilburg. Her husband used a white thobe, which flowed until his ankle. He is coming with two boys following him. Later, I learned that the boys were the children of Fatima and Azam. In our first ten-minute conversation, Azam declared to me that he is not a supporter of RMS. As an outsider who thought that all Malukan diasporas were supporters of RMS, I was startled. Aunt Kiki, who was born and raised in the Netherlands, tell me also in our conversation, where we sit in the middle of the Bait al-Rahman Mosque in Ridderkerk, about how she still identifies herself as Indonesian. She often emphasized in our conversation that she is Indonesian and not part of the RMS group.

*My passport is still Indonesian, I am 300% Indonesian. This act is a symbol that Indonesia is my father and my mother. How can you say I am Dutch?*
*– Aunt Kiki*

In the Netherlands, Malukan people have a special status; they are treated as Dutch citizens, although they do not have Dutch nationality[10], so they can choose to be Indonesians or citizens of other countries. From the conversation with Aunt Kiki, who is really proud to be Indonesian, now I can understand why Azar posits in the conflict's class reading that identity indeed cannot be bargained (Azar, 1990, p.147); they are not subject to negotiation. However, at the same time, identity is also, as Hall argues, always in process, never complete, multiplex, and contingent (Hall, 2011, pp.1-17), as we can see from the Malukan people below.

At first, most ex-KNIL soldiers who transferred to the Netherlands supported the independence of the Republic of South Malukan (RMS)—as a country that separated from Indonesia (Amersfoort, 2004, p.1). Over time, many Malukan Muslims identified themselves as "Indonesia". One of the reasons why they identify as Indonesian is because they are becoming a marginalized group within the Malukan community. They are the minority; only 2,5% of the Malukan are Muslim, with a total of 300 people or 80 families when they first arrived here. Most Malukan who transferred to the Netherlands are Christian (93%), while the other 4.5% are Catholic (Smeets and Steijlen, 2006, p.99).

Aunt Kiki, as a Malukan Muslim, identifies herself as part of 'Indonesian' instead of 'Maluku' because of her national imagination. Anderson (2016) showed that national identity is built by the imagination of collectiveness where, in the sense of Malukan Muslims, their collectives are embedded with Indonesia as a Muslim-majority country. "We love Indonesia because we can find many *halal* food and return to the roots," said Lili. As Yuval-Davis (2006, p.220) also mentioned, identity can come from a form of origin or, rather, a myth of origin, which, in the case of Malukan Muslims, their myth of origin is Indonesia as a Muslim majority country. The act of including some people and excluding others is an act of situated imagination (Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis, 2002, pp.321-324), which has been maintained to build the national 'imagination' by many countries (Yuval-Davis, 2006, pp.204-207). I put 'imagination' here because I agree with Anderson (2016, pp.6-10) that nationality is imaginative communion as the fellow members never meet each other; it's a construction built through national identity.

Besides being marginalized by Dutch society, the Muslim Malukan community is also on the periphery in the face of the Malukan community as a whole, as told by Aunt Dina: "They (Malukan Christians) do not remember the Muslim community when they have the event. Although they use the name Maluku". Being excluded and marginalized indeed makes a group make their political struggle to legitimate their belonging by searching for their citizenship as a form of being ruled and having rulers" (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p.206). Uncle Idris also feels the same; he said while I was visiting his family in his house that the Malukan Christian dominates the narrative of Malukan

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[10]The information about Malukan Act (special treat for Malukan) in the IND (*Immigratie en Naturalisatiedienst*) website: https://ind.nl/en/status-of-Malukan-act (Accessed: 30 August 2024)

*"Whenever I go to the Museum, and I find the history of Malukan, the narrative that has been written is only the narrative from the Malukan Christian"*

*"What is the meaning of Malukan Christian narrative?"* I asked again

*"There is no story about Islam. There is no story about how Malukan Muslims were supporters of Indonesia,"* he explains

Contrary to Uncle Idris, who refuses anything connected to the RMS, Aunt Dina is still thankful for the RMS movement; she said, "However, without them, we cannot have this (the house, mosque, and other facilities)". Another reason why Malukan identifies as "Indonesian" is because they are influenced by the Indonesian people when they do the hajj or pilgrimage to Makkah. As mentioned by Fatima's husband in the Mosque in Tilburg, his father was on Indonesia's side after he was doing the hajj or pilgrim and met with Indonesian people in Makkah. This experience showed that the hajj is not only a spiritual journey, but also a political one. This reminds me of how Snouck Hurgronje, a Dutch orientalist and an advisor Dutch colony, recommended calling people who completed the pilgrimage in Dutch Indies "Haji". It was not only to recognize their religious achievement but also to allow the Dutch colony to monitor them because the hajj was a chance to have a political idea. Where in the 19th century, hajj was a meeting for ideological ideas of anti-colonial and agitation and rebellion toward the colony (Benda, 1958, pp.339-341)

As I sat in the library with the coffee on my right side and reread this chapter, I realized they are a long journey that Malukan must experience to know the right term to identify themselves in the Netherlands. With their brown skin, their veil, and the experience of displacement and resettlement, Malukan knew there would never be Dutch. Unfortunately, being part of Republik Maluku Selatan is also difficult as they felt marginalized within this group. I understand that identifying as "Indonesia" is the easiest way for them right now because Indonesia is a Muslim-majority country with the same brown color, which gives a connection with them. Nationality might be a beast; for the Western world, it will result in the exclusion of others, but for the Global South country like Indonesia, it can be a source of unity. However, during my conversation with Aunt Dina, she tells a story about her husband, who imagines a world without borders.

*Can we just say we all live in this world without discussing this or that country?*
*-Aunt Dina's husband*

I feel connected with this imagination, a world without borders. Maybe not only without borders but also without supremacy and injustices. Being a global citizen with the dignity for every human being. Hoping the world to recognize who we are without the discrimination of our skin color. While I was still building blocks for this dream—imagining how people will identify themselves if they do not have a border, a notification about 42.000 people killed in Gaza since 7 October 2023 woke me up. All the beautiful orange leaves falling this autumn around the Hague felt strange to me as I realized that a world without borders, white supremacy/innocence, and inequality might be just a utopia. To end this chapter, I think it's important for me to show a piece of "Letter from Gaza" by Ghassan Kanafani, a Palestinian

author, to show solidarity and to sum up the reflection on the identity of human refugees among all the embedded traditions of coloniality, supremacy, and Islamophobia in this world.

*"No, my friend, I won't come to Sacramento, and I've no regrets. No, and nor will I finish what we began together in childhood. This obscure feeling that you had as you left Gaza, this small feeling must grow into a giant deep within you. It must expand; you must seek it in order to find yourself here among the ugly debris of defeat. I won't come to you.*

*But you, return to us! Come back to learn from Nadia's leg, amputated from the top of the thigh, what life is and what existence is worth"*

While the Malukan are different from Palestinians, I hope their same experience of displacement, resettlement, and being the "other" can make us learn. For me, as a visible muslim non-white civilian like Malukan, when I saw what happened in Gaza—where people like me were being killed, it made me realize that our identity as visible muslim non-white is not mattered in the world. We, because of our "identity", unfortunately, are "killable bodies." We didn't matter.

# Chapter 4: In-betweenness
## *A paradox feeling of Malukan in the Netherlands*

**Overview**
This chapter is the second finding. It is about the bizarre feelings of being the Malukan people in the Netherlands, the "in-betweenness" or liminality. I tried to show the Malukan people's feelings and position about living in the Netherlands, where they are neither here nor there—they go beyond the category of authority, coloniality, and binary. In this chapter, we also tried to revisit the idea of migration and nationality, which put Malukan people in an ambivalent position through the lens of intersectionality and colonialism.

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I am writing this sentence in a chair facing the canal in OBA Library, Amsterdam. I walk 5 minutes from the central station to the left with my friends. From this chair, I can see the ships and boats passing by, with the reflection of the summer sun in the water. The Dutch houses lined just across the canal, with the bus and car passing over. A man with white hair— maybe around 75 years old, sits two chairs left beside me. He is reading a book, and another two books are in a queue under his chair. When I see all these facilities that "developed" countries have, I often imagine my family living here. My mom, who can't drive, would be very happy to live in an integrated public transport city, and my aunty, who cannot walk, can have a special bicycle here that enables her to enjoy life.

    I hate this country because of what they did in the past and present. However, I cannot lie; I am happy to live in an area where the public library is accessible, the park with its voice-singing birds is always nearby, good-quality education is accessible, and the air is not polluted. There are similar reasons why Malukan people still live here—in the Netherlands- although they hate the country because of what they have done in the past.

> *"My mother is the first generation of Malukan, the one who transferred here in 1951; she felt how bad the Dutch government treated them in the Camp for 20 years. My mother visited Maluku for the first time in 1973, when the Dutch Government resettled us to more 'proper' houses. While in the Netherlands, my mother often cried & fought with my father because she wanted to go back (to Maluku). They can only send the letter when they miss their families; about 3-5 months, the letter will arrive. However, after coming home in 1973 and seeing the situation in Maluku, my mother was grateful; she said this: I miss my family, but if I look at it, I am grateful to be here (in the Netherlands). It would be more difficult for me if I lived there (Maluku); I have 8 children. How can they go to school there (Maluku) if we did not have anything?"*
> *--Aunt Dina, 76 years old*

    When writing the transcript of Aunt Dina, who shares a story about her mother who was grateful to be in the Netherlands because of the facilities they provide, I remember one of the games in the Making of Development workshop; most of the students in my group came from the Global South (Latin America, Africa, and Asia), and there were questions about "where do we hope to live", most of us hope to live in the Global North; the developed, the west. Hope for better job opportunities, and higher job wages have been our reason, as many immigrants feel the same. This phenomenon is explained by the oldest theory in migration: the process of economic development (Lewis, 1954, p.142), which showed that

wages cause immigration because movements of capital always increase the movement of people (Hass, H.D, Castles, S & Miller, 2005, pp.1-3). This is also what Aunt Kiki said about the reason why she still stays in the Netherlands, although she is longing for Maluku.

> *What work will I do if I go back to Maluku?*
> *—Aunt Kiki, 63 years old*

However, explaining labour demand or capital as the only reason why people migrate is insufficient. Samaddar criticizes that we must go beyond the labour market analysis because it forgets the postcolonial dynamic that shapes modern migration (Samaddar, 2020, p. 6). Especially in the Maluku case, if we only use the labour market analysis—the resettlement, displacement, and the camp-like slum they experience are forgotten (Steijlen, 2011, p. 4). For me and my friends who want to stay here in the Netherlands, maybe it's true that one of our inspirations is a decent salary—the economy; however, generalizing analysis of migrants merely because of 'the economic side' displaces and disguises the experience of people who do not have other choices, the one who "forced" (Samaddar, 2020, p. 7; Samaddar, 2012, p.2).

The reason why I choose to categorize Malukan as a "forced migrant" is because I am following the work of Samaddar (2012, pp.2-3), which argues that the awareness of post-colonial politics and society can encourage the critical analysis of a different kind of "forced" that play in the migration process from village to city, indentured labour, bonded labour, etc. As for Malukan, they migrated to the Netherlands because of a political clash after World War II, where the Dutch employed 25,000 Malukan armies to Indonesia; then in 1949, when Dutch officials needed to transfer the sovereignty, 6,000 soldiers were discharged, 1,000 entered the Indonesia army (TNI), 12,000 were demobilized, 2,000 soldiers who were stationed in Malukan became the core movement of RMS, and the rest, 4,000 soldiers in Western Java refused to demobilize except in Malukan, so temporary solution was to transfer 4,000 soldiers with their families to the Netherlands (Kutarumalos, 2005, p.i-12; Bartles, 1900, p.1). In that sense, Malukan were 'forced to migrate' as a temporary solution between two clashed nations: Indonesia and the Netherlands. Moreover, we can see from Aunt Tati below that she has no choice except to stay in the Netherlands because of her condition:

> *What about our children and grandchildren if we leave?*
> *—Aunt Tati, 67 years old*

The fear of their grandchildren is the reason they do not want to move to their country of origin, Indonesia. They might worry about losing their overall welfare in the Netherlands and about the critical issues of uprooting and displacement (Samaddar, 2012, pp.3-5)—something that they have been experiencing in the Netherlands. They also might be worried that their grandchildren will align more with the Netherlands' culture and will have to experience displacement yet again if they move to Indonesia. Lili, the younger of these three women, also shows the same fear about her children's education and jobs when she explains the reason why she lived in the Netherlands:

*As I get older, I still want to go (to Indonesia or Maluku) because of the values. But now, yeah, school (for the children) is here, of course, better than there, and it is also better here than there for a job. My husband is also Dutch. But still, what is more important, job and school, or your culture, your values, Islam? It's not here. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, that's a paradox.*
*-Lili, 36 years old*

Aunt Dina's mother—if she is still alive, maybe around 100 years old; Aunt Tati is 67 years old, and Lili is 36; however, their stories as Malukan brown muslim women draw the same pattern. The 'fear' for the children (or grandchildren) comes first, rather than their own desire. This is not surprising because, for many families, children are an important reason to migrate or re-migrate (Hagelskamp et al., 2010, pp. 717-718), whereas, in Lili's case, her children are the reason for her stay in the Netherlands. Lili, moreover, with her black hijab, told me how it's easy for visible muslim like her to be in Indonesia, to find halal food, to find a mosque, and not to be seen as strange people; 'we are like the celebrity here, because we are different, whenever we go, people will see us strangely' she said. Still, again, her children, husband, and family were here, with a good school and a job, too.

Moreover, Lili's last word, "a paradox," shows her bizarre feelings about the two worlds she lives in: Indonesia and the Netherlands. As a colonized citizen myself, I often have the binary thinking about home or belonging when I talk with Malukan people. I imagine they must choose between Indonesia or Dutch; there is no such a liminal world. I remember when I interviewed Uncle Idris, I always tried to know which contingent he most belonged to.

*"But if you are going to Indonesia, you call it come home or vacation?"* I asked again after Uncle Idris explained that the Netherlands and Indonesia were home to him.

As I reread the transcript, I realized that I have this duality bias, a structuralist, and a classification tradition. Deep down in my heart, maybe I hope Uncle Idris feels more at home in Indonesia because of the biases I have. Indeed, we do not understand the meaning of something without imagining the opposite of it (Giesen, 2012, p.789). However, this duality-habit thinking "excludes and silences the other possibility" (Derrida, 1974, pp.170-172), which in this case is the Malukan people, who lived in both worlds instead of just Indonesia and the Netherlands. Furthermore, this duality of categorizing people into certain nations fails to criticize borders as critical sites; then, the nation appears to be something natural, the citizenship, moreover, becomes a tool of exclusion (Samaddar, 2020, p.6-7), it's like how Lili shares her stories, that she neither being Dutch nor Indonesia.

*Here, I'm a foreigner. But when I went to Indonesia, I was also a foreigner. They say, oh yeah, you're Dutch. The Dutch people, at the same time, always ask, where are you coming from? Were you born here? They don't see me as a Dutch woman*
*-Lili, 36 years old*

For Lili, life feels strange in both the Netherlands and Indonesia. Like all the countries in the world, the Netherlands and Indonesia are separated by a border. The nation-state created the neat border, a myth thanks to colonialism (Samaddar, 2020, p.8) and the violence that enabled it (Tilly, 2017, p.123). Within this neat border, Europe has created a more layer, a buffer zone—an "offshore border defense" to stop people before they even reach their border (Samaddar, 2020, p.5). However, within this border 'myth', people still question their belonging, nationality, and citizenship (Nyamnjoh, 2005, p.18) because it is about how they feel safe and their emotional attachment (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p. 197). Construction of

belonging, moreover, reflects the emotional investment, longing to belong, and desire to attach (Ibid, p. 202). Unfortunately, with all the boundary-making I mentioned above, it includes some people and excludes others—making the condition, whether they are "us" or "them" (Ibid, p. 204); it is "a dirty work of boundary maintenance", as mentioned by John Crawley in Yuval-Davis (Ibid, p. 204). Unfortunately, the Malukan people, who are living in both worlds, Indonesia and the Netherlands, don't know which one they belong to the most, as Uncle Idris said:

> *We don't know where we are going. We're like, Dutch says, between the land and the ship*
> *-Uncle Idris*

For the Malukan, the emotional attachment to their upbringing, history, and ancestors' struggle is important for them (Sandberg and Van Rijen, 2021, pp.3-5). Thus, I can see from the conversation that they always identify themselves as 'Malukan' and 'Indonesia' as their cultural and political identity. However, when I asked them which places they call home, they were confused because the location of the Malukan people in the Netherlands also affects their belongings, as location and identification are closely intertwined (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p.203). So, the feeling of 'in-between' as Uncle Idris told, and the story about his friend below connect the dot of the liminality—the feeling of "being and yet not being" (Turner, 1969, p.95):

> *Many Malukan people in my generation still do not have Indonesian or Netherlands passports; they use travel documents. For me, I use a Netherlands passport, but still, my nationality is Indonesia; this (policy) is special for Malukan*
> *-Uncle Idris*

Uncle Idris's friend, as shown above, is talking about his friend's daily in-betweenness, where he neither uses his Indonesian nor Dutch passport but his travel document. This showed liminality or 'in-betweenness," as Uncle Idris also said about his condition, neither here nor there. Arnold Van Genep introduces liminality in his work The Rites of Passage (1909), which describes liminality as part of the common ritual rites (Van Genep, 1909, p.11). Van Genep (Ibid, pp.11-52) builds the theory using three distinct schemes: preliminal (rites of separation), liminality (rites of transition), and postliminal rites (rites of incorporation), where he said that the danger lies in the liminality—because it's neither one step nor other. However, Mary Douglas (1966, p.97-99) criticizes this approach because the transition is neither to one step nor the other; in other words, it is not always a sequence. Douglas also emphasizes in her work that the unease and danger in the space of in-betweenness were neglected in Van Genep's analysis of liminality (1966, p.97). From Douglas (1966) and Van Genep (1909), I understand that they see the position of liminality as something that is polluting and ambiguous. Moreover, Turner, an anthropologist, expanded van Genep's work; although he also sees liminality as threatening, he nuanced this interpretation by positing liminality as a new possibility in communal; it is "neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial" (Turner, 1969, p.95).

Turner's explanation has helped me see the phenomenon of Malukan as in between, in the liminality, or going beyond (Bhabha, 2009, p.2). Within this liminality or in-betweenness, we can see that people's identities are split and ambivalent in the context of authority narrative; it's not reached in the narcissistic idea of national discourse (Ibid, pp.212-215). Moreover, this duality or in-betweenness refuses the split (Sheik, 2021, p.97). This is precisely what Aunt Kiki said to me with her confident eyes while we enjoyed the Netherlands biscuit with the warm tea she provided:

*And I think it's wealth because it's from two worlds. I see it as something that makes you rich if you have good things from both worlds.*
*-Aunt Kiki*

I love how Aunt Kiki explained that her in-betweenness position brings richness to herself, allowing her to see double (Sheik, 2021, p.97). As she said, it makes you rich because you have good things from both worlds. While I walk out from Aunt Kiki's car, I am amazed at how she can transform my understanding; from people with the structuralist view to people with the understanding that the "in-betweenness" position helps us think beyond the logic of duality, binary, and coloniality, as also mentioned by Sheik (2021, p.117), instead of seeing this liminal position as impure or polluting (Van Genep, 1909, pp.11-52; Douglas, 1966, p.99). I will end this chapter with the poem from Eko Saputra Poceratu, which I think captures the history of why people in Maluku felt the in-betweenness position in the Netherlands:

……
*Our mothers breathe fire*
*We are that fire*
*Do you remember Kota Inten?*
*Do you remember Maluku?*
*Do you remember the generations that gave birth to the revolutions (out of the womb) of the iron ships, filled with (the stench of) conspira-cy*
*We keep on living from our mothers's breastmilk; we keep on growing with her waistband that bind us to each other*
*mutually connected*
*When one got chocked, the other recited mantras of Gandong and Pela Darah*
*One blood, although our histories differ*
*Our mountain does not break the ties*
*Our sea does not swallow the memory*
*Open your eyes*
*Resound the Kapata resound, come out from under the sago leaf roofs*
*Stamp on the ground, dance the "cakalele"*
*See Maluku! Open your eyes to today's Maluku*
*Watch as the salt of our tears gathers on the coral*
*See our dining table now empty without salt*
*Watch as our children are being denied education*
*Watch as we lose our languages and our senses*
*Watch as we lose our culture and our lands*
…….

A poem by Eko Saputra Poceratu in the "Beta Disini" event, translated into English by Tamara Soukotta. (Available at: https://youtu.be/bsh2Bv-Uj-8?si=H4QearrDVmx5TzId: accessed 8 Nov 2024)

# Chapter 5: The Idea of a Home
## *Ritual in homemaking for Malukan in the Netherlands.*

**Overview**
This chapter will tell stories of how the Malukan people in the Netherlands present their narrative about home, which goes beyond the narrative of nationality. It will delve into food and hosting as the homemaking of the Malukan community and show how relationships with friends, family, and loved ones influence the definition of home.

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It was a beautiful summer day at the beginning of August; I walked to the outskirts of Tilburg to visit Aunt Dina's house. The bell rang, and Aunt Dina opened the door for me; she was wearing a turban with a blue and red flower robe. Aunt Dina lived alone; her son and daughter had been leaving the house with their own family. Her husband, unfortunately, passed away in the COVID time. She always tells a story about how she missed her husband while showing the photos of him. She is always happy when I come to visit her. That day, we also watched YouTube together about the Maluku camp.

Today, she cooks Indonesian food; I can smell Indonesia spices when the door opens. "This reminds me of home and how my mom cooks for me," I told Aunt Dina after asking how life has been for the past two weeks since our last meeting. Aunt Dina asked me to have lunch first before our conversation. That day, my heart was warm, and I felt the love of my mom from Aunt Dina. I also asked her who had taught her all these recipes because she had been living in the Netherlands since she was 3 years old, but the taste was like the original one. It was her mother, she said. Aunt Dina's mother always cooks Indonesia food.

**Figure 5.1**
Indonesia's food in Aunt Dina's house.



Source: Fieldwork, June 2024

In the middle of our conversation, Aunt Dina's grandchildren came. He is about 7 years old, and he plays with the ball in his hand with Aunt Dina's neighbor. She said her grandchildren always come daily to play football or take a nap. On the wall are many of her grandchildren's drawings, with bright colors. One of them has "Oma" written on the upside of the paper. When Aunt Dina escorted me to Tilburg's station, she explained that she was familiar with all the roads here in Tilburg.

As I follow the stories of Aunt Dina, I can understand why performativity—something that Butler said as repetition and ritual is crucial to identity and emotional attachment (Butler, 1999, p.xv; Yuval Davis, 2006, p.199). Performativity is performing some social act with repetitive practices that link to individual or collective behaviour, influencing individual and

collective identity (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p.199) because something that *we do* repeatedly can influence who *we are* (Butler, 1999, pp.1-5). Aunt Dina's interaction with Dutch society, her everyday repetition in the Netherlands environment and culture, and her Dutch language might have reinforced or affected her belonging. This performativity makes me understand why Aunt Dina feels "strange" or "less Indonesia," as she mentioned in her conversation with me:

*In the past, I always missed Indonesia, but now it's not anymore; there are a lot of Indonesia spices here. Home is where my family, children, mother, and siblings are, and they are here in the Netherlands. I even felt I was a stranger in Indonesia, and here, although I have a different skin colour, I felt I was at home*
*-Aunt Dina*

Although Aunt Dina feels strange in the Netherlands, the smell of the Indonesian or Maluku species in her home speaks about how she has tried to maintain her connection with Indonesia or the Maluku because performing certain rituals is crucial for identity narrative and a connection that people want to build (Butler, 1999, p.xvv; Yuval-Davis, 2006, p.203). With her cooking, Aunt Dina tried to connect with Malukan or Indonesian heritage because food can create bonds and links (Duru, 2017, p.19). Moreover, what people eat can tell us who they are and their culture (Grew, 2000, pp.3-5). For the Malukan people in the Netherlands, eating Indonesian or Maluku food is not only to "satisfy the hunger" but also to build a connection (Troisi et al., 2015, p.58). Seeing the Malukan cook Indonesian or Malukan dishes showed this was a way to recreate their sense of connection with Maluku and Indonesia in their home.

**Figure 5.2**
Indonesia's food in the Malukan party



Source: Fieldwork, June 2024

From eight participants, I visited half of their homes. The other half I met in the place we had already agreed on, in the mosque, at their parent's house, or at my place. Most of the homes that I visited always gave me a bunch of Indonesian food. Om Paul's house welcomes me with Indonesia croquette, Aunt Tati and Uncle Idris's house provides me with *wajik* (glutinous sweet with rice, sugar, and coconut milk) and Indonesian tea, Aunt Dina cooks *ayam ketjap* (chicken with kecap) and *sayur labu* (chayote stew), and Malukan party that I came to is like an Indonesian food feast; they offer *dadar gulung* (a green pancake with coconut and palm sugar)*, nasi rames* (rice with several dishes)*, es campur* (mixed ice), and many other Indonesian food. Moreover, most of the Malukan houses I visited always gave me something when I wanted to go back; Om Paul even said to me, "Please consider us your parents here in the Netherlands," while her wife prepared a bucket of Indonesian food that I must bring

to my housing. From the experience of visiting the Malukan family, I understand that hospitality is part of the Malukan's homemaking; it differs, as Lili said below, from Dutch homemaking:

*When you come home to a Molluccan house, you get food, everything like this (she pointed out to the table with a lot of Indonesia food), on the table. There is a lot of food. When you come to a Dutch house, they will ask you for a drink, and then they will come with a box with cookies, and they say, oh, you can take one, and then they put it back.*
*-Lili*

Most of the Malukans I met lived and were born in the Netherlands. However, they have their roots in Maluku and Indonesia. As a way of homemaking, they cook the food and host others with their hospitality tradition, which is different from Dutch society. However, as Lili mentioned in our next conversation, this difference is not to give the cultural inappropriate to one culture, but instead to show the differences of homemaking for Malukan and Dutch. Hospitality is important in Malukan tradition; it allows space and time between guests and hosts to build relationships and bonds (Rottmann & Nimer, 2021, p.1383).

However, I see women in the house as the ones who provide most or work for Malukan's hospitality when I visit them. This issue has been discussed in the feminist theories about home, where a home is a place of tension—not merely a haven because it is often seen as a place where women must work (Young in Rottman and Nimer, 2021, p.1384). However, the same tasks in the home also provide a tie, a connection, strength, and solidarity between women from different backgrounds, like in the case of Syrian refugees in Turkey (Rottmann & Nimer, 2021, pp.1392-1394). Nevertheless, I think we cannot normalize the burden and unequal care work that has been done mostly by women, which, in the case of Maluku I met, this care work (like hospitality and preparing food) also has been influencing the belonging of the community.

Furthermore, the definition of "home" concerns not only the origin of the roots, like food and hospitality that has been explained above, but also about parents, place (Gustafson, 2009), and their series of relationships or connections. Aunt Dina's conversation showed us that even though she hates this country, she feels it is her home because of her family—children, mother, and siblings. This showed that home is a series of relationships. Moreover, Uncle Idris's experience aligns with what Aunt Dina said; he feels more at home in the Netherlands because of the relationship he has:

*We often ask, where are we coming from? There (Indonesia) is a home, but here also a home. Maybe if I need to percentage it, 70% I felt more at home here in the Netherlands, but it's not because of the country; it's because I am growing up here, my friends are here, and my environment is here, but if you asked about nationality, we are like people who do not have the nationality*
*-Uncle Idris*

Uncle Idris's familiarity and everyday connection with his friends here in the Netherlands are important for defining his feeling of "home." Moreover, Uncle Idris's statement showed the importance of friend in his definition of home because friendship, or in other words, solidarity, is important in a time of alienation and colonial embeddedness (Fanon, 1963, pp.133-156). He feels more at home in the Netherlands because of his friend, not because he has militancy for the Netherlands; this proves Quijano's hypothesis that nationality is associated with colonization, not common identity or militancy (Quijano, 2000, pp. 222-223) and Fanon's hypothesis that often people do not do something because of the nation, but simply because they want to exist still (Fanon, 1963, p.207).

Interestingly, although Uncle Idris felt more at home in the Netherlands, his daughter, Lili, felt more belonged in Indonesia. Indeed, people can belong to many things and objects, which vary from one person to another (Yuval-Davis, 2006, p.199). Lili, with her black hijab, ate *wajik*, and tried to explain why she feels more at home in Indonesia, although she was born and lived in the Netherlands:

*Indonesia feels more like home when I am here; the people are the same as you, but with the Malukan people, which we can count on each other here, it also feels like home*
*-Lili*

From the glass table in front of us, I can see Lili's face when she is saying from its reflection. Her eyes look toward the ceiling of this house; it is like seeing the mysterious future. For Lili, the convenience of searching for Halal food in Indonesia influences her definition of home. Maybe her identity as a visible Muslim woman made her experience something that Uncle Idris, her father, does not: the difficulty in finding halal food because women are seen as the ones responsible for home-caring in the "ideal" family in post-world War II (Nicholson, 1999, p.77) and because Lili feels the discrimination as both a woman of color and a visible muslim in the Netherlands.

Moreover, the mutual relationship in the Malukan community that Lili shares as her reason to make the Netherlands feel like home reminds me of what Lugones advises us, as women of color, to have a loving perception toward others by trying to travel playfully to other people's world with loving eyes (Lugones, 1987, pp. 3-5), traveling to others means that we see the world from their eyes, that we go to their world and see how we are constructed by their worlds (Lugones, 1987, p.8). Lili admitted that she feels at home in the Malukan Muslim community here because of their solidarity; she said, "We can count on each other." When I think about it, it makes sense because I can stay here, in the Netherlands—a strange country for me because of the friendship that flourished me along this journey. To end this chapter, I think the lyrics of "*Ambon ya manise*" perfectly show the longing for a home for the Malukan community. I listen to this song at many Malukan events. To honour the Malukan people and language, I will not translate the lyrics to English:

*Neg'ri Ambon Manise*
*Tanah Asal Beta e*
*Yang Beta Cinta*
*Lama Beta Pigi e*
*Tinggal Neg'ri Manise*
*Sio Asing Lawang e*

*Biar Jauh Dimata*
*Tapi Dalam Hati e*
*Beta Seng Lupa*
*Sio Mama Deng Papa*
*Saudara Gandong Disana*

*Hari-Hari Rindu e*
*Malam-Malam Mimpi e*
*Inga Inga Ambon Manise*
*Beta Ingin Pulang e*
*Kumpul Basudara e*
*Makan Sagu Deng Cakalang*

*La Air Mata Jatuh Dipipi*
*Sio Kalau Ingat Sampe Disini*

*Mangapa Beta Mau Buang Badan*
*Jauh Bagini e*

# Chapter 6: Conclusion
## *What we know so far*

In this study, I tried to answer how the intersection of Malukan's gender, race, religion, and ancestor struggle in the Netherlands influenced their sense of being and belonging. I used the autoethnography method, which involves interviewing the participants, observing Malukan events, and reflecting on my own experience and vulnerability. I was confused when formulating my findings into three stories because they are all intertwined and complex—it's not as simple as I imagined. However, this process has made me learn, relearn, and unlearn within the guide from coloniality of power and intersectionality theories.

My first finding about identity is in chapter three. I put identity first because this 'embodied narration' is crucial for the collective identity narrative—for being and belonging. Individual and collective identities are intertwined, complex, and dynamic for the Malukans I interviewed. By intertwined and complex, I mean no single dimension defines Malukan's identity. Their skin colour made them never identify themselves as "Dutch" because they were "the other" or *"allochtoon"* in Dutch society. Moreover, because of religion (most of my participants are Muslim, seven out of eight participants), they are more marginalized both in Dutch society and in the Malukan community in the Netherlands as a whole, which is dominated by the Christian community (with respect to them). Moreover, within the intersectionality lens that has been possessed by Kimberly Crenshaw, Malukan women, especially those who are visible muslim or wearing the hijab, experience more marginalization. One of the aunts I interviewed did not use the hijab because she was tired of being questioned by her friend. I also add my own experience as a visible muslim woman living in the Netherlands, with the dominant view of muslim women as backward and victims of the religion in the West narrative.

Moreover, by dynamic, I mean identity is always in process. For example, when Malukan Muslims arrived here, their political identity was South Malukan Republic (RMS); however, because of their experience being "the other," they identified themselves as "Indonesia" as their political choice, although they were mostly born and lived in the Netherlands. Some of them proved this political choice by still having and using an Indonesia passport or being an Indonesia citizen (Malukan have a special treatment in the Dutch law, which allows them to have another citizenship and still be treated as Dutch). Being Indonesian is the easiest way to connect with their Islamic and cultural tradition within their experience of being "the other" in Dutch society and being "marginalized" in the Malukan community. To conclude, this chapter showed that the Malukan race, religion, gender, and their ancestor struggle intertwined with each other and made them never identify as Dutch. Instead, they now identify as Indonesia because of the religious and cultural connection.

The second finding is about in-betweenness, which is a common feeling for them—this is their being and belonging. When I asked Malukan I interviewed which places they felt most belonged to, they said they were neither here (the Netherlands) nor there (Indonesia). Their ancestor histories connect them to Maluku and Indonesian culture. However, most of my participants were born and lived in the Netherlands, with their jobs, children, and grandchildren, which also influenced their belonging. So, the feeling of in-betweenness results from Malukan ancestors' experience of "forced" migration, the narrative of nationality with its order identification, and their everyday experience in the Netherlands.

Regarding migration, the capital reason (usually mentioned in the migration study) is insufficient to explain Malukan's stay in the Netherlands, although they said they are staying in the Netherlands because of their jobs and the welfare of their children. Capital reason cannot analyze Malukan ancestors' experience of displacement and resettlement, where they

did not have the choice to go or to stay because of the colonial tension they experienced. The in-betweenness feeling is a position Malukan cannot escape when we connect the dots between their ancestor's experience of "forced" migration and the ambivalent feeling of exclusion and connectedness in the Netherlands. Moreover, I feel amazed at how Malukans I met see in-betweenness as a position that brings richness to themselves, allowing them to see double. This has taught and transformed me—a people with structuralist bias, to think beyond the logic of binary, duality, and coloniality.

The last main finding discusses the Malukan narrative of home and homemaking, which is important to their being and belonging. Food and hospitality are important for homemaking in the Malukan community, while relationships with friends, family, and loved ones also influence their home definition. Regarding food, Malukan often cooks Indonesia and Maluku dishes, which connects them to Maluku and Indonesia while also reminding them of their parents and ancestors. Moreover, they always welcome the guest with hospitality while providing food at the table, which is part of their culture and a way to differentiate themselves from Dutch culture. However, although they tried to maintain the culture within their home, they could not escape from building the relationship in the Netherlands, which is also an important point for their definition of home. So, a home for them is not a country; instead, a home is food and hospitality that connects them with their culture and a series of relationships that make them feel safe.

**Figure 6.1**
Overview of Malukans being and belonging
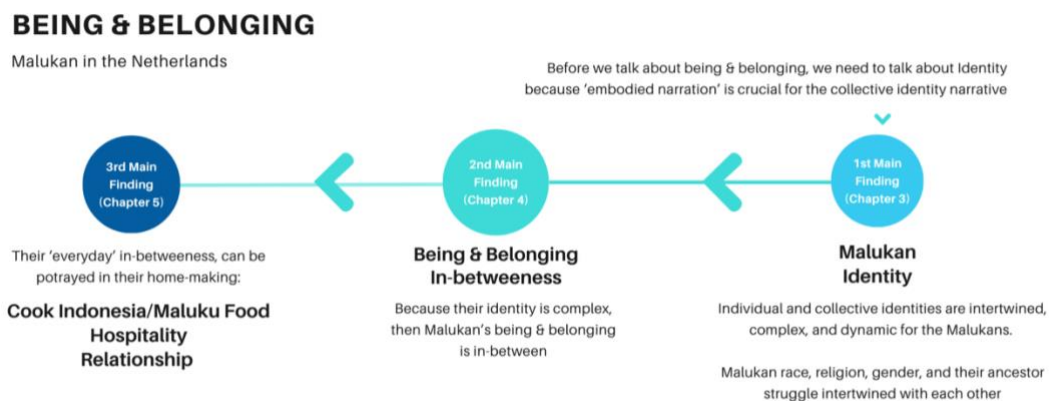


Source: Author

Overall, from the experience researching with the Malukan people, I understand that identity, being, and belonging is complex—it's influenced by many things: race, gender, ancestor, religion, etc. It alerts me, especially within the development sector, that tangible things, like location, are not more important than intangible ones, like racism, discrimination, coloniality, marginalization, etc. Because Malukan's being and belonging are not influenced by their location but rather by their ancestor and their own experience in the location; their race (brown), religion (mostly Islam), gender (some of them identify as women), and ancestor struggle, have been the reason never to identify themselves as Dutch. This research also taught me that to build a better future, we need solidarity and relationships for life; as mentioned by Malukan, their relationship with people in the Netherlands makes them feel that the Netherlands is also a home for them.

Ultimately, I think the research's objective has been fulfilled; I have discovered another layer of myself, and I can understand a piece of myself a little bit more. I hope you, as the reader, can find a piece of yourself here, too.

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