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The Students of Cultural Anthropology Journal appears biannually, publishing written work from Utrecht-based anthropology students. The works published in this edition were written during the second semester of the academic year 2024-2025.

Core team

Sophie Albert, Annelinde Junte, Lieke Kovac, Jorien Veenis, Jasmijn Zandinga.

Selection committee

Madeline Edgar, Maarten van Hemmen, Ewa Kuijpers, Xenia von Oehsen, Boris Oostlander, Elliot Zomerlinde.

Contact details

Email: info@scajuu.com

Website: www.scajuu.com

Our mission is to empower undergraduate and graduate students of anthropology in Utrecht to feel that their work matters. As such, we work to create a collaborative and independent intellectual space for all students.

Our goals

We strive to *facilitate knowledge exchange* by creating an accessible space equipped for learning new insights and skills. In addition, it is our goal to *foster student engagement*. Students are part of every step in our publication process. SCAJ thus reflects efforts of Utrecht-based anthropology students through and through.

Our values

We operate in the pursuit of *inclusivity* as a means to further develop as a platform. Utrecht-based anthropology students of all backgrounds are included in our publication process and thus all these students of anthropology may appeal to this platform. For this to be true, we value *transparency* in all our teams, selections and processes. As such, we strive to ensure that there is no mystery as to how we operate.

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Introduction

It is with great joy that we get to introduce you to SCAJ's newest Fall Issue as Editors-in-Chief. This year, we (Sophie and Jorien) bundled forces as Editors to bring about this diverse edition. We've been part of SCAJ's journey for the past two years and, as recently graduated job-hunting anthropologists, we were happy to continue working with SCAJ.

This issue came together with a small but wonderfully dedicated team. Due to graduating and starting master's degrees, we were once again scattered around the Netherlands. A special thanks to Annelinde and Lieke for sticking by us while also diving into Conflict Studies and International Development and keeping our design and reviewing process as smooth as ever. Also a big thanks to our newest member Jasmijn, who brought some fresh energy and ideas into our team. Because our team was small, we sometimes had to improvise and closely work together, and we are so happy that we made it work so successfully.

Together, the five of us managed to put together an edition that opens our eyes to different topics, courses and types of writing. The authors of this issue show us different places where anthropology can be a lens of understanding the world, from the courtroom, to outside between plants and to football riots. Through their writing they show their critical voices and hopefully inspire all readers to look at the world a little differently every now and then. So, without further ado, let us introduce you to this Fall Issue's authors and their papers.

In her column, Anna van der Stouwe takes us to the courtroom. By drawing on observations from a visit to the Rechtbank van Utrecht, Van der Stouwe shows how documents in legal procedures act as powerful organizational actors, rather than passive carriers of information. Her column reveals how they shape interactions, pace and decision-making in court, while also highlighting the value of anthropological skills and perspectives for understanding the subtle, often invisible, dynamics of bureaucratic institutions.

Ciel Rombouts, Chaira Jongepier and Susanne van der Kruk accompany us to a place we all know and love; the Botanical Gardens of Utrecht University. In their paper they explore how humans encounter and appreciate more-than-human beings within the botanical garden. They show how interactions between visitors, plants and the institution itself generate a paradox: the garden invites immersion in nature, yet does so through carefully curated and orchestrated encounters. Their analysis highlights how appreciation of non-human others is shaped, guided and at times constrained by institutional design.

Finally, Dirkje de Vries takes us back to the Amsterdam riots of November 2024, focussing on how these riots were used to reinforce broader structures of racialization in the Netherlands. She shows how political and media narratives singled out Muslim youths as a cultural threat while overlooking other forms of violence. She reveals how such incidents are mobilized to sustain ideas of white innocence, ethnonational belonging and the persistent othering of Muslim communities.

Dear readers, thank you for letting us introduce the authors of this Fall Issue to you. Happy reading to you all!

Sophie Albert & Jorien Veenis
Editors-in-Chief

Before reading

Before you start reading the papers that have been selected for this edition of SCAJ, we feel it is important to share a few comments. First, the core team of SCAJ would like to emphasize that both the content of the papers as well as the added motivation for producing the work (as quoted beneath the author's name), are completely written by the authors. Each work was checked for possible errors regarding spelling, grammar, and referencing. Any corrections were relayed back to the respective authors, who were then given the opportunity to revise their work accordingly. SCAJ's reviewers and editorial board have thus not made any alterations to the works you are about to read.

To elaborate, the papers in this edition of SCAJ have been selected by our selection committee from a broader range of submissions. This edition's committee consisted of four students of Cultural Anthropology from different years of study, as well as three members of our core team. During the process of selection, the committee was divided into three groups, each led by one of our core reviewers. Each group used the same set of reading questions as a guideline for the selection process. These reading questions focused on readability, creativity, originality, and structure. However, every reviewer was given the freedom to deviate from these reading questions. We believe that the ability to discuss freely allows for dynamic analyses, providing more valuable insights than rigidly conforming to any guideline. Every group read a number of fully anonymized papers, of which they made a selection fit for publication. Afterwards, the three members of the core team discussed the results and considerations of their respective selection groups to make this final selection.

The order in which the papers are published in this journal is not based on our judgement of their respective qualities. Rather, we have tried to organize it in a way that is pleasant to read. This means we have tried to avoid placing papers with similar topics and lengths in sequence to each other. Other than that, the arrangement of papers is completely random.

Documenten en Organisatorische Macht

Een Antropologische Blik op de Rechtsprocedure

Anna van der Stouwe

Ik weet dat mijn werk officieel geen paper is, maar een academisch column. Toch wil ik graag mijn werk delen, aangezien ik de excursie naar de Rechtbank en het vak Politieke Antropologie heel interessant en leuk vond en ik trots ben op deze academische column. Het is heel jammer dat het vak is wegbezuinigd.

Abstract

Op basis van observaties tijdens een excursie naar de Rechtbank van Utrecht biedt dit academisch column inzicht in de rol van documenten in de rechtsprocedure. Het eerste gedeelte van de column laat zien hoe documenten beschouwd kunnen worden als actoren die een organisatorische macht bezitten, waarmee de sociale organisatie en interactie in de rechtbank wordt vormgegeven en beïnvloed. Het tweede gedeelte benadrukt de waarde van het toepassen van antropologische kennis en vaardigheden in de benadering van bureaucratische organisaties.

Stilte Het getik van een toetsenbord. Recht voor mij zie ik drie vertegenwoordigers van het recht, die ieder gefocust naar een eigen scherm staren. Alle drie gekleed in prachtige gewaden.

Vorige week had ik het genoegen om, als toeschouwer en eerstejaarsstudent antropologie, aanwezig te zijn bij vier zittingen van de politierechter. Voorheen was mijn beeld van de rechtbank gebaseerd op films en series, waarin heldhaftige advocaten het opnemen voor hun onschuldige cliënt door nieuwe bewijsstukken te tonen in de rechtszaal, waardoor de verdachte direct werd vrijgepleit. In de praktijk zijn de zittingen helemaal geen spektakel, maar eerder het tegenovergestelde.

De situatie aan het begin van deze column geeft een beter beeld van de rechtbank: veel stiltes, witte, kille, hoge ruimtes die enigszins zijn gedecoreerd om een poging te doen tot het bemoedigen van de sfeer, toetsenborden die je hoort tikken, vertegenwoordigers van het recht die je naar een scherm ziet staren, maar bovenal de interactie tussen de rechter, de officier van justitie, de advocaat en de aangeklaagde. Een interactie die wordt aangestuurd door de organisatorische macht van documenten.

Documenten zijn een belangrijk onderdeel van de rechtbank. Tijdens mijn bezoek kon ik er niet omheen: de talloze documenten die verwezenlijkt, gedeeld, verstuurd en verwacht worden. Bij binnenkomst moest ik in het bezit zijn van een geldig identiteitsbewijs. Aan het begin van de zitting werden de personalia van de aangeklaagde genoteerd. Tijdens de zitting waren de rechter, de officier van justitie en de advocaat in het bezit van allerlei documenten die samen het dossier van de zaak vormden, terwijl de griffier ondertussen het proces-verbaal noteerde. Tevens werd er meermaals verwezen naar getuigenverklaringen, bewijsstukken en dagvaardingen. Deze documenten zijn van levensbelang voor de rechtsprocedure. Zonder aanklacht en bewijsmateriaal, immers geen verdachte.

Het belang van deze documenten voor de rechtsprocedure kan begrepen worden aan de hand van het begrip organisatorische macht. Dit begrip verwijst naar het handelingsvermogen van een actor om een sociale ruimte te creëren, waarin de actor de sociale interacties tussen andere actoren kan sturen en beïnvloeden (Pansters 2025, Hoorcollege 2). Documenten bezitten deze organisatorische macht, aangezien zij deels de sociale organisatie in de rechtbank

vormgeven. Zo beschrijft Hull dat bureaucratische organisaties, zoals de rechtbank, beschouwd kunnen worden als collectieven, bestaande uit mensen en grafische artefacten. Met grafische artefacten verwijst Hull naar documenten zoals dossiers. Deze collectieven worden deels gevormd door ontmoetingen tussen actoren, die tot stand komen door deze artefacten (Hull 2008, 504). Documenten creëren dus een sociale ruimte waarin de rechtsprocedure mede wordt vormgegeven.

Tevens beargumenteert Hull dat artefacten niet alleen geschreven en gelezen worden, maar ook gedupliceerd en aangevuld, en dat verschillende artefacten met elkaar in verbinding staan. Documenten hebben een sociaal leven dat de communicatie binnen een organisatie vormgeeft, waardoor documenten macht uitoefenen op de uitkomst van gebeurtenissen (Hull 2008, 505). Documenten kunnen daardoor beschouwd worden als actoren met een handelingsvermogen die gebeurtenissen in een sociale ruimte kunnen sturen en beïnvloeden, zoals gebeurde tijdens de zitting bij de politierechter.

Een bewijsstuk dat tijdens de zitting werd vertoond, miste de datum waarop de

gebeurtenis had plaatsgevonden. De rechter legde dit voor aan de advocaat, die op dat moment de exacte datum niet kon geven. Hierdoor kreeg de advocaat de opdracht mee om voor de volgende zitting de datum te achterhalen, zodat het bewijsstuk bruikbaar zou zijn in de zaak. De onvolledigheid van dit document kan ertoe leiden dat het bewijsstuk niet gebruikt kan worden, wat van invloed kan zijn op de uitspraak van de rechter, en die uitspraak heeft weer directe gevolgen voor de aangeklaagde. Documenten beïnvloeden dus de sociale interactie tijdens een zitting.

Groepsdynamieken, machtsverhoudingen, interacties, gedragingen en relaties: allerlei verschijnselen waarin antropologen geïnteresseerd zijn (Male 2023). Een antropologisch perspectief maakt het mogelijk om gebeurtenissen vanuit een andere invalshoek te benaderen. Antropologen kijken immers verder dan hun neus lang is. Zo proberen antropologen de leefwerelden van verschillende culturen te begrijpen en de onderliggende dynamieken van het sociale leven zichtbaar te maken (Strang 2021, 2). Het verstaanbaar maken van ingewikkelde en vage gebeurtenissen is dan ook waar de kracht van antropologie in

schuilt (Male 2023). Met behulp van een holistische benadering, observaties en het gesprek aangaan met mensen over hun leefwerelden, proberen antropologen de wereld om hen heen te begrijpen.

De kracht en vaardigheden van antropologie hebben ook betrekking op bureaucratische organisaties, zoals de rechtbank. Antropologen beschouwen deze organisaties als sociaal-culturele gemeenschappen en zijn met name geïnteresseerd in het jargon van de organisatie en het taalgebruik waarmee de organisatie zichzelf presenteert aan de

buitenwereld. Ook richten antropologen zich op de symbolen en rituelen binnen deze organisaties, zoals de toga's die de vertegenwoordigers van het recht dragen, waarmee zij zich distantiëren en hun functie als vertegenwoordiger van het recht aannemen (Pansters 2025, Hoorcollege 4). Met deze kennis op zak, woonde ik de zittingen van de politierechter bij. Ik hoop dan ook dat u, na het lezen van deze column, uzelf uitdaagt om met een antropologische blik een kijkje te nemen in de wereld om u heen. Wie weet welke nieuwe inzichten dat oplevert.

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The Paradox of the Botanical Garden

Appreciation, Interaction and Disconnection in a Non-Human Public

Ciel Rombouts, Chiara Jongepier and Susanne van der Kruk

Dear reader,

The paper you are about to read was written for the course Political Ecologies: Nature, Humans & Nonhumans. The research for this paper was a collaborative effort between the Botanical Garden and the Cultural Anthropology department, and we are very proud of the final product. We would like to thank our teacher, Dr. Aditi Saraf for her excellent guidance and support during the research and writing process.

With kind regards, Chiara Jongepier, Susanne van der Kruk & Ciel Rombouts

Abstract

Humans share space with more-than-human others a multitude of settings, yet these relations are often on the background of everyday experience. In the current climate, where human life dominates the life and existence of others, it is pivotal to reflect on these relations. Specifically, the aim of this study is to reflect on the appreciating on non-human others in the botanical garden of Utrecht university. The emerging interaction of humans and non-humans is outlined through the agency of the human visitor, the non-human others and the botanical garden as an institute itself. In this dynamic, a paradox of appreciation arises. The visitor is invited to interact with non-human actors in a setting where attention is brought to a variety of beings. However, this is a highly curated interaction which creates an artificial element to a space that is aimed to allow the visitors to immerse themselves in nature.

Introduction

I walk through the Botanical Garden at Utrecht University, I see lush green trees, feel a mosquito on my arm, smell the damp mossy rocks, and from the pond I hear the frogs croaking. Following the sound, I step towards the pond and read the sign just before the waterline. "Off to the merry croaking? Be extra careful where you step". I see a frog with its blown up cheeks making loud noises and when I come closer, it leaps under the lilies. The Botanical Garden is a multispecies public. Humans are scarce in comparison to all the plants, trees, insects, mosses, birds, and all the hidden species like underground fungi or microbes all over. As I walk the beaten paths, I become aware of those multitudes of stories and experiences. Normally, I might notice the smell of a particularly strong flower or a buzzy bee when I'm outside, but here I'm drawn to appreciate more than just the visible. As Hartigan reminds us that in this modern world, a domain dominated by plants, is rare (Hartigan 2015, 284).

Therefore, this research is based around the theme of non-human publics. More specifically, how do visitors of the Botanical Garden appreciate the non-human others? Botanical garden are public spaces

designed and curated specifically for visitors to engage with a diverse range of plants. These gardens have a complex history of colonialism, science, and education. For this research, we focus on the Botanical Garden at the University Science Park in Utrecht.

In order to understand how visitors of the Botanical Garden appreciate the non-human others, we look at the three actors of this relationship. The human, the non-human and the botanical garden. These three entities create a specific dynamic where a relationship between the visitor, the non-humans and the Botanical Garden emerges.

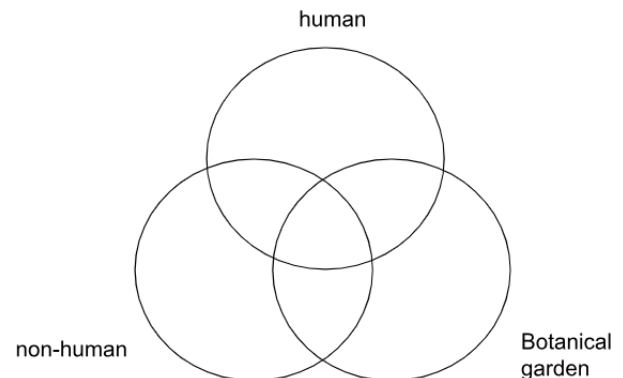


Figure 1: The triangle of the non-human public

Several concepts are important in this research. As noted earlier, this study is set in the Botanical Garden. According to Hartigan (2015, 281): “Botanical gardens are complex cultural sites where multispecies relations are cultivated and managed. These sites typically combine scientific inquiry with conservation efforts and public attractions”. These botanical gardens are populated by multiple species, curated and visited by humans. Relative to other non-human publics the Botanical Garden is dominated by non-humans. For the research question, we chose to delve into the appreciation of non-humans by humans. This appreciation is a multidirectional relationship based on attention, value, judgement, and affect. The non-human others have various levels of agency, namely the way they can influence that relationship to their environment and specifically humans. Aside from varying distributions of agency, the Botanical Garden is a multinatural world where all species have *umwelt*. This *umwelt* entails that each being understands and experiences the world in their own way, because of their unique way of being in the world with their body and how that interacts with the world (e.g. language, photosynthesis, sentience) (Bridle 2022, 24).

Another important concept for this research is curation. In the Botanical Garden perspective section, we will delve deeper into this process, which is characterized by ideas about aesthetics, engagement between human visitors and non-human other and welcoming and unwelcoming.

In this study, different forms of data gathering are used. It is a collection of field work, interviews, literature research, participant observation, and analysis of relevant reports.¹

How do visitors appreciate the non-human others in the Botanical Garden?

Visitor's perspective

While entering the Botanical Garden, my attention does not immediately fall on the immense diversity of plants or animals. Even the stately rock garden or fortress I notice later than the people all around me. Expecting to find mainly students on their break, I am astounded by the diversity and sheer number of visitors, ranging from teenagers to elderly people, walking, sitting or even lying down in the garden. It also strikes me that very few of these people actually take the time to stop and look at or interact with the plants. When asked, they answer that they come here to clear their

mind, to relax and sometimes to look at or buy a specific plant. There is an interesting dynamic between the human and plant there, because of the intentionality and consciousness surrounding their relationship. The conscious relationships that are created are usually mediated by the Botanic Garden, specific to one species and well-informed. As will be further explained in the section on its perspective, the Botanical Garden tries to facilitate interaction between humans and non-humans through education and infrastructure (Hartigan 2015). It makes the visitor aware of the plant's special traits, the care it needs, and how this relates to humans. Thus the Botanical Garden shape the affective and epistemological conditions for multispecies encounters. It determines what types of interaction are and are not allowed. These were the relationships often explicitly mentioned in interviews and talking during my participant observation.

The unconscious relationships between humans and non-humans in the Botanical Garden are quite different. They are often more random, holistic, and sudden. The overall atmosphere, the synergy of the plants, animals, rocks and waters produces an effect on the humans, which is not recognized as a true relationship or

interaction. It is not planned and mediated like conscious relationships, but creates responses on an affective level. Affect is the hard-wired, pre-emotional response to something or someone (Parreñas 2012, 674). For the visitors I interviewed, this takes the shape of creating a sense of home or carefreeness that comes to be through being surrounded by the non-human others in the Botanical Garden. The aesthetic appeal of the garden directs the attention and produces a curated engagement, whereby the interplay of the Botanical Garden, non-humans and humans comes to the front (Hartigan 2015, 482). The positioning of and infrastructure through the plants provided by the Botanical Garden shapes the possibility of interaction between humans and non-humans. This determines to what extent agency is performed and experienced by both parties and the type of relationship and affect that it produces.

The non-humans in the Botanical Garden are often experienced as completely stripped of agency by the human visitors. One interviewee even went so far as to call them "art made by humans". Many scholars call for a more inclusive and interconnected view of the relationship between humans and non-humans, where people do not see

themselves as apart from nature (Van Dooren 2019, 123; Chao 2022, 102). Van Dooren (2016, 10) advocates for viewing all beings as having “knowledge, consciousness, intelligence, creativity, emotions, personality, intentions, and desires”. However, none of the participants seemed to connect to this view, even actively negating it. So while the Botanical Garden tries to open people up to the world of the plant, the visitors are not open to this kind of thinking. The bordered, dualist perspective of humans versus non-humans is too entrenched to simply change through the education that a visit to the Botanical Garden offers. The idea that a plant, especially one in the Botanic Garden, could be agentic, could attune to humans and actively form relationships, is not recognized by the visitors. The information and sensations provided by the Botanical Garden do not change this. On the other hand, non-human agency is recognized when the non-human other claims attention through movement, growth or sound. Participants described affective responses to not only animals, but plants and waterfalls as well, acknowledging the active role of the non-human other. Lizards speeding by, unwelcome plants or weeds claiming their space and the sound and sight of running

water frequently were mentioned as affective and agentic encounters.

The Botanical Garden offers a carefully curated interface where humans and non-humans co-exist, but rarely co-relate in ways that recognize mutual agency. While the garden’s infrastructure and educational mission attempt to foster attentiveness to plant life, the dominant visitor perspective remains anthropocentric and the interactions instrumental. Affect flows through the space, often unnoticed, producing sensations of calm or belonging, yet these are rarely traced back to the plants themselves as active participants. The affective and relational potential of the Botanical Garden remains constrained by a deeply entrenched dualism, one that sees humans as subjects and plants as passive objects. Thus, while the garden cultivates the possibility of multispecies relationships, the actuality of those relationships remains largely unrealized in the perceptions of its human visitors. In the next part we will dive into what the Botanical Garden itself perceives as its role, function and duty in shaping the relations, interactions and evaluations between humans and non-humans.

The Botanical Garden Perspective

Within the botanical garden perspective, two topics are important to investigate, namely curation and welcoming/unwelcoming. These two topics allow us to think about the way the Botanical Garden values the non-human other and what subsequent choices are made to include or exclude them. The sections below are structured in the following manner: first we will take a look at the aims of the Botanical Garden. Second, we will briefly explore the respective concepts and how they are used in this paper. Third, we will take a look at how curation and welcoming/unwelcoming are utilized and experienced in the Botanical Garden, and finally we will return to our research question and try to form a provisional answer to the question: How does the Botanical Garden appreciate the non-human other?

Before we turn our attention to the process of curation, we have to briefly dwell on the question: What is a botanical garden and what are its aims? A botanical garden can be seen as an institutional manifestation of human's proclivity to collect (Hohn 2022, 3), but it is also something more. Generally, a botanical garden has multiple aims, such as to collect, to preserve, to display, to educate and to research a vast array of plant species

(Hartigan 2025, 483). The Botanical Garden at Utrecht Science Park defines three aims, as explained by the scientific director Dr. Edwin Pos:

1. To preserve the collection;
2. To educate about biodiversity and ecosystems (with the public as well as academic students);
3. To facilitate research with the collection (personal communication, Edwin Pos, May 22 2025).

For our research, the second aim is of particular interest. As further explained by Dr. Pos, the Botanical Garden serves as a site where visitors can reconnect with nature and learn about their entanglements with and dependency on plant species (personal communication, Edwin Pos, May 22 2025). As such, the Botanical Garden can be seen as a cultural site where multispecies relations are encouraged and fostered (Hartigan 2025, 481). This also relates to the concepts of care of species and divulgación, as identified by Hartigan (2015, 490). By educating and encouraging visitors to take care of plant species, the Botanical Garden hopes to foster sustainable multispecies relations.

Moving on to the process of curation, it is critical for a botanical garden to have a clear protocol in place. A botanical garden that does not make structured decisions regarding its collection, risks disregarding its aims and purposes (Hohn 2022, 13). For the Botanical Garden at Utrecht Science Park, there are three reasons to add a plant species to the collection, namely:

1. To stimulate (bio)diversity;
2. For aesthetic reasons;
3. For research purposes (personal communication, Edwin Pos, May 22 2025).

Exploring the second reason, we can make a connection to the human visitor perspective. As explained in that section, the aesthetic appeal of the collection directs visitors' attention to a plant, urging them to learn about their entanglements with and dependency on this particular species. Often, humans are more attuned to plants with human-like characteristics, and research shows that people are more likely to care for the conservation of plants when they practice anthropomorphism (Balding & Williams 2016, 1192). Thus, stimulating self-identification and empathy between the human visitor and the

non-human plant contributes to the aim of educating the public about plant life.

Currently, there is a curation protocol in place which is under revision. The Botanical Garden aims to make the updated version of this protocol openly accessible in the context of transparency and open science (personal communication, Edwin Pos, May 22 2025). Additionally, the choices are not made in a vacuum, but in a process of ongoing conservation with the public and the university. In terms of appreciation, what we see here is a context in which the Botanical Garden tries to estimate which species will be appreciated by its visitors and makes choices accordingly.

Secondly, within the Botanical Garden perspective the concepts of welcoming/unwelcoming are interesting to investigate. As we previously learned, the Botanical Garden tries to estimate the popularity of certain plant species, which influences the choices surrounding curation. Additionally, the Botanical Garden aims to preserve and exhibit the collection as well as educate the public about their deep entanglements with plant life. In order to do this, the Botanical Garden tries to facilitate interaction between the human visitor and the non-human other, namely by offering a

range of educational workshops and activities (Botanical Garden Utrecht University 2025, 12). Thus, curation is part of the process of including and welcoming humans and non-humans alike.

However, even though the Botanical Garden is a public space, there are also processes of exclusion at work. Naturally, it is not possible to deter all other, unwelcome non-human species from the gardens entirely. As will become clear in the non-human perspective, non-humans are agentic species who enter (or try to enter) the Botanical Garden without being welcome. But what does the Botanical Garden itself do to prevent or eliminate unwelcome others from the premises?

Here, we can make a connection to the Van Dooren text and more specifically, his notion of hospitality. Van Dooren argues that by welcoming others to a specific place, one positions oneself as a host, thereby claiming the space as your own (Van Dooren 2019, 122). Clearly, in this manner a power dynamic is at work, in which humans determine who is welcome and who is not. In practice, as explained by Dr. Pos, the Botanical Garden tries to find a balance between protecting the plant species and removing unwelcome others from the gardens (personal

communication, Edwin Pos, May 22 2025). A recent example of this is adding a trench around the Botanical Garden in order to keep out rabbits from entering the garden. Moreover, Dr. Pos stressed that all choices regarding for example pest control are made in favor of the well-being of the plants. Additionally, all choices and subsequent actions regarding prevention and elimination of unwelcome others are made in collaboration with experts, for example the veterinary science department at Utrecht University.

To summarize, the Botanical Garden aims to facilitate interaction between its human visitors and non-human others in order to deepen our understanding of our entanglements with plant life. This process is guided by a structured protocol which is informed by a shared responsibility to the public and the university. At the same time, the Botanical Garden has to make choices about who is welcome and who is not, positioning themselves as a host to the non-human species. Thus, how the Botanical Garden appreciates the non-human other depends on who they are, what they look like, and if they hurt or help the plant species in the collection.

Non-Human Perspective

The visitor and non-human relationship is bidirectional. In this section, the perspective of the non-human will be questioned. The Utrecht Botanical Garden is populated by a large number of species. More than 10.000 plants are invited by the Botanical Garden (Botanische Tuinen Universiteit Utrecht 2025), and then there are all the insects, rodents, fungi, microbes and more species that come and go on their own accord. In this multispecies public, many non-human perspectives emerge.

The main method for the research of the non-human perspective is an analysis by Hartigan (2017). It follows 9 steps: Literature, location, reflexivity, description, theory, walking, connections, context and analysis. Hartigan considers this method as a failed experiment, but there are several ideas and main threads that are useful for this non-human perspective. He tries to find a new way to bring attention to plants, who do not communicate with human language, and experience life differently. However, in multispecies research, it can be interesting to study plants and other non-humans with an ethnographic lens. "We can begin to see organisms as intersecting relationships that are part of the greater web of life" (Hartigan



*Figure 2: Multispecies public.
Note: Plants, lizard, frog.*

2017, 255). Since non-humans have various forms of communication that are not human-language based, Hartigan proposes to dwell with the plants (Hartigan 2017, 254). This idea of dwelling is a more unencumbered form of attentiveness that can be multispecies ethnography.

The perspective of the non-human brings certain limits, for they have a different life from us humans. Concepts that are productive for this research are ontology, agency and umwelt. Ontologies are “ways of being” (Willerslev 2004, 637), a person can understand the world via their senses, but they can also theorize and share those thoughts with language. A plant senses their surroundings too, but with a more biochemical method. As far as we know, plants are not conscious of their actions in a way that humans are, for they have no brain. In addition to that, they live on a different timeline than humans. Movement, independent of wind or other beings moving them, is a slow and tedious process of growing. However, even this is different across different plant species. Animals are more like humans in that they have brains and can walk, fly or crawl around in the same timeframe as humans. They can smell and taste, and perhaps have some sort of

conscious experience of those sensations in their brain. This idea that perspectives, sensations, and world-forming are dependent on the body, and thus unique for each being, is called umwelt (Bridle 2022, 24).

Aside from these ways of knowing, there are ways of doing or being. I will use the concept of agency as discussed by Kim (2016, 182). When it comes to humans, agency can be formulated through intentional behavior, freedom of choice and conscious decisions. Even those theories of agency are debated and there are multiple ideas about what human agency is. However, we can extend ideas of agency to non-humans and even to non-living entities or objects. Kim posits for example that landmines can have agency because they affect, influence and change their environment and others. Plants create their own environment by way of niche construction (Hartigan 2017, 257). This entails adapting to the environment and relating to other species in the form of symbiosis. These relationships can be collaborative, neutral, or competitive. Agency can also be applied to other species in the garden, a frog can have agency by jumping in the puddle in order to get away from human visitors, but a rock can also have agency by tumbling off a hill and

landing in a human's shoe, creating a relationship between the rock and the human that is perhaps loaded with annoyance, physical sensations and elicits a response from the human. Thus different kinds of relationships and dynamics emerge.

Aside from their personal agency and behavior, the non-human others in the Botanical Garden are subjected to their own kind of biopolitics. Biopolitics are defined by the political powers that affect biological life (Lorimer & Driessen 2013, 249). These biopolitics are a results of the curation of the Botanical Garden and the non-humans themselves. As discussed before, the Botanical Garden curates the life in the garden by welcoming and unwelcoming different species. All plants that are placed there by the garden are given name tags. It might even introduce the plant through their family, hometown and behavior. Some are given extra information, protection, highlighting or simply a good spot near the cafe where they get a lot of attention from visitors. In this sense, their being becomes more agentic with the help of the garden. The species in the Botanical Garden are mostly artificially placed there. Even though it is a nature based landscape, you will never find a tropical flower next to a native Dutch

weed in the wild. However, biological life is wild and ungovernable in the end (Lorimer & Driessen 2013, 257). Some species have enough agency to come and go as they please, like birds. Some, like certain plants, can drift in as pollen or seeds and take up roots in the garden, uninvited. The garden inevitably remakes itself in some ways and therefore affects the way the visitor will experience it. In the educational part of the garden, the plants are introduced according to their use and it is neat and organised, contrary the marsh and bank are "fairly pristine and natural" (see fig. 2), since it reflects the river banks of the Kromme Rijn. It is less governed by the Botanical Garden, grasses grow high and there are no name tags for the plants. These biopolitics around the garden result in different levels of agency for the non-human others, which in turn influences the dynamic of the non-humans and humans.



Figure 3: Apothecary plants, Marsh & Bank

Note: Information about medical plants, the marsh & bank in the Botanical Garden.



Figure 4: Extended agencies of plants

Note: Measuring biodiversity by doing nothing, BamBOO!



Figure 5: Designated spaces for species
Note: The Buzzstop, Alpine species in greenhouse.

Aside from the agency and behavior of the non-humans, we can try to understand the perspective of the plant. Much of the non-human perspective cannot be understood with current scientific or epistemological methods. For example, the entire underground ecosystem of roots and symbiotic relations between plants. This rhizosphere is seen as the hub for communication and social exchanges of plant life (Hartigan 2017, 257). However, Hartigan also notes that we can't see that, and trying to study it would mean uprooting plants and thereby killing them and the social life with them (Hartigan 2017, 281). This idea of social plant life is frowned upon in the scientific community. This became particularly apparent in the reaction to Peter

Wohlleben's book "The Hidden Life of Trees" (Kingsland 2018, 1). Scientists criticized his poetic readings of scientific facts, imbuing the trees with emotions and drama. However, if scientific possibilities are limited, can we not extend our understanding with imagination? Hartigan experiments with different methods to interview a plant, and comes to the act of drawing to facilitate looking (Hartigan 2017, 256). I took my watercolors to the garden and decided to find a plant which I would normally look at for a long time. Generally, I look mostly at mosses, I love their texture and they bring me comfort. Now, I chose a flower growing out of a rocky structure.

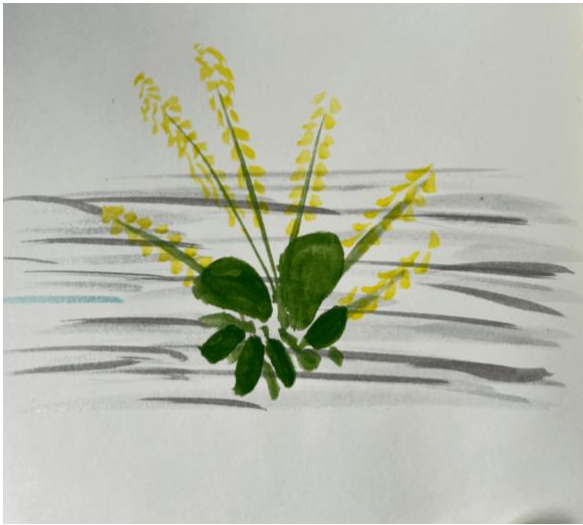


Figure 6: Drawing of a plant

Note: Shifting attention to the details of plant life by drawing.

This flower had a prominent place near the cafe, so it had the opportunity to be seen and appreciated by many visitors. Within plants, attention is often biased through the plant's aesthetics, generally there is a "culture of flowers" (Hartigan 2015, 494). Humans tend to appreciate a flowering plant more, or a useful plant if anything. Thus in the Botanical Garden, plants attract human interaction quite the same as they elicit relationships with other species like bees. The flowers, colors and scents pull us in. This is reflected in the Botanical Garden's aim for an aesthetic, beautiful garden, as explained in

the Botanical Garden perspective.

Even with attentive looking or drawing, human visitors might not fully understand the non-human others in the garden. Their bodies and therefore *umwelt* can be vastly different which influences their relationship. However, with conscious effort, we can blur those ontological shortcomings. Ontological blurrings is a phenomenon where our being can be blurred with others (Willerslev, 2004). For example, I can walk through the garden and try to really embody the bee. Trying to understand their perspective of flying around and focusing on the nectar of flowers.

Dwelling and ontological blurring bring me to eco-poetry. In the multispecies public, we have an opportunity to practice a biocentric view of nature, instead of the anthropocentric view. With a stance of ontological humility, there is space to experience fluidity when it comes to relating to non-humans and imagining the perspectives of other beings (Martinez Serrano 2023, 682). Perhaps we could even deconstruct the idea of "non-human others" by placing the human and nonhuman on a continuum, for there is a "shared intimate knowledge of the world" and both our mind and bodies are "dynamically embedded in

the interconnected world that is the material world” (Martinez Serrano, 2023,392). Poetry can be used to explore these shared intimacy and to imagine the perspective of the non-human by trusting that we can blur the boundaries of our physical body to that of trees, moss, frogs and beyond.

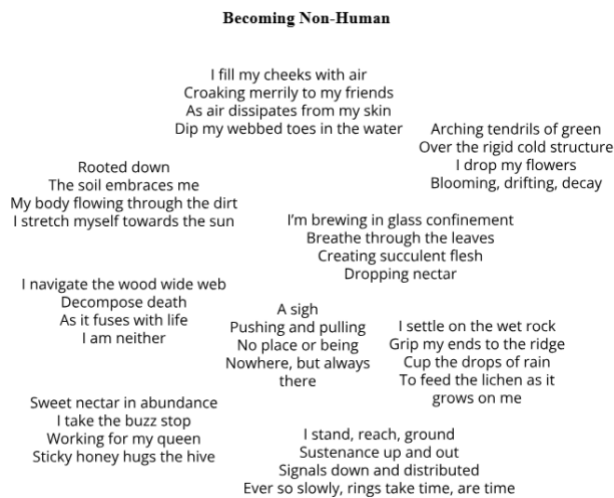


Figure 7: Non-human perspective poem

Note: An encounter between a human mind and the mind of the wild. Poetry as method to study the non-human perspective.

The ethnography of a multispecies public is different from that of a solely human culture. In order to understand the visitor's experience of the non-human public, there needs to be an understanding of their

perspective and the relationship that can arise. Perhaps this relationship does not lie in communication and interaction, but in the space between. Parreñas describes this intra-action in which the connection produces subjects in relation to each other (Parreñas 2012, 682). This intra-action produces affect, a sort of intensity and embodied phenomenon that, unlike emotion, is a dyadic process between entities (Parreñas 2012, 674).

The perspective of the non-humans in the Botanical Garden is diverse. Each species and entity has their own way of being, and therefore of acting and relating. The animals can come and go, hide, and actively seek relationships with humans. The plants are put into a certain place and have their own morphology which will elicit a certain response. The landscape of the garden, water, rocks, and other non-living things, have distributed agency and add to the experience of the visitor. Biopolitics affect these dynamics and differ through the different areas of the garden. Even though non-humans have a unique umwelt, humans can appreciate the non-humans by bringing their attention to these differences with an ontological humility.

Conclusion

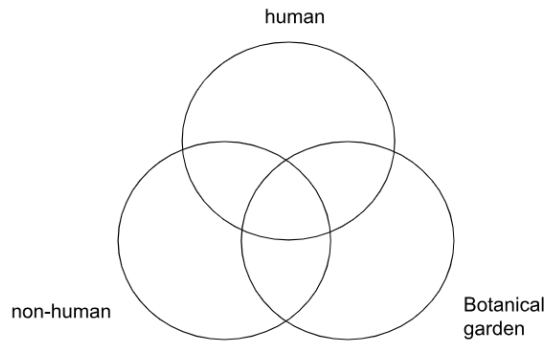


Figure 8: The triangle of the non-human public

Returning to how research question: How do visitors of the Botanical Garden in Utrecht appreciate the non-human others? In this research, three agents are highlighted in order to answer this question. Appreciation emerges in the interplay between these three perspectives, shaped by infrastructure, affect, and differing (perceived) capacities for agency and attunement.

A paradox arises in the Botanical Garden: it allows for humans to connect to nature, whilst also distancing the human from the non-human. The Botanical Garden is a place for humans to immerse themselves in an environment dominated by plants and other organisms, to connect and identify with

nature. However, while the garden invites this bonding, it simultaneously creates distance through curation and control, presenting plants as objects of display rather than relational beings. This exhibiting lets humans appreciate non-humans for their beauty or practical uses, but does not encourage true recognition of their agency. Yet, through serendipitous encounters, this mutual respect and acknowledgement of agency is still accomplished, often unconsciously. In this way, the Botanical Garden becomes both a stage and an interface: shaping how humans relate to non-humans, while also offering a place for one's own discovery of more entangled, multispecies ways of being.

In the Botanical Garden, the visitor, or nature dweller, can hear the frogs croaking and smell the flowers with full attention. Perhaps they need a nudge from the Botanical Garden to actively bring their attention to these non-human others and realize how they are part of this natural landscape. Yet this experience can make the visitor aware of what there is to appreciate and how, even beyond the gates of the garden.

Endnotes

¹The 'I' in this paper is the participatory researcher. This study is done by three researchers who write from their own observations.

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Meer dan Geweld

Een Weerspiegeling van Structurele Racialisering

Dirkje de Vries

Wat mij motiveerde om mijn essay in te dienen, was mijn lieve studievriendin Jasmijn, die me op de mogelijkheid wees. In het laatste blok schreef ik een essay voor het vak Nationalisme en Racialisering, en zelden heb ik zoveel plezier beleefd aan een opdracht. Waar ik normaal gesproken moeite heb met beginnen en volhouden, ging dit keer alles bijna vanzelf: ik fietste door de opdracht heen, simpelweg omdat ik de thematiek zo boeiend vond. Toen Wille, onze docent, ook nog eens zo'n positieve feedback gaf, dacht ik: waarom niet? Ik stuur het gewoon in en zie wel wat er gebeurt!

Abstract

In dit essay onderzoek ik de rellen rond de wedstrijd Ajax–Maccabi Tel Aviv in de nacht van 7 op 8 november 2024. De gebeurtenissen werden door politiek en media direct geframed als een “klopjacht op joden” en als bewijs voor een integratieprobleem, zonder ruimte voor nuance of volledige feiten. Ik laat zien dat deze snelle duiding niet op zichzelf staat, maar voortkomt uit een langer bestaand patroon van racialisering in Nederland. Met behulp van de inzichten van Essed, Wekker, Said en Guadeloupe analyseer ik hoe moslims structureel worden gepositioneerd als de Ander, als een groep die collectief verantwoordelijk wordt gehouden voor incidenten en nooit volledig als Nederlands wordt erkend. Deze casus maakt zichtbaar hoe mediarepresentaties en politieke retoriek bestaande machtsverhoudingen en kansenongelijkheid reproduceren, en hoe het incident wordt ingezet om bredere stigmatiserende narratieven te bevestigen.

"Ik accepteer niet dat er op joden gejaagd wordt in onze hoofdstad, zegt Wilders" (Tweede Kamer der Staten Generaal 2024). Deze uitspraak wordt gedaan aan de hand van een 'jodenjacht' die plaatsvond op 7 november 2024. De gebeurtenissen van 7 op 8 november 2024, waarbij Pro-Palestijnse relschoppers Israëlsche voetbalsupporters belaagden, veroorzaakten grote ophef in politiek en media (Schreuder 2024). Deze nacht werd beschreven als een dieptepunt in Nederland waarin Nederland joden in bescherming te nemen (De Vries 2024).

In verschillende app-groepen werd er die nacht opgeroepen tot een klopjacht op joden. Er werden leuzen geroepen als "fuck you" en "free Palestine". Alle fans van de voetbalclub Maccabi Tel Aviv waren deze nacht doelwit van deze gewelddadige acties (Blokker en Adriaanse 2024). Auto's werden klemgezet, supporters werden in hoeken gedreven en opgewacht, supporters werden bewusteloos geschopt en geslagen, er werd een supporter de gracht in geduwd. Dit alles met een antisemitische ondertoon (De Vries 2024).

Het geweld vond plaats op de avond waarop ook de Kristallnacht werd herdacht. Premier Schoof noemde de rellen dan ook "absoluut antisemitisch", waarmee hij het

incident in een beladen historische context plaatste.

Van rellen naar integratieprobleem

Naar aanleiding van deze gebeurtenissen stelt premier Dick Schoof vrijwel direct dat er sprake is van een integratieprobleem binnen Nederland. Meerdere bewindslieden beaamden deze constatering (NOS Nieuws 2024). Volgens VVD-staatssecretaris Nobel zou er een groot deel van de Islamitische jongeren niet instemmen met Nederlandse normen en waarden. Tijdens de rellen zouden er Arabische teksten geroepen zijn.

Nobel stelt dat het probleem veel groter is dan enkel de tekortkomingen van integratie. Ook politica Yesilgöz vindt dat het probleem breder aangepakt moet worden. Dit zou volgens haar thuis, op school en in moskeeën beginnen. Nobel pleitte voor strengere inburgering en hogere taaleisen (NOS Nieuws 2024). Schoof sprak over problemen rondom de religie, onderwijs en opvoeding waar hij de nadruk legde op Islamitische weekendscholen waar 'buitenlandse beïnvloeding' zou plaatsvinden (Dool en Ven 2024). Ook minister David van Weel (VVD) zei bij WNL op zondag: "Uiteindelijk denk ik dat een heel groot deel van de Nederlanders wel snapt dat dit

Marokkanen waren die dit gedaan hebben". Dit betreft slechts een greep uit alle uitspraken die zijn gedaan rondom dit thema na de rellen de nacht van 7 op 8 november.

Witte Onschuld en de Vijand van Vandaag: De Islamitische Ander in Nederland

De situatie zoals ik hierboven beschreven heb, is de gekleurde berichtgeving en gekleurde duiding door de politiek vrijwel direct na de verdrietige incidenten die hebben plaatsgevonden in de nacht van 7 op 8 november. Ik schets hierbij een beeld dat vrijwel iedereen die het nieuws een beetje volgt voor zijn neus heeft gekregen. Deze berichtgeving is niet volledig incorrect, maar dit verhaal is slechts één kant van de situatie en laat cruciale delen weg. Het is geschreven zonder nuance aan te brengen en zonder af te wachten of de weergave wel in overeenstemming met de feiten was.

Er gebeurde de dagen rondom de voetbalwedstrijd veel meer, zo bleek uiteindelijk. Zo zouden ook Maccabi supporters zich misdragen hebben (Blokker en Adriaanse 2024). Maccabi supporters mishandelden een man door hem te slaan met een riem, een taxi werd volledig toegetakeld, er werden Palestijnse vlaggen verbrand en er werden leuzen geroepen als

"fuck you Palestine". Daarna escaleerde de situatie, zoals eerder besproken.

De rellen en de manier waarin het in het nieuws verscheen werden met beide handen aangegrepen door politici zoals Wilders die mensen met een Islamitische achtergrond al jaren gebruikt als zondebok van alle problematiek in Nederland. Essed en Trienekens (2008) spreken in hun artikel hoe 'witheid' de norm bepaalt binnen de media, politiek en het dagelijks leven. "The muslimification of racism is related to actual events and current affairs, but it underscores what others have noticed too: religion as a marker of difference seems to have surpassed ethnicity in dominant discourse" (Essed en Trienekens 2008, p. 62). Er is een verschuiving in hoe racisme fungeert in de huidige samenleving. Voorheen was racisme meer gericht op etniciteit of huidskleur, nu is het vaak gericht op religie; en in Nederland vaak op moslims. In het nieuws worden 'moslims' vaak afgeschilderd als probleemgroep.

Ongeacht afkomst of huidskleur worden moslims collectief geproblematiseerd als de Ander, de religieuze bedrieger of zelfs barbaars (Essed en Trienekens 2008). Statistieken tonen hoe disproportioneel deze focus is: in 1995 ging

slechts 2% van de berichtgeving over de multiculturele samenleving over moslims, in 2005 was dat maar liefst 54%. Door de 'moslim' af te schilderen als probleem creëert de media een vijandbeeld dat zowel reductionistisch is, maar ook destructief.

De gevolgen van deze framing reiken ver, zoals Francio Guadeloupe (2022) ook omschrijft in zijn boek *Black man in the Netherlands*. In reactie op een moordzaak schrijft hij: "I soon realized, however, that Sabah's tears were not only about what had happened; they were also about the way the murder was immediately being framed. Once again, it became an ethnic issue: Moroccan gangs. Once again, it was being forgotten that Dutch Moroccans are Dutch too!" (Guadeloupe 2022, 8). Dit legt bloot hoe snel incidenten een etnisch karakter krijgen zodra daders een migratieachtergrond hebben. De daad wordt verbonden met een hele bevolkingsgroep (vaak minderheden die niet de norm vormen binnen Nederland). Deze mechanismen van collectieve schuld en uitsluiting illustreren hoe diepgeworteld de logica is waarin niet-witte Nederlanders, en moslims in het bijzonder, structureel als "niet echt Nederlanders" worden beschouwd.

Er wordt gesproken van een integratieprobleem, maar waaraan hebben

we dit integratieprobleem te danken? Vaak worden mensen met een migratieachtergrond in het dagelijks leven en publieke discours niet volledig geaccepteerd binnen de samenleving. Allochtonen worden zelden erkend als volwaardig geïntegreerde burger. "Ramifications are that allochtonen are informally considered and treated as second-class citizens, never quite Dutch, never quite the norm, always considered as aspiring, as a problem, lagging behind" (Essed en Trienekens 2008, 58). Hiermee wordt bedoeld dat allochtonen vaak worden gezien als mensen die nog moeten bijbenen, of zelfs een probleem vormen voor de integratie. Er is maar zelden ruimte voor het erkennen van de successen of bijdrages van 'allochtonen' en de media en politiek voeden dit eenzijdige beeld.

In haar werk *White Innocence* beschrijft Gloria Wekker (2017) hoe Nederland zichzelf structureel positioneert als moreel zuiver en onschuldig. De reactie op de rellen in Amsterdam; aangeduid als een 'klopjacht op joden', past naadloos binnen deze analyse. Israëliische slachtoffers worden symbolisch dichterbij de Nederlandse norm geplaatst en onmiddellijk verdedigd, terwijl moslims collectief worden neergezet als gewelddadige daders. Het

incident wordt uitvergroot en benut om het narratief te versterken dat moslims een bedreiging vormen voor de Nederlandse samenleving. Daarbij blijft elke vorm van historische en structurele ongelijkheid (waaronder raciale machtsverhoudingen die teruggaan tot het koloniale verleden) volledig buiten beeld. Zo slaagt Nederland er opnieuw in zichzelf als slachtoffer te presenteren, in plaats van de eigen rol binnen systemen van uitsluiting en racialisering onder ogen te zien. Deze vorm van uitsluiting hangt nauw samen met wat men aanduidt als etnonationalisme: een ideologie waarin de nationale identiteit wordt gedefinieerd op basis van een gedeeld etnisch en cultureel erfgoed (Anderson 2016). Deze ideologische patronen zijn geen incident, maar weerspiegelen een structureel probleem.

Van incident naar ideologie

Deze wij-zij-tegenstelling vormt de kern van het dominante discours over nationale identiteit in Nederland. Het idee dat “zij” (moslims, migranten, vluchtelingen) zich moeten aanpassen aan “onze” normen en waarden impliceert dat de Nederlandse identiteit vaststaat, homogeen, en exclusief wit is. Hierdoor ontstaat een binaire logica

waarin het onmogelijk wordt om tegelijkertijd moslim én volwaardig Nederlands te zijn. Deze tegenstelling legitimeert niet alleen uitsluiting, maar creëert ook ruimte voor openlijke Islamofobie onder het mom van cultuurkritiek.

Binnen dit discours wordt steevast een onschuldig, fragiel en moreel verheven wit Nederlands zelfbeeld geconstrueerd, tegenover een ‘schuldige’ en onbeschaafde ander. Zoals Wekker (2017) stelt, heeft die positie van de Ander in de afgelopen decennia vooral de gedaante aangenomen van de islamitische ander, maar eerder werden ook zwarte Nederlanders zoals Afro-Surinamers, Antillianen en Molukkers op die manier geportretteerd. Deze verschuivende vijandbeelden maken duidelijk dat het niet gaat om de specifieke groep, maar om het in standhouden van een nationale identiteit die afwijzing van raciale en culturele ‘afwijking’ nodig heeft om zichzelf te bevestigen. In plaats van werkelijk inclusieve modellen van burgerschap, reproduceert Nederland zo voortdurend raciale hiërarchieën en een cultuur van uitsluiting.

De rellen van 7 op 8 november zijn niet alleen een symptoom van maatschappelijke spanningen, maar worden actief ingezet om bestaande stigmatisering

te voeden en te legitimeren. Juist daarom is het van belang dat we kritisch blijven kijken naar wat ons via media en politiek wordt voorgeschoteld en niet klakkeloos meegaan in een eenzijdig en polariserend narratief.

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