

How the framing of asylum seekers by populist parties affects their sense of home

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Abstract

This study conducts a qualitative research in how the framing of populist parties influences the sense of home from refugees in Nijmegen. It does so by conducting a document analysis of the latest two election programs of the PVV which show three frames are used the most: the Islam-as-a-threat frame, the restrictive frame and the intruder frame. Furthermore it searches how refugees rebuild their sense of home in Nijmegen and which psychological and physical elements impact this the most by conducting interviews with refugees. This showed that emotional safety, social interactions and spatial stability are the main contributors to rebuilding a sense of home and fostering a sense of belonging. At last it seeks to find if the rise populist parties have an effect on the lived experiences of refugees in daily live. By combining the interviews and theory it revealed that the constant threat of the possibility to be excluded did influence the experiences of refugees. Although the local, friendly environment of Nijmegen caused there to be no constant fear in their daily lives.

Table of contents:

How the framing of asylum seekers by populist parties affects their sense of home	1
Table of contents:	3
1. Introduction.....	3
1.1.1 Main Research Question	5
1.1.2 Sub-questions	5
1.2 Research objective.....	5
1.3 Societal Relevance.....	5
1.4 Scientific Relevance.....	6
1.5 Literature review	7
1.6 Theoretical Framework.....	8
1.7 Research Design and Research Methodology	10
1.8 Data Analysis	10
1.9 Potential considerations and limitations	11
1.10 Research plan.....	12
2. Results	14
2.1	14
2.2	17
2.3	21
3. Discussion.....	23
4. Conclusion	27
5. References	30

1. Introduction

The last elections in the Netherlands were a showcase of a trend happening in the global West, right-wing populist parties are growing. The PVV (Party For Freedom) became the biggest winners of these elections. By growing from 10,8% of the total votes in 2021, to getting 23,6% of the votes in 2023 (*Verkiezingsuitslagen Voor de PVV - Partij Voor de Vrijheid, 2025*). These results in the Netherlands are not an exception in Europe, seven EU Member States – Croatia, the Czech Republic, Finland, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands

and Slovakia – now have far-right parties within government (*The Year Of Elections: The Rise Of Europe's Far Right*, z.d.).

This shift in political votes does not mean that there has been a major rise in people who sympathize with populist ideas. According to Bartels (2023) the so called “wave” of right-wing populist sentiment (in Europe) is more of a reservoir, based on broad European opinion research. There have always been groups that shared these populist ideas, but they did not vote on it. The main shift was that voters now took economic aspects less into account to decide which party they were going to vote for. Research done by Danieli et al. (2022) showed that the main focus of voters shifted from economic aspects to cultural aspects. The populist party voters have shown to be united by their stance on migration and refugees. So where one of the trademarks of populists parties is that they remain vague on their economic stance, they do share a remarkable harsh stance when the debate is centered around migration topics. Rovny (2012) states that certain political parties, such as those of the radical right, seek to compete on neglected, secondary issues while simultaneously blurring their positions on established issues in order to attract broader support. This makes it clear why the PVV has a strong position in the migration debate, but hardly ever make clear how they stand in the economic debate.

To convince people to that their stance on a topic is the proper one political parties – all of them – use framing. They try to highlight specific parts of the debate that support their stance. In the case of populist parties that part often is the heated debate on migration. One of the examples of these parties is the Dutch PVV, as they won the last Dutch elections by focusing the debate on refugees, asylum seekers and status holders. During debates in the campaign their leader, Geert Wilders, often wrote off discussions about the housing- and economic problems in the Netherlands towards the “overflow” of immigrants in the country. They state that status holders should not get priority in the allocation of social housing because they take the houses of Dutch nationals. But according to research done by Van den Eerenbeemt en Van Uffelen (2023) in name of De Volkskrant only 10% of the social housing that becomes available goes to status holders. The PVV frames the problem as bigger than it is, hereby damaging the image voters have about refugees and status holders.

With this increasing focus on migration and refugees in the political debate, the question rises how the frames that are being effect the targeted refugee groups themselves. As a lot of research has been done on the political landscape and the strategies of populist parties, the refugees groups themselves have not been subject of many of those researches. Have they felt any influence of these used frames and strategies by the populist parties, or have their feelings of home changed since the populists have grown?

To understand how these populist frames influence the sense of home among refugees, this research builds upon several theoretical perspectives. Framing theory (Entman, 1993) explains how political actors strategically highlight certain aspects of an issue to shape public perception. Additionally, the concept of ‘othering’ (Said, 1978) helps to analyze how populist narratives

construct refugees as outsiders. Furthermore, the politics of belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2011) provides insight into how individuals negotiate their place within society in response to exclusionary rhetoric. These theoretical lenses will form the foundation for analyzing the impact of populist discourse on refugees' lived experiences in the Netherlands.

1.1.1 Main Research Question

What kind of influence do the frames that populist parties use have on the targeted refugee's groups 'sense of home' in Nijmegen, the Netherlands?

1.1.2 Sub-questions

1. What are the major frames that populist parties in the Netherlands use in relation to refugees?
2. What aspects in daily life makes the refugees in Nijmegen feel more at home?
3. Do refugees notice a change in their lived experiences in the Netherlands since the populist movements have been on the rise?

1.2 Research objective

This research aims to provide insight into how political rhetoric influences the lived experiences of refugees in the Netherlands. The study will focus on identifying the framing strategies used by these parties in refugee debates and political campaigns (Rovny, 2012; Wodak, 2015) and it examines the role of belonging and othering in the discourse that populist parties use in these activities. Using the concepts of framing as described by Entman (1993) and Korsten (2013) to connect the frames used by populist parties with the concepts of othering (Said, 1978) and belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2011) as a theoretical framework, this research will explore whether and how these frames affect refugees' sense of home. To uncover how refugees build a sense of home this research connects empirical findings gathered through qualitative interviews with theories about belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2011), place and placeness (Relph, 1976), sense of home as described by Duyvendak (2011) and De Haene and Derluyn (z.d.) together with the politics of belonging (Crowley, 1999). To see what an impact they have on the daily life we connect the findings with the theories of Crowley (1999), Yuval-Davis (2011), Said (1978) and the symbolic power as described by Bourdieu (1991). The findings could offer important insights for policymakers and other political parties, potentially informing strategies to counter these dividing narratives and create more of a sense of belonging among refugee communities.

1.3 Societal Relevance

In recent years, societal and political dynamics in the Netherlands—and beyond—have undergone significant changes. Since the Covid-19 pandemic,

polarization has intensified, and public debate has hardened (Maly, 2022). Where people once sought durable and broadly supported solutions to societal issues through dialogue, this willingness now appears to be decreasing. In this shifting landscape, disinformation and misinformation have started to become normalized, particularly among groups that have lost trust in governments and no longer feel represented (Farkas & Schou, 2020). Populist parties made use of this gap, presenting themselves as the voice of the ‘forgotten’ citizen, often using migration and refugees as central themes in their political campaigns (Wodak, 2015).

This research is socially relevant as it provides insight into how the framing strategies of populist parties influence the experiences of refugee groups in the Netherlands. While much attention is given to the rise of populism and the political strategies that accompany it (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017), the impact on the people that feel the direct effects of this rise remains undiscovered. Research has shown that political and media discourse can significantly shape public perceptions of refugees and their sense of belonging (Yuval-Davis, 2011). By examining this impact, this study contributes to a broader understanding of the societal consequences of populist discourse and how it affects the integration and emotional well-being of refugees in the Netherlands.

Furthermore, this research holds significance for various societal actors. Policymakers and political parties can use these insights to create a more inclusive and fact driven debate on migration and integration. NGOs and civil society organizations working with refugees can benefit from a deeper understanding of how political discourse shapes the lived experiences of their target groups. Lastly, this study is relevant to anyone seeking to understand the social and political dynamics that influence refugees’ sense of home and belonging in Dutch society.

1.4 Scientific Relevance

This research is scientifically relevant as it addresses a gap in the current literature on populism, migration, and the sense of belonging. While significant studies have focused on the rise of right-wing populism and its political discourse (Mudde & Rovira Kaltwasser, 2017), there remains limited research on how populist framing influences the lived experiences of refugees and asylum seekers. Most existing studies on populism focus on its impact on national politics and its role in shaping electoral outcomes (Wodak, 2015), yet few explore how this rhetoric affects the individuals it targets, particularly refugees.

By integrating theoretical frameworks such as framing theory (Entman, 1993), othering (Said, 1978), and belonging (Yuval-Davis et al., 2018), this study provides new insights into how populist frames shape refugees’ sense of home in the Netherlands. These concepts, when applied to the context of Dutch politics, offer a new perspective on the intersection between political discourse and individual experiences of belonging through seeking the interceptions between these theories and the empirical data gathered

through qualitative interviews with refugees from Nijmegen and surroundings. Furthermore, this research aims to deepen the understanding of how political rhetoric influences societal inclusion and exclusion, contributing to a broader academic discussion on the consequences of populist politics in contemporary Europe. This study aims to do so by combining the theories of the politics of belonging (Crowley, 1999) emotional attachment and safety (Yuval-Davis, 2011), othering (Said, 1978) and symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1991) to lived experiences of refugees in Nijmegen, the Netherlands to create a theory based empirical supported discourse on this topic.

1.5 Literature review

An important thing that can be found in the literature about populism are many different definitions. Allcock et al. (1968) described it as a 'movement', since the definitions have become more specific. Canovan (1981, 1982) further defined that populists aren't characteristic for their form of organization, but their characteristic way of communicating and their rhetoric. A more recent and explained definition has been created by Mudde (2004) he defines populism as: "an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the *volonté générale* (general will) of the people." Another important part of his definition is that he states populism is a 'thin-centered ideology', "it does not possess 'the same level of intellectual refinement and consistency' as, for example, socialism or liberalism." "As a thin-centred ideology, populism can be easily combined with very different (thin and full) other ideologies, including communism, ecologism, nationalism or socialism (Mudde, 2004)."

Many writings have been published within the topic of right wing populist parties and their characteristic rhetorics. One of these, written by Wodak (2015), contains a list that summarizes some common ways populist parties shape their discourses. According to Wodak (2015) they focus on a nativist homogenous community, stress that a 'homeland' (We) has to be protected against dangerous outsiders (Them). It contains a belief in a common narrative of the past, conspiracies to create a discursive construction of fear, they endorse traditional and conservative values and they support common sense simplistic explanations and solutions. This creates a useable framework and understanding for framing discourses that will be discussed in this research.

While in this research the concept of Othering and Belonging will be applied to migration and refugees in connection with right wing populist parties, there are other aspects to the concept according to Powell & Menendian (2017). They state in their research article that it "may occur along any salient social dimension, such as race, gender, religion, LGBTQ status, ability, or any socially significant marker or characteristic." Even though the topics it can be applied to are very broad, Othering gives us " a framework that allows us to observe and identify a common set of structural processes and dynamics

while remaining sensitive to the particulars of each case (Powell & Menendian, 2017).”

As this research focusses on how framing influences the ‘sense of home’ of refugees other studies have been conducted to discover how other factors make one feel at home when they had to flee their country of origin. Ghorashi (2017) concluded that home was not connected to a territory anymore, but rather “the ‘place’ where I am surrounded by people who give me peace and affirmation as well as the critical feedback I need to feel secure about opening up new horizons in life.” This is an example that senses of home might differ between individuals because they have other things that make them feel safe at a place.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

framing theory: in this research framing is used in the way Entman (1993) described it. ‘To frame is the process of selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described.’ The framing theory will be used to research what feelings populist parties are trying to evoke among voters. This should help understand how they try to impact the process of othering the refugees. According to Korsten (2013), framing is a powerful tool that political actors can use to direct the focus to certain aspects of a debate. Populist parties have been known to frame migration as a crisis, portraying refugees as a threat to national identity, economic stability and social cohesion (Lucardie, 2010). Mudde (2004) stated these frames can be used to create a distinction between the ‘pure people’ and the ‘dangerous outsiders’. This is closely in line with Said’s theory of othering

Othering: The base of this concept was made by Said in his work *Orientalism* (1978) where he describes the process where the West depicts the East as The Other “underdeveloped” and uncivilized society in contradiction to the civilized Western countries. He unravels certain they used in this process, some forms are language, images and power structures. By using the concept of Othering from Said in this research the goal is to see how the process of framing is related to the goal of Othering the refugees in the Netherlands and thereby influencing their sense of home.

These aspects are important in identifying what the major frames are that the populist parties use in their discourse about refugees.

Belonging: An important part of social identity is the feeling of belonging. ‘Belonging is about emotional attachment, about feeling ‘at home’ and, as Michael Ignatieff (2001) points out, about feeling ‘safe’ (Yuval-Davis, 2011). This feeling of ‘safe’ might be influenced by the frames used by populist parties to ‘other’ the status holders and thereby have an effect on their feeling of belonging. In this research belonging will be used as the aforementioned description.

According to De Haene en Derluyn (z.d.), social networks and community acceptance play a role in fostering a sense of home for refugees. The process

of belonging could have a positive influence on these feelings refugees have. As Duyvendak (2011) argues that a sense of home is not just about a physical space, but also about recognition and emotional attachment.

Sense of home: Home is often referred to as a place. In *Place and Placelessness* (Relph, 1976) Relph examines place in depth, he focuses on people's identity of and with place. By the identity of a place, he refers to its "persistent sameness and unity which allows that [place] to be differentiated from others" (Relph 1976, p. 45). Relph describes this persistent identity in terms of three components: (1) the place's physical setting; (2) its activities, situations, and events; and (3) the individual and group meanings created through people's experiences and intentions in regard to that place. In this research these three components will be used to gain knowledge over refugees senses of home and belonging.

Politics of belonging: Crowley (1999) defined the politics of belonging as 'the dirty work of boundary maintenance'. The boundaries that the politics of belonging is concerned with are the boundaries of the political community of belonging, the boundaries that separate the world population into 'us' and 'them' (Yuval-Davis, 2011b). This definition will be used in this research, as it links parts of the "othering and belonging", as well as that it gives an idea about what the populist parties try to achieve with their framing of the target groups. To set boundaries to their feeling of belonging in the Netherlands.

According to Bourdieu (1991), language is not merely a tool to communicate it can be used to exercise power and reinforce social hierarchy. The way people talk and the language they use reflects their social position but in the meantime also affects that social position. This way language can be a powerful tool to create, reproduce and legitimize social inequalities.

To see which frames are dominant in the discourse of the PVV the framing theory of Entman (1993) and the theory about political framing (Korsten, 2013) will be the core theories used for analyzing the dominant frames that emerge. This will be connected to the broader theories of othering (Said, 1978) and populism (Mudde, 2004) by analyzing the interrelationships between the document analysis and the theories we will seek to find an answer to the sub question: What are the major frames that populist parties in the Netherlands use in relation to refugees?

For answering the sub question about what makes refugees feel at home the empirical findings in the interviews will be analyzed by using the theories about emotional safety (Yuval-Davis, 2011), place and placeness (Relph, 1976), sense of home (Duyvendak, 2011) (De Haene & Derluyn, z.d.), and the politics of belonging (Crowley, 1999). By seeking the reflections from the theories in the feelings and statements outed by the participants we seek to uncover the relationships between them and to answer the sub question: What aspects in daily live makes the refugees in Nijmegen feel more at home?

To uncover if refugees have noticed a change in their lived experiences since the rise of populist in the Netherlands, the theories about the politics of belonging (Crowley, 1999), emotional safety (Yuval-Davis, 2011), othering (Said, 1978), and symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1991) will be used in analyzing

the lived experiences of the refugees in Nijmegen. Seeking to make the connection between these experiences and the before mentioned theories we will seek an answer to the sub question: Do refugees notice a change in their lived experiences in the Netherlands since the populist movements have been on the rise?

1.7 Research Design and Research Methodology

The overall approach of this research will be a qualitative in dept case-study. The choice for a qualitative research has been made on the basis of the fact that the aim is to gain a deeper understanding of how refugees themselves give meaning to the populist framing and how that effects their sense of home. The choice for a case study also fits this same view, within the research the focus is on one specific group within a certain context. The best fit to achieve the goal is a the use of a case study on refugee groups in Nijmegen, the Netherlands. The case study makes it possible to try and understand the complex social processes this research aims to understand, like othering and belonging. “Qualitative case study methodology provides tools for researchers to study complex phenomena within their contexts” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 544).

The targeted group in this research is refugees who currently reside in the region of Nijmegen, preferably groups have been here for some time so that they have had time to develop some feelings for the surroundings and some habits. They would also either have been a status holder or currently are one, this because they are the mainly targeted group by PVV. This way of selecting the participants is also referred to as purposive sampling. “Purposeful sampling is widely used in qualitative research for the identification and selection of information-rich cases related to the phenomenon of interest” (Palinkas et al., 2015, p. 533). The aim is have an interview with around 4-6 refugees to gather some.

The Interviews will be semi-structured to give them a base to build further upon during the interview, but to also leave space for it to take a natural form and for some flexibility. It give the chance to gain more insights in how the participants feels about the questions asked, but it also leaves room for their own experience to share. “Semi-structured interviews are well suited for the exploration of the perceptions and opinions of respondents regarding complex and sometimes sensitive issues and enable probing for more information and clarification of answers” (Barriball & While, 1994, p. 330)

1.8 Data Analysis

For the document analysis on the election program of the PVV to see which frames are dominant in their stance on migration a part of the codebook from the master thesis of Dennis Bouwman (2024) is used. He put together a codebook to analyze how the framing of existing parties in the Netherlands was influenced by the rise of populist parties like the LPF and PVV. For this analysis he gathered different sorts of frames: seven frames based on the topic of migration, two types of general frames and three types of frames

focused on aim of the message. To analyze the latest two election programs of the PVV on the topic of framing migration this research only made use of the seven frames focused on the topic of migration.

For this research, thematic analysis as described by Braun & Clarke (2006) will be applied to categorize the responses from interviews with refugees. Thematic analysis allows for the identification of patterns within qualitative data, which will be used to uncover key themes such as 'experiences of othering', 'strategies for belonging', and others. These themes will be organized into meaningful categories to better understand how refugees perceive their sense of home and how populist framing influences their experiences. The analysis will be supported by ATLAS.ti, a software tool that facilitates qualitative data management, enabling a systematic and efficient process of coding and categorizing the data.

To ensure the reliability and validity of the findings, triangulation will be employed. Triangulation involves combining multiple data sources (interviews and document analysis) to validate the results and enhance the robustness of the conclusions (Benders, 2023). By comparing refugees' personal accounts with the political discourse used in populist campaign materials, this approach allows for a deeper understanding of how populist framing influences public opinion and refugee experiences.

Additionally, reflexivity will be a key aspect of the research process. As the researcher, it is crucial to acknowledge my own position and how my background, assumptions, and perspectives may influence the interpretation of the data. Reflexivity helps ensure transparency and provides insight into how the researcher's bias may affect the findings (Finlay, 2002). This awareness will contribute to a more nuanced and critical analysis of the data.

Confidentiality and anonymity are fundamental ethical considerations in this study. To protect the identities of the interview participants, all personal information will be anonymized, and any identifiable details will be omitted from the final report. Additionally, all data will be stored securely on the student's one drive account and in RIS to prevent unauthorized access.

Informed consent will be obtained from all participants prior to conducting interviews. Participants will be fully informed about the nature of the research, their voluntary involvement, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence. This process will ensure that participants' rights are respected, and their participation is based on a clear understanding of the research process.

The use of ATLAS.ti will further support the ethical handling of data, as it provides tools for managing and organizing qualitative data securely. This software allows for efficient coding and analysis while maintaining the confidentiality of the participants' information.

1.9 Potential considerations and limitations

There are some considerations that have to be taken into account about the limitations of this thesis. First of all, it was conducted in the city of Nijmegen.

Which is considered to be voting 'left' during elections more than average in The Netherlands. This means that the right-wing populist parties have less influence in the region. This might have an influence on how the lived experiences of refugees have an effect on their 'sense of home'.

The research also in conducted by a white male with a western background, this might result in a different perspective or a lack of knowledge on certain topics. Resulting in an incomplete preparation to get the best results and get a more inclusive conclusion on the topic.

Another limitation might be a language barrier. At the moment of writing it is yet unknown who will participate in the research, so there might be a possibility that the parcticipants are not fluent in speaking English. This problem could be solved by using a translator, but this might result in some information that could get lost in the translation process or due to the less direct contact with the participant.

1.10 Research plan

To do:		9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
Week number:		9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
Hand in research proposal		Yellow																
Process feedback proposal			Blue	Blue	Blue	Yellow												
Answer sub question 1						Blue	Blue	Red										
Answer sub question 2								Blue	Blue	Red								
Answer sub question 3										Blue	Blue	Red						
Write results/conclusion/discussion												Blue	Blue	Red				

2. Results

2.1

To conduct research on how the sense of home of refugees is affected by dramatic frames used by the PVV we need to gain insight in which frames are being used the most. In the political landscape frames can be found in almost every form of communication used by the political parties. To see how these frames operate the political atmosphere of the PVV we will look at their two most recently published election programs. 'Nederland weer op 1' (The Netherlands back on 1) is their election program used in the 2023 parliamentary election where they ended up becoming the biggest political party in the Dutch parliament with 37 out of 150 seats available. The one before that, 'Het gaat om u' (It is about you), was used for the elections in 2021 where the PVV ended up third with 17 out of the 150 seats. This chapter analyzes these two most recent election programs to answer the question: What are the major frames that populist parties in the Netherlands use in relation to refugees?

By identifying and categorizing these frames, we create an empirical base to analyze how these frames might have an effect on the way refugees feel at home in the Netherlands. To construct this empirical base, this chapter uses Entman's (1993) framing theory, Korsten's (2013) view of political framing and the broader theories of othering (Said, 1978) and populism (Mudde, 2004) as analytical tools.

Selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and making them stand out more in communicated texts, in such a way to promote a specific problem is a part of framing as Entman (1993) defines it. According to Korsten (2013) political actors use framing to steer the public's attention and thereby creating a dominant view on complex issues, often simplifying it in such a way that it polarizes moral conflicts. In populist discourse, this often translates into a dualistic worldview: morally pure "people" and the threatening "other" (Mudde, 2004).

When these frames are used in fundamental political documents, such as election programs, they are part of more than an opinion, they actively contribute to creating political meanings. This political meaning has real effects as it shapes public opinion, policy debates and possibly the social atmosphere experienced by the refugees these messages apply to. This aligns with Said's (1978) idea of othering, which explains how dominant discourses label and marginalize groups through symbolic boundaries.

In his master's thesis Dennis Bouwman (2024) conducted a research about if the frames used on the topic of migration by long existing Dutch political parties VVD and PvdA had changed since the rise of populist parties LPF and PVV. To gain an insight in if the frames used changed with the rise of populist parties he set up a codebook based on framing literature. The codebook identifies specific migration related frames. Specifically for a research on the Dutch migration and integration political debate multiple frames have been established between 1995 and 2005 (Roggeband and Vliegthart, 2007). These frames are: the Multicultural frame, Emancipation frame, Restrictive

frame, Islam-as-a-threat frame all. The victim frame also included in this research was replaced by the victim frame as described by van Gorp (2005). The intruder frame used described by van Gorp (2005) was also included. The last addition made was adding the economic consequences frame (Smetho & Valkenburg, 2000).

By applying this codebook to the PVV's latest two election programs (2021: it is about you and 2023: The Netherlands back on 1), we can systematically determine which frames are dominant, how the framing evolved in a small period of time and how it aligns with the theories. The analysis has been conducted by coding the programs and calculating their frequency relative to the total number of frames used.

		📄 2: PVV verkiezingsprogramma TK 2021 definitief 👤 44	Totals
● ◇ economic consequences frame	👤 11	4 8,00%	4 8,00%
◇ emancipation frame	👤 0		0 0,00%
● ◇ intruder frame	👤 20	10 20,00%	10 20,00%
● ◇ islam-as-threat frame	👤 34	22 44,00%	22 44,00%
◇ multicultural frame	👤 0		0 0,00%
● ◇ restrictive frame	👤 31	14 28,00%	14 28,00%
◇ victim frame	👤 0		0 0,00%
Totals		50 100,00%	50 100,00%

Figure 1, oversight of frames used in the 2021 election program by the PVV

Figure 1 shows that in their 2021 election program the PVV used the Islam-as-a-threat frame a total of 22 times, which makes up 44% of the frames used on the migration topic. This frame fits directly in Entman's (1993) definition of framing as problem definition. The second most used frame is the 2021 election program is the restrictive frame, which accounted for 28% of the codes used. This frames' primary

function is to propose a solution to the perceived crisis created by the use of the other frames. In third place we can see that the intruder frame has been used 10 times and it makes up 10% of the frames used. It focuses in claims that migrants use the social housing and welfare intended for Dutch citizens. It aligns with Entman's (1993) statements of causal interpretation, implying that "others" are to be blamed for the scarcity of these things. Overall they aim to frame the debate like the immigrants are a threat to our society, that we need to aim to restrict it more and that the immigrants take away help from the "real" Dutch people.

		📄 1: PVV-Verkiezingsprogramma-2023 👤 43	Totals
● ◇ economic consequences frame	👤 11	7 15,22%	7 15,22%
◇ emancipation frame	👤 0		0 0,00%
● ◇ intruder frame	👤 20	10 21,74%	10 21,74%
● ◇ islam-as-threat frame	👤 34	12 26,09%	12 26,09%
◇ multicultural frame	👤 0		0 0,00%
● ◇ restrictive frame	👤 31	17 36,96%	17 36,96%
◇ victim frame	👤 0		0 0,00%

Figure 1, oversight of frames used in the 2023 election program by the PVV

In their election program for the 2023 elections we can see that a shift has occurred. Figure 2 shows that the restrictive frame is used 17 times and makes up 36,96% of the frames used, while the Islam-as-a-threat frame is now the second most used frame, making up 26,09% of the frames used with 12 uses. This suggests that while culture threat is still a theme, the PVV shifted to framing migration as

a policy failure and that it overloads the system, a move that connects that created threat of migration to broader concerns of the voters like housing and healthcare. This shift illustrates an adaptive framing strategy aimed at more electoral resonance. The intruder frame is still the third most used frame, making up 21,74% of the used frames. Underlining the statements made about refugees take away housing and welfare from the Dutch.

Overall it is clear to see which of these frames are used the most by the PVV in their election programs over the last 4 years. The programs show that they try to frame migration as a threat to our safety by stating that the Islam is the enemy and we should not let them into our country. They try to convince the people in the Netherlands this threat is so serious we should let less people come into our country and that we should “close” the borders. This is in line with the idea of Entman, promoting a particular problem. This also aligns with Mudde (2004) who stated that populist parties try to create a divide between “dangerous outsiders” and the “pure people”, while also emphasizing the sense of a cultural and moral threat. This brings us to the next frame that is one of the most used. Restricting the amount of people coming in. They mention it in a lot of different ways. The following quotes are an example of the different ways of framing they use, but they also reflect the framing logic used by the PVV:

“Het sluiten van onze grenzen voor nog meer gelukszoekers uit andere culturen is daarbij noodzakelijk.”

(“Closing our borders for even more fortune seekers from other cultures is thereby necessary.”) Quote 1:3 (vk2023)

“En het is onverantwoord dat tot op de dag van vandaag een letterlijk ongelimiteerde asielinstroom wordt toegestaan.”

(“And it is irresponsible that to this day a literally unlimited influx of asylum seekers is allowed.”) Quote 1:8 (vk2023)

“De PVV wil dan ook dat de studiemigratie fors wordt beperkt.”

(“The PVV therefore wants study migration to be significantly limited.”) quote 1:37 (vk2023)

These quotes combine multiple elements found in framing and clearly show Entman’s (1993) framing process. They state the problem, the unlimited amount of migrants coming into the country. Followed by a moral judgement, it is irresponsible, and ends with a simple and clear solution, closing the borders. The intruder frame often aligns with another aspect of framing, the delegitimization of refugees. Implying that the reason the refugees left their country are not valid enough to seek refuge here.

The shift made from prioritizing the Islam-as-a-threat frame to the restrictive frame also shows connections to Korsten’s (2013) concept of framing as an adjustable political tool. While the cultural threat dominated in 2021, the PVV adapted its framing strategy to the electoral opportunities. Where the Islam-as-a-threat frame focused more on the problem stating part of Entman’s (1993) process, the restricting frame is directed to the solution part, showing the electorate how they will handle the problem.

While the shift from problem stating to offering a solution was made, the consistent use of the intruder frame shows a lasting symbolic exclusion of refugees from Dutch society. This not only connects to Said's (1978) concept of othering, it also reinforces it. Refugees are not only pictured as outsiders, but as illegal occupier of houses and welfare.

For the answer on sub question one:

What are the major frames that populist parties in the Netherlands use in relation to refugees?

We can see that the PVV used problem stating and solution offering frames, as the Islam-as-a-threat and Intruder frame showed the perceived problems the Netherlands is facing and the Restrictive frame as solution were the most used frames in both election programs. But all these frames serve one uniform goal, delegitimizing the presence of refugees in the Netherlands. Using the lenses of Entman, Korsten, Mudde and Said has shown that these frames are not merely political goals, but they form a key in understanding how political discourse can affect a refugees perception of Dutch society and their ability to rebuild their sense of home in the Netherlands.

2.2

To understand what creates a sense of home among refugees living in Nijmegen, three qualitative interviews have been conducted with four participants who are all refugees housed in Asylum Reception Centers or refugees who have recently moved to independent living in Nijmegen and surroundings. The interviews aimed to reveal the key factors which influence the emotional, social and physical sense of home of refugees. But also to place these lived experiences in the broader context of belonging, place and identity. This chapter does not only present empirical findings, but critically analyses them through academic theories to answer the question: What aspects in daily live makes the refugees in Nijmegen feel more at home? After this analysis it creates a synthesis that shows how placemaking, emotional safety and recognition are all involved in the lived experiences of refugees.

The analyses is structured around three key factors which appeared in both the interviews and the theory, emotional safety, social environment and networks, and spatial conditions. These are all interrelated dimensions and with interacting with each other they shape a refugee's sense of home and feeling of belonging in Nijmegen. The analysis is grounded in theoretical framework of Yuval-Davis (2011), Relph (1976), Duyvendak (2011), De Haene & Derluyn (z.d.), and the politics of belonging (Crowley, 1999).

Being able to live without fear was a first step to feeling safe and attributed to their feeling of home. It was constantly emphasized by all participants that this was foundational to their feeling of home and did not only consist of the absence of immediate danger, but also the presence of emotional security and predictability in daily life. Participant 4, a 23 year old refugee from Yemen described how his sense of home only started rebuilding after leaving the

Asylum Reception Center in Ter-Apel and settling in his own room in Nijmegen:

“I just started to feel home because also in Nijmegen, especially in Nijmegen, people here are too friendly. And yeah, you feel safe and you feel with your home.”

In this case safety does not only refer to the absence of violence, but also to the comfort of knowing that his own environment is stable and non-threatening. His move from a crowded and uncertain Reception Center to a private room in Nijmegen marked a significant change in his ability to develop emotional attachments. This is in line with Yuval-Davis (2011) concept of belonging as “emotional attachment...about feeling safe.” His feeling of home in this context, was only possible after a foundation of security was established. Refugees need to not only be physically removed from danger, but also psychologically and emotionally separated from that hazards that displacement brings. Participant 3, a 41-year old man from Syria, described a similar feeling. Before being politically prosecuted he had taken safety for granted, but now he realized what a core actor safety was for his sense of home:

“You feel yourself always safe in your country. So you don’t ask this question [about feeling at home].”

Here, the feeling of home was revealed through its absence. The statement aligns with the politics of belonging as formulated by Crowley (1999) and Yuval-Davis (2011) they claim that the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion are emotional and political. Belonging is about this emotional attachment, about feeling at home and about feeling safe. Not only is it a foundation to feel safe if you want to feel home somewhere, but it is essential for refugees to allow them to rebuild their identity and relationships. Safety often is the very reason for refugees to leave their “home” country. Participant 4 further stated:

“If you are in your house, you are safe, even from every kind of people, from every problems. Yeah. So, you feel with your home.”

His feeling of safety aligns with Yuval-Davis’s concept that “safety is not simply the absence of violence, but the emotional stability that allows for attachment and trust.” He explained in his interview that the feeling of safety allowed him to develop emotional presence again. This shows that safety is necessary for emotional restoration and future orientation, both of which are important aspects of the belonging process as expressed by Yuval-Davis (2011) and Duyvendak (2011).

After safety another aspect repeatedly mentioned during the interviews was the social environment in Nijmegen. Participants stated how the friendliness towards refugees of local residents contributed positively to their lived experiences. Participant 4 stated:

“In Nijmegen, especially in Nijmegen, people here are too friendly.”

The presence of friendliness is not only a surface level thing. It plays a key role in constructing what Duyvendak (2011) would call “recognition”, being seen and feel accepted in a community. He emphasized that this attitude helped

him shift his lived experience from alienation to belonging. Participants 1 and 2 also emphasized the friendliness and even just the presence of Dutch volunteers at language cafés, vegetable gardens, and other community activities. They gave them space to interact with Dutch society outside of the isolated asylum procedures and provided an emotional buffer. One quote was a good illustration:

“We worked as volunteers together with Dutch people. That was nice for us. Speaking Dutch. Practicing. Meeting new people.”

These daily interactions with these helpful people led into feeling more positive about their new environment. It let them feel like they were part of a broader society and something bigger than their own struggles. This is strongly tied with De Haene & Derluyn’s (z.d.) claim that social networks and acceptance in the community are essential in creating a sense of home. Even light forms of interactions, if experienced regularly and positive, can contribute to a basic sense of belonging in a society.

Participant 3 mentioned similar experiences with the openness of the local community. By volunteering at the local food bank and initiatives such as Buddy2Buddy he was able to rebuild relationships that helped him feel included in society. It made him feel like not just a receiver of aid, but as someone who actively contributed to society. He said:

“I feel that I am welcome here in the Netherlands.”

This is a clear example of Relph’s (1976) perception of place identity. According to Relph, a sense of place is a combination of three interrelated components: physical setting, activities and events, and individual or group meanings. The experiences of participant 3 show that the activities and events he is a part of by volunteering have more than just a functional meaning, they make him feel part of a group and show to him and others that he belongs. The feeling of belonging built on the recognition and social participation experienced by all participants are part of what Duyvendak (2011) identifies as essential components of feeling at home.

It was not just social interactions and environment or the feeling of safety and the absence of violence which made the participants feel at home. As one of the key elements according to Relph (1976) the physical setting had an important role as well, participant 4 described how the move to a private room and stable housing allowed him to begin feeling at home:

“Now I have my own room. And it’s quiet. And I feel safe. That helps a lot.”

This key factor, a quiet, private space is not just an improvement, it can transform the way an individual relates to his environment. He stated that the physical setting he was living in now supported him in growing his sense of home. Participants 1 and 2 shared this feeling. They mentioned that living with all 3 of them in one room for 2 years makes it hard to have their own private spaces where they can fully relax and not be surrounded by others. It was one of the only things which would majorly help their sense of home. This again

emphasizes the relation between physical space and emotional stability, both of which are key factors in rebuilding a sense of home.

The last component of Relph's place identity, meaning, is also noticeable. Participant 4 captured this component well when he said:

"I feel obligated to give something back to the Dutch society. Through good work, volunteering, paid work, paying taxes. This is my idea."

This shows that after he felt safe, stable and confident enough in his new environment he was able to see a future. To be of meaning to his new environment and to the society he felt he belonged to. This also highlights the fact that belonging is constructed through activity and recognition. Which backs Duyvendak's (2011) argument that home is not merely a physical place, but a product of recognition and engagement. Refugees cannot simply move to a place and feel at home, they have to rebuild that feeling through relationship building and contributing.

This shows that the sense of home is created through the interrelationship between security (Yuval-Davis), place (Relph), and social recognition (Duyvendak). The ability for an individual to engage with its social environment is vital to rebuild a sense of home. The data demonstrates that place making is based on the lived experiences, it relies on daily routines, interactions with their new environment, and meaningful participation in society.

The emphasis of all participants on how friendly and welcoming their surroundings were suggest that they have an underlying awareness of how different an environment could be. They show an unspoken contrast to other experiences, rejection, racism, which underlines how important inclusion is for refugees. This shows how the politics of belonging as described by Crowley (1999), where social boundaries are frequently maintained, always have a role, even in clearly welcoming environments.

This perspective is even more critical when you connect it to the broader national discourse on migration, as analyzed in the previous chapter. Where communities like Nijmegen show a warm and welcoming environment, the national political rhetoric of parties like the PVV frame refugees as burdens and as a threat. This emphasis on the appreciation and contribution can suggest an idea that they have to deserve their place, a concept Yuval-Davis (2011) described as conditional belonging.

To conclude, the data of refugees in Nijmegen shows that a sense of home is built through the interrelationship emotional safety, supportive social environments, and stable and safe physical spaces. These findings are deeply woven into the academic theories of belonging and place identity. Refugees are actively shaping and rebuilding their home through everyday actions and relationships, they are not just passive recipients of a new home. Refugees in Nijmegen feel at home not simply because of where they live, but because of how that place allows them to feel safe, to be seen, and to participate in society.

2.3

This chapter examines if and how refugees in Nijmegen have noticed changes in their lived experiences since the rise of political parties in the Netherlands. It analyzes qualitative interviews with four refugees through integrating their perspectives with the theoretical framework consisting of the politics of belonging (Crowley, 1999), emotional attachment and safety (Yuval-Davis, 2011), the concept of othering (Said, 1978), and Bourdieu's (1991) concept of symbolic power. Where the previous chapter revealed a lot of positive experiences by the refugees in Nijmegen, the interviews also reveal that the symbolic and emotional consequences of populist framing have an effect. This chapter will explore how this broader national shift in discourse interact with personal lived experiences of refugees and answer the question: Do refugees notice a change in their lived experiences in the Netherlands since the populist movements have been on the rise?

Even though the broader feeling about creating a sense of home was mere positive, all of the participants were aware of the national context. Where populist parties frame the refugees as if there is a crisis. This national context fits in Crowley's (1999) concept of the politics of belonging. This involves "the dirty work of boundary maintenance", the ongoing effort to define who belongs and who does not. Yuval-Davis (2011b) expands on this by describing how political discourse draws boundaries between "us" and "them," often to the prejudice of marginalized groups.

Participant 4 felt a little emotionally affected by the anti-immigrant statements made by Geert Wilders:

"Of course, it affects my feelings because... maybe he will do it. So that will affect my emotional [state]... It makes me sad."

This quote displays a broader theme among the participants. The fear that the political rhetoric, even if it cannot yet be found in policies, might become reality. It shows how symbolic violence, the threat of being excluded, can have a negative impact on emotional safety. One of the key factors for belonging disclosed by Yuval-Davis (2011) and discussed in chapter 1 of the results. Even if Nijmegen as an environment feels safe, the fear introduced by the national discourse produces a constant anxiety in the background. Although participant 4 felt safe and welcome in Nijmegen, the threat of political changes in regard to the populist frames effected his psychological wellbeing and his sense of safety in the future.

Participant 3 showed a contractionary opinion, he stated that he did not feel targeted as an individual, because of his secular and leftist background:

"I come from a completely leftist background. I am against all religious ideologies, especially those that limit women's rights. So when I hear these things [from Wilders], I don't feel personally attacked."

However, this sense of exemption is also built on him distancing himself from the generalized image of the refugee as portrayed in populists frames. The next statement highlights his issue with the homogenizing narratives.

“They always talk about newcomers as if it’s one group. But everyone has their own story.”

This is an example of Said’s (1978) theory of othering, which describes how complicated individuals are reduced to simplistic stereotypes that serve the political goals of the dominant group. Populist framing constructs a threatening refugee identity that excludes all of them from the national discourse of belonging, by failing to recognize individual stories and contexts. By homogenizing all refugees the populist parties try exclude every one of them from the possibility of becoming ‘truly Dutch’ and so making it harder for them to integrate in the Dutch society.

But he did see the challenges that arose as the different cultures have their differences.

Even though participant 3 has never experienced direct discrimination, he did express his concerns that if migrants are not integrated into broader Dutch society, the tensions might get worse over time as the differences in cultures could cause problems driven by the boundaries shaped through the political discourse:

“There is a difference in culture about women’s rights, about how society works. And if people isolate into closed communities, it becomes a problem for the future. Not dangerous now, but not good.”

The participant showed that he values cultural integration and recognizes the challenges. But he also critiques the way populist parties emphasize the division rather than offering ways for connecting. This again shows how Crowley’s (1999) idea that the politics of belonging is not merely about inclusion, but also about exclusion and often about ruling out the possibility of inclusion all together.

Participants 1 and 2, a Turkish couple, shared this double perspective. They were aware of the negative image some political parties try to shape of refugees, but responded with critique and some understanding. They acknowledge that many Dutch people are concerned about migration but stressed that not all refugees are the same:

“We understand why some Dutch people think too many people come. But not all asylum seekers are the same. Some come from really dangerous situations.”

This is an example of what Yuval-Davis (2011) would call “the conditional nature of belonging.” Refugees constantly have to prove themselves worthy of inclusion and belonging by distancing themselves from the generalized and framed “problem group”. By doing this, they embody the moral boundaries set by the political discourse. This was illustrated by how they emphasized their efforts to integrate and contribute to Dutch society:

“We work, we learn Dutch, we try to do everything right.”

This idea shows they feel the pressure to show they are a “good immigrant”, a figure created not through fundamental human dignity, but through functional value to the host society, to gain social legitimacy. This is deeply embedded in

the politics of belonging (Crowley, 1999), where inclusion is not a guarantee but must consistently be earned.

They also showed doubts in their interview. They were grateful for how they got these opportunities in the Netherlands and for the safety provided, but they also felt discomfort in how they are constantly evaluated by the lens of public discourse. Even though they haven't encountered any negative experiences themselves, this discomfort shows that they are aware of how their presence is perceived in broader Dutch society.

This uncertainty shows the emotional effects of symbolic exclusion. As Yuval-Davis states and mentioned in previous chapters, belonging is not merely about legal rights or physical presence but involves emotional security and recognition. The moment refugees notice that their belonging is fragile or conditional, it affects their ability to fully participate in and connect to their new environment.

All of the interviews show that the populist framing of refugees as the "outsiders" or threats does not directly convert into more cases with discrimination or exclusion at the personal level. Yet, the impact is still significant. It creates an emotional climate where the sense of being watched and judged shapes how refugees think about their future, how confident they feel in rebuilding relationships, and how they interpret interactions with other individuals. This aligns with Bourdieu's (1991) idea of symbolic power, the ability to impose meanings and norms that define social reality. Populist discourse, although not always directly imbedded in policy, imposes a reality where the refugee is framed as a crisis, intruder and outsider.

The emotional environment created by the populist discourse is inherent to the experience of refugees. It does not necessarily result in direct exclusion but it produces a fragile sense of belonging. Refugees can live in safety, participate in society, and rebuild their connections, but they do so under the threat of possible rejection. Their sense of home, created through place, participation and relationships remains fragile.

In conclusion, while refugees living in Nijmegen and surroundings have not noticed significant changes in their day to day treatment as a result of the rise of populist parties in the Netherlands, they have noticed changes in the public debate and the discursive climate, how they are talked about, the way they are framed and as a result the emotional atmosphere it creates. This emotional atmosphere does have consequences for their lived experience, especially in their feeling of safety, how they look at the future and how they feel connected to Dutch society. The populists activities of othering has some actual effects as it generates stress and can complicate the process for refugees of rebuilding their lives.

3. Discussion

This chapter gives a comprehensive discussion on the findings obtained from the empirical research conducted for this thesis, linking them with the original

research question, sub questions, theoretical framework, and methodological approach. The main research question: What kind of influence do the frames that populist parties use have on the targeted refugee's groups 'sense of home' in Nijmegen, the Netherlands? Was answered through three sub questions. These sub questions gave structure to the analytical purpose of the research: 1. What are the major frames that populist parties in the Netherlands use in relation to refugees?, 2. What aspects makes the refugees in Nijmegen feel more at home?, 3. Do refugees notice a change in their lived experiences in the Netherlands since the populist movements have been on the rise? This discussion integrates these sub questions, links them to the used theories and reflects critically on the implications for both academic literature and future policies.

The empirical document analysis of the PVV's 2021 and 2023 election programs revealed a frequent and consistent use three key frames: the Islam-as-a-threat frame, the restrictive frame and the intruder frame. These frame align undoubtedly with Entman's (1993) notion of framing as a selective process that defines problems, attributes causes, makes moral evaluations, and recommends treatments. The PVV uses these frames to situate refugees as an existential threat to Dutch values, a burden to public resources and a group who's traveling to the Netherlands is in need of urgent restriction.

Each frame has a distinct function in the populist discourse on migration. The Islam-as-a-threat frame which was the most dominant in 2021 focuses on the cultural differences and religious extremism as the primary problems of migration. This reflects with Mudde's (2004) notion that the populist discourse tries to create a moral distinction between the "pure people" and the "threatening other." The restrictive frame, which gained dominance in 2023, reflects a shift towards more technical problems as housing shortage, pressure on healthcare and immigration quotas, offering a more policy oriented motivation for the exclusion of refugees. The intruder frame, which remained stable across both years, is especially effective in moralizing the welfare allocation and raising resentment among Dutch citizens, claiming that refugees unfairly benefit from services meant for Dutch nationals.

These frames do not merely have a rhetorical function. As argued by Bourdieu (1991), symbolic power lies in the ability to define the debate and make these definitions seem like they belong there. Through repeated use in election programs, media appearances, and political debates, populist parties introduce a dominant frame and view on refugees that extends beyond the political boundaries into everyday life and interactions. What reemerges is a strong discourse that goes beyond the political discourse and becomes rooted in the social environment.

Crucially, these frames create a foundation for what Said (1978) describes as othering. By homogenizing refugees and presenting them as culturally significantly different or economically opportunistic, they get excluded from the imagined national community. This process uses boundary drawing which is a key factor in Crowley's (1999) concept of the politics of belonging, which conceptualizes inclusion and exclusion as political tools which can be used to keep control over the social environment in a society. Making populist

framing a tool not merely used for convincing the electoral, but for shaping the symbolic boundaries for the feeling of belonging.

Where the populist political discourse tries to exclude, the lived experiences of refugees in Nijmegen shape a contrasting viewpoint to this symbolic and emotional violence. Through the qualitative interviews conducted with four participants three key factors and critical dimensions emerged that play a role in the refugees' sense of home: emotional safety, social engagement, and spatial stability. These findings are deeply acquainted with the theoretical contributions of Yuval-Davis (2011), Duyvendak (2011), Relph (1976), and De Haene and Derluyn (z.d.).

Emotional safety emerged as the most critical and necessary condition for feeling at home. All participants consistently showed signs that without the safety of physical and emotional security, no further form of attachment was able to develop. This finding is directly in line with Yuval-Davis's (2011) reports that a sense of belonging is dependent on emotional safety, not merely on legal status or a residency. One participant made it clear: "If you are in your house, you are safe... so, you feel with your home." This experience of safety however was not uniformly agreed upon, it varied from dependence on housing to encounters with institutions, and friendliness in their new social environment. But it was also influenced by the perceived hostility in the political discourse on refugees.

The importance of the key element of social environment and relationships was fairly equal to emotional safety. Participants all repeatedly mentioned the friendliness of the residents of Nijmegen, the welcoming nature of volunteers at activities they joined, and their own active participation in the community as key factors in their sense of belonging. These factors share what Duyvendak (2011) calls recognition, a foundational component of emotional and symbolic integration in the local society. Participating in local initiatives such as language cafés, Buddy2Buddy and volunteer work in community gardens and at festivals not only allowed the participants to practice their Dutch, but to feel valued and part of their new social environment. These everyday experiences of inclusion demonstrate how social networks can counteract an exclusionary discourse, but it cannot erase the effects as was shown in chapter 3 of the results.

The spatial stability, place identity as described by Relph (1976), also played a role in rebuilding the refugees' sense of home. The transition from shared rooms in Asylum housing to private accommodation marked a symbolic turning point in their feelings. This private space was more than a room to shelter, it gave them a material foundation for emotional stability, planning a future. This shift was not merely spatial, as they moved into private rooms they started thinking about how to give back to their new societies, reflecting Duyvendak's (2011) notion that home is the foundation for comfort and for moral engagement.

These findings show that the simplistic and homogenizing image of refugees created by the populist rhetoric can be challenged. They show that home is relational achievement and not just a given thing by the host society, that it is

built through interactions, stability and symbolic inclusion. Yet this achievement remains fragile.

Despite local successes in integration and inclusion, refugees in Nijmegen are isolated from the national climate of populist discourse. All participants were aware of how they are portrayed in political debates and in the media. This awareness embodied itself in various ways: anxiety about possible future policies, discomfort about constantly being viewed and evaluated, and concerned about being the “undeserving refugee.”

Participant 3, for example, stated that while he did not feel personally attacked, the constant homogenization of refugees was troubling him: “They always talk about newcomers as if it’s one group. But everyone has their own story.” This shows the emotional exhausting process of resisting the symbolic exclusion, of constantly showing one’s individuality. Meanwhile participant 4 expressed direct anxiety about the intentions of Geert Wilders statements, fearing that the discourse might become implemented in policy.

Participants 1 and 2, a Turkish couple, showed internal discomfort. They were grateful for the safety and opportunities they had found in the Netherlands, but also felt the pressure to constantly prove themselves as the “good refugees” worthy of receiving this aid, by contributing to society and learning the language. This reflects Yuval-Davis (2011) idea of conditional belonging, where acceptance in the new society is contingent on visible contributions, and alignment with the local norms. It also shows a part of what Bourdieu (1991) calls symbolic violence, the embodiment of the external evaluations that shape how individuals see themselves.

This national atmosphere resulting in fear, self-monitoring and symbolic violence, establishes a less visible part of the refugee experience. It does not take the direct form of explicit exclusion, but of constant insecurity, the feeling that one’s place in society is not so certain. This divide between local inclusion and national exclusion results in a fragile feeling of belonging.

Combining the insights gained from all three sub questions, a complex picture with multiple layers emerges. Populist parties create a picture of refugees as cultural, economic, and social threats through strategic use of framing. These frames do not only represent and reflect opinions, they form the foundation for forming symbolic boundaries that shape the limits of national belonging. Their effects can be seen external, through shaping populist and political discourse, and internal, by effecting how refugees see themselves and their place in society. These findings show that the symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1991) can be kept by party through defining problems, attributing causes and making moral evaluations as described by Entman’s (1993) notion of framing. By creating boundaries as described in Crowley’s (1999) concept of the politics of belonging through the process of othering (Said (1978) we see characterization of populism as a discourse that constructs a clear divide between the “pure people” and the “evil and corrupt other” (Mudde, 2004).

Yet, this symbolic terrain does not remain unchallenged. Refugees in Nijmegen demonstrate agency, flexibility, and relational creativity in rebuilding their lives that challenge their exclusion. They rebuild their sense of home

through finding emotional stability, social contribution and spatial stability. These findings show the interaction and the interception between the theories of Yuval-Davis (2011), Duyvendak (2011), Relph (1976), and Bourdieu (1991): belonging is not a binary state, but a negotiated, performative, and often fragile achievement.

We can also underscore a central contradiction: while refugees experience Nijmegen as a safe environment full of possibilities, they simultaneously live in a national atmosphere that seeks to mark them as “the other.” This contradiction is not simply a tension between the local and national scales, but a defining characteristic of the refugee experience in Europe today.

To understand the mechanics behind this required a theoretical approach that included the emotional, symbolic and material dimensions of belonging, and a methodological approach that centered the refugees experiences. The combination of document analysis and qualitative interviews proved effective in reaching this goal. The document analysis grounded the research in the symbolic structures of the political discourse, while the interviews revealed how those structures were lived, experienced, resisted and reproduced.

Based on this analysis, three key recommendations can be made, one for praxis and two for further academical research.

Policy recommendation: Institutionalizing local inclusion initiatives

National and local governments should invest in encouraging and protecting the kinds of local initiatives that refugees in Nijmegen named as the ones with the most impact in rebuilding their sense of home. Part of this is policies that support rapid access to private and stable housing to support emotional and spatial safety. Furthermore it should include structural support for community based volunteer programs that lay the foundation for meaningful interaction between refugees and volunteers from the host society. These initiatives should not be seen as a replacement for current methods, but as complimentary and essential for the integration of refugees.

Academic recommendations: emotional citizenship and comparative research

The findings in this study form a foundation for further research in the development of emotional citizenship. The idea that belonging includes more than just rights and participation, but also the capacity to feel safe, recognized and legitimate. Future research could investigate how refugees and other marginalized groups cope with this negative symbolic boundary work and emotional exclusion in the context of the rise of populism. Other recommendations could be elaborating this study by setting comparative studies in other cities in the Netherlands to see how big the impact of the local environment actually is.

4. Conclusion

This study is set out to find an answer to the research question: what kind of influence do the frames that populist parties use have on the targeted refugee groups' sense of home in Nijmegen, the Netherlands? In search for an answer to this, the study combined a framing analysis of election programs from the PVV with qualitative interviews with four refugees living in Nijmegen or the surroundings of Nijmegen. By connecting and integrating these two sorts of data through a theoretical framework embedded in the works of Entman, Yuval-Davis, Said, Crowley, Duyvendak, Relph, and Bourdieu, a more complete image of the relationship between the framing of populist parties in the political discourse and lived experiences of refugees has been revealed.

The analysis of the latest two election programs of the PVV showed that their discourse is focused on three dominant frames when talking about refugees: the Islam-as-a-threat frame, the restrictive frame, and the intruder frame. All of them contribute in different ways to the broader narrative which frames refugees not as individuals with their own story and history, but as one homogenized symbol of crisis, threat and unfair receivers of welfare. The Islam-as-a-threat frame creates an image of refugees, particularly those with a Muslim background, as culturally not compatible with Dutch values, playing with the fears of losing Dutch culture in society. The restrictive frame focuses on the numerical challenge, and the need for severe immigration control, presenting refugees as the problem for the Dutch welfare and housing problems. Lastly the intruder frame sees them as unfair users of the social services, thereby creating displeasure among citizens who feel disadvantaged and led to believe their own compensations are compromised.

These frames serve to picture the refugees symbolically as the "other." Reinforcing the sense of a national in-group. As described by Entman (1993), these frames selectively highlight certain aspects of the migration debate to promote certain solutions. They do more than play a part as strategies in discourses, they are part of constructing the as a problem that must be managed, mitigated or prevented. This symbolic making of boundaries is part of Crowley's (1999) politics of belonging, in which social boundaries are constantly relocated to maintain exclusionary definitions of who is allowed to belong and who is not. In this context the PVV's rhetoric acts as a form of exercising symbolic power, affecting not only the national debate but also the everyday realities of those who it targets.

The interviews conducted with refugees in Nijmegen provided a counterpoint to this analysis. Even though none of the participants had experienced discrimination in their day-to-day lives, all of them expressed a clear awareness of the national discourse on refugees. This awareness impacted their emotional well-being, sense of security, and views on the future. One participant spoke about how the statements made by Geert Wilders made him feel anxious, while others described a sense of having to prove their worth to Dutch society, learning the language, volunteering, or having to clearly distance themselves from the generalized negative image in order to be perceived as the "good" refugee.

What emerged from these interviews is a tension between inclusion at local level and exclusion at the national level. Nijmegen was described by all as a

warm and welcoming place, where friendliness dominated. Playing a central role in helping the refugees feel like they belonged were the social relationships with Dutch citizens through volunteering, and language cafés. Stable housing was another critical factor for refugees to rebuild their sense of home. These empirical findings related to the theories of Yuval-Davis (2011), and Duyvendak (2011) that belonging is not just a physical or legal status, but an emotional condition built on safety, recognition and participation.

But this fragile sense of belonging is constantly undermined by the symbolic exclusion created by the populist political discourse. Even while the day-to-day lived experiences are positive, the knowledge that one's belonging in society is constantly being reviewed creates a background stress. A sense that one's presence is conditional and that the belonging could be revoked depending on political developments. This reflected Bourdieu's (1991) theory about symbolic power, where power operates through changing the meanings and categories that shape an individuals' understanding of themselves and their place in society.

In this context it becomes clear that populist framing does influence refugees' sense of home, not direct by impacting their experiences. But by reshaping the symbolic context where those experiences take place. Refugees in Nijmegen actively shape their own belonging through everyday practices and engagement, contribution and adaptation. But their efforts are constantly evaluated against a discourse that seeks to exclude them from the moral and cultural boundaries of the nation's society.

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