Navigating Normality

A Study on the Experiences of International Muslim Students at Leiden University

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Chapter 1
The Starting Point
Framing the Notion of Normality

In the realm of everyday life, phenomena seem to have an almost unfathomably paradoxical quality; the picture that at a distance appears ordinary and seamless, at a closer look reveals the confusing, even chaotic yet ultimately extraordinary terrain where individuals constantly struggle to make and remake themselves. In researching the everyday experiences of international Muslim students at Leiden University there is a similar contrast apparent between the seemingly unaffected spaces and places, and the student's stories that revealed hindrances and boundaries that were otherwise invisible. To understand this difference, this research focuses on the notion of normality, a reflection of the larger structures of power, determined in a historical and socio-political context of the university and the Netherlands at large. On the level of the institution, through policies and accompanying measures, and more importantly through the actors themselves who are inextricably connected to the aforementioned structures, this notion of normality can seep into the space of the university. Therefore, this notion profoundly influences everyday life and underscores the physical, social and symbolic spaces by influencing the determination of what is 'normal' and 'correct' and goes into creating this seamless, and possibly deceiving, picture of everyday life at the university.

Under the Diversity and Inclusiveness research internship at Leiden University, this thesis attempts to understand 'How international Muslim students' experiences influence the way they identify themselves and navigate boundaries within the larger student community of Leiden University' This research attempts to explore what the idea of the 'normal' is, beginning this foray from the viewpoint of the international Muslim students themselves. This is done by first looking at the way 'normal' is encountered in and influences the everyday life of international Muslim students, in an implicit, nuanced way or perhaps by creating distinct exclusionary dynamics, and consequently refers to the 'performative' aspect of how students navigate possible resulting boundaries and ultimately looking at how it affects their self-identification. This is analysed in the context of academic, social and political discourses regarding diversity, inclusiveness and integration in the Netherlands, and the research also looks at if and how these wider debates have influence in the space of the university and create narratives or norms that students may feel the pressure to resist or emulate.

It can be said that the university is the setting for some of the most profound and defining moments in a person's entire life. It is a time when individuals begins to identify themselves and determine a place for themselves within their educational institution and the society at large. For students who journey from different parts of the world for the purpose of becoming part of a specific institution, the university is even more significant because it is here that they begin to understand the culture and society they have just become a part of.

Leiden University is one of the oldest institutions in the Netherlands, founded in 1575, and has the historical motto, 'Libertatis Praesidium', that translates to 'Bastion of Freedom'. While a university may under specious observation appear to be a 'bubble' existing outside the 'real world', it is in fact constantly influencing and influenced by the currents within the wider national and global discourse. Therefore, while a university can have a distinct identity and be a place imbued with specific meaning, created through the policies and also the various unique individuals who form its community, it can also in parallel be a microcosm of the wider society. The physical, social, and symbolic space of an institution can reverberate the social and political environment of the country. Therefore to understand how international Muslim students experience the space of the Leiden University, it is important to consider the context that has historically, and possibly continues to, shape the institution.

The Context: The Notion of Normality and the Netherlands

In the beginning of March 2017, at the outset of my program, when I was still deciding the topic for my research and getting acquainted with the Netherlands myself, I remember reading about the approaching elections. Despite the reticent character of the public spaces, void of any sign of elections apart from a few small posters, I could sense the anticipation with the name 'Wilders' coming up in debates around me; whether or not the increasingly popular Geert Wilders, the right-wing, anti-Islam, anti-immigrant, populist, leader of the 'Party for Freedom' (Partij Voor de Vrijheid - PVV) would win seemed to be the pivotal point. However, polls rolled in to give the existing Prime Minister Mark Rutte a win, news headlines quickly declared the loss of the far-right, the defeat of hate and also reflected the relief of the Dutch media as it began to reclaim Netherlands' position as liberal and tolerant (Foster et al 2017).

In her book 'White Innocence', Gloria Wekker highlights the pristine image of Dutch society that is constantly propagated and fiercely defended, and takes as her object the Dutch self-identity to understand the prevailing denial of racism and by extension, the need to address any problem. She writes, "I am intrigued by the way that race pops up in unexpected places and moments, literally as the return of the repressed, while a dominant discourse stubbornly maintains that the Netherlands is and always has been colour-blind and antiracist, a place of extraordinary hospitality and tolerance toward the racialized/ethnicized other, whether this quintessential other is perceived as black in some eras or as Muslim in others." (Wekker 2016; 1) In this research, Wekker's notion of denial is crucially important, and I analyse how it manifests in the policy and structures of Leiden University as well, feeding into the creation of a pretence of perfection in the everyday life of the institute, often leaving those who struggle with exclusion in confusion and self-reproach.

Despite this dignifying rhetoric, the fact that Wilders' brand of right wing nationalism had nevertheless tainted the elections is evident, most starkly in Rutte's campaign slogan; 'Be Normal or Be Gone' (Newsmax 2017). This slogan perfectly encapsulates the different layers that together form the national sentiment on issues of diversity, inclusion, and integration. First it underscores the belief in the superiority of Dutch values and Dutch society, and the brazen

admission of the power to determine what is 'normal'. It mirrors the hostility brimming in the current political atmosphere against those deemed to be the 'outsiders', who are only given two options; assimilation or exclusion. Then, the fact that this is the winning slogan, that it is (at best) used as a political tool for gaining widespread support, is telling of how popular this notion really is. And lastly, the fact that such aggression can be voiced, without flinching with any moral reproach or fear of political correctness reveals the historically burgeoning complexly interconnected events and discourses that have allowed for the simultaneous existence of the unabashed expression of animosity on the one hand and the denial of racism on the other.

It is worth mentioning here however that Rutte's propagation of a particular 'normal' was transparent to many as a reconfiguration of right wing sentiments, and in a way mimicking the underlying assumptions on which earlier campaigns, such as that of the right wing party, Christian Democratic Appeal[1] (CDA), were based. Rutte's open letter that included the injunction to "act normal or leave" (VVD 2017), did not explicitly mention Muslims or Islam, but specifically praised Dutch sexual freedoms and condemned those who did not abide by secular 'normal' values of public conduct such as shaking hands with the opposite sex, thus making it clear that the antagonists here too were specifically the Muslim, who had been emphasized as such in PVV's rhetoric (*The Economist* 2017). Many also criticized it for its exclusionary basis, being directed not at the entire Dutch community but an invisible or silent majority (*NRC* 2017). This is also something this thesis attempts to further unravel on the scale of the institution.
Nevertheless, this made Rutte the subject of various comics and parodies that dubbed him the "Normaal Man" (*De Volkskrant* 2017), also casting back on his infamous confrontation with Wilders who chided him to "*Doe eens normaal*" or "Do it normally" (*De Volkskrant* 2011) It is interesting to note, that the phrase is used to prompt someone to essentially not be a hindrance in general Dutch language. In later chapters, in the analysis of a pressure to be 'politically correct' and neutral, it is considered how this implicit injunction may be felt by the international Muslim students. These parodies reflected the fact that a significant part of the Dutch people did not buy into his rhetoric, which suggests a split between the notion of normality and the norm. This is an important distinction in the analysis of this thesis as well. What may be considered normal or appropriate, or ultimately be used to determine who belongs to a community and who is otherized, may be determined by several factors, including the communities themselves, but as is evident here, such notions may also be propagated through larger public discourses that have various socio-political motives. However, if they become part of the norm, or are internalised by the people as true, may have a separate set of determining factors. In the analysis of whether popular discourses that define the normal on the macro-level, become part of the norm of the university spaces, this distinction is specifically considered.

This can be traced to the multiculturalism debate and the events surrounding it to a large extent. Ian Buruma in his book 'Murder in Amsterdam, focuses on one pivotal event; the murder of Theo van Gogh on 2nd November, 2004 by a Dutch Muslim man, Mohammed Bouyeri, who declared that he killed for the sake of his religion, offended by the controversial film 'Submission'

1 CDA has rallied for the proliferation of the 'Dutch norms and values', assumed to be the "Christian Democratic values" (EPP Party - Press Release 2017)

(2004). The violent act made a mark on Dutch consciousness, and gave footing to the already growing antipathy against Muslims on a global scale. Before this, Pim Fortuyn, who anchored the antipathy against Muslim's on the debate of sexual emancipation, was murdered on 6th May, 2002, with the assailant claiming, "I shot Fortuyn for Dutch Muslims,"(The Guardian 2003). The public rage that followed, including violent outbreak that was exalted by many as "Fortuyn's revolt" was predicated on the anger against Muslim immigrants who were seen to be the vessels for 'extremist Islam', and also on various conspiracy theories that saw the murder as an instigation that included the status quo, against a 'normal politician' (Margry and Roodenburg 2016). However, Theo van Gogh's murder opened the public discourse for the free expression of this sentiment like never before. But Buruma highlights that the murder rather than an evidence of fundamentalism, was more a symptom of a greater underlying ailment; the problem of Dutch exclusivist culture that alienates and excludes immigrants from true membership in Dutch society. He saw in Bouyeri a dejected young man rather than an extremist. He critiqued the film in question, and a co-creator Ayaan Hirsi Ali, as portraying an offensive denigration in the guise of an earnest attempt at revealing the truth. Nevertheless, this became, to many Dutch people, a shorthand for the pre-existing stereotype of Muslims as a threat to the Dutch liberal and secular freedoms. It also crucially forwarded the notion that multiculturalism, that celebrated pluralism and equality of all cultures, undermined citizenship of those originally Dutch (Buruma 2006).

This feeds into the creation of the rhetorical figure of the 'Ordinary Man', the hardworking Dutch man, who is 'originally' Dutch and presumed white (Mepschen 2016; 20). Vertovec states that this discourse stems from an essentialistic ideology of 'Culturalism', in which culture is viewed as static and homogeneous across strictly bounded groups, seen as 'reified, bounded, biologized or inherited' (Vertovec 2011; 243). He writes that within this seemingly innocuous language of culture a new form of racism is eminent; 'cultural racism'. It is rooted within binary constructions of reality that also create categories like immigrant/non-immigrant, autochthonous/allochthonous (Vertovec 2011). The term 'autochthonous' (opposed to 'allochthonous') refers to the citizens assumed to have a loyalty to the Dutch soil emanating from their kinship ties, and cultural and genealogical linkages (Mepschen 2016; 25). This figure firstly stands in opposition to the status-quo, making him the protagonist in populist discourse. This figure of the 'Ordinary Man' features as 'Henk' and 'Ingrid' in Wilders campaign, these names are used to refer to the schema of the hard-working Dutch people who are being oppressed by the corrupt political elites (Aljazeera 2017). And also in Rutte's victory speech in 2011 as he reaffirmed his mission to give the country back to the Dutch (Mepschen 2016).

This populist discourse coupled with fears of terrorism has been used by right-wing politicians to garner opposition to pleas for multiculturalism, making Netherlands the 'poster child' (Bloemraad 2014; 318) for backlash against it in Europe. With the moral argument against racism quickly losing its traction, the country has been one of those leading the larger European inclination to normalize antagonism and discrimination against Muslims. Philomena Essed also highlights that while these aggressive statements are supported by a significant number, there is a resistance to dub them as racism, which is consequently often veiled in a grander nationalistic purpose, for example most often as the Dutch reclaiming their country (Essed 2014).

Delving into the notion of normality is crucial in understanding how national ideologies are shaped within the socio-political context to create the idea of the 'normal' citizen. And since 'normality' by its nature rests on its opposition to the antithetical 'Other', studying its conceptualization also helps us understand this process of otherization. Before any stereotyping takes place, the field of knowledge that dictates perception must exist. "Before the Other can be known, a particular discourse has to be accepted, a field of knowledge that enables people to distinguish between ordinary neighbours and cultural Others." (Mepschen 2016; 57) This is a composition of categories, frames and schemas, guided by a culturalist way of understanding reality that attempts to create a knowable and perceivable Other. Within Europe, it is Islam that currently takes the centre stage as the ideological Other. In the Netherlands these sentiments are widely echoed and the Dutch national discourse has been primed with the reconfiguration of citizenship from universal liberal values into almost solely nationalistic value based on cultural distinctiveness (Uitermark 2013).

Following Wekker, Essed also highlights the 'smug ignorance, innocence, and resentment' (Essed 2014; 9) in the Dutch self-conceptualization and how it creates the idea of ethnic minorities as "the ungrateful others" (Essed 2014; 101). It is asserted that minorities are ungrateful of the Dutch tolerance and openness, and a strain on society, not making an effort and asking too much of society. Essed points to a larger underlying stream in the veneration of 'Dutchness' as based on cultural ideals of sexual freedom, gender equality, freedom of speech and individualism. These "hegemonic liberal and secular virtues" (Essed 2014; 337) become the absolutes in the question of membership. Essed suggests that beyond racism, this reflects a "post-colonial ressentiment" (Essed 2014; 337) that sees Dutch as the enlightened and advanced, while reducing and essentializing minorities (Essed 2014).

This gives a crucial insight into the construction of the 'normal' which illuminates the 'imagined modern self' (Uitermark 2013; 242) standing for a set of 'Western' values, all of which are deemed to be in striking contradiction to 'traditional' Islamic values (Bowen 2013; 1). Wekker further explains that this imagination that posits Dutch culture as the epitome of modernity and beacon of civilization is linked to a nostalgia for "normal times" (Wekker 2016; 108) that refers most often to the 1950s, when religion had faded giving way to secularism and demographic 'whiteness' was the norm. The visibility of diversity within the public sphere prompts the individuals to express their longing for days when their public life was not threatened by the 'uncivilized others' (Wekker 2016; 108). This nostalgia is tied to deeper undercurrents of retaining Dutch heritage, norms and values, against the influences of the incoming 'outsiders'.

An example of this visibility is hijab, which has become an emblem, a symbol of cultural politics, taken to be a representative of female oppression or 'backward' Islamic values. Such a thinking is linked to the creation of an exclusivist 'neoculture' that stands for the superiority of 'Dutch values', it draws strict boundaries and demands those placed outside them to integrate, which has been equated to completely assimilate, or face exclusion (Uitermark 2013). With citizenship being redefined in these terms of cultural assimilation, ethnic loyalty and national identity (Mepschen 2016), the Muslim citizen finds himself not only in the enduring category of the outsider, but also

in the suspect category of a potential nemesis, and hence in constant need of clarifying his loyalties (Silverstein 2005; 366).

What further seals the fate of Muslims as the 'Other' is the fact that those who define them as such are the self-proclaimed champions of tolerance, more specifically of sexual emancipation and gender empowerment. Pim Fortuyn, the openly gay politician spoke of how he felt his own liberties threatened by the backward Muslims. In doing so he merged the neoliberal, anti-immigrant agenda against Muslims with the 'new left' values of secularism, gender equality and gay liberation. Antipathy to Islam and the discourse of sexual freedom has since become so closely linked that it is almost impossible to discuss sexual emancipation without a reference to immigration and the 'problem' of multiculturalism (Uitermark 2013; 245). Another way this has manifested is in the propagated threat of the new anti-Semitism, with Muslims being seen as the oppressors of Jewish populations (Silverstein 2005). So then it is the Muslims who become the imagined racists, bigots and intolerant ones, in constant need of fending off these claims if they hope to maintain a semblance of belonging with the larger Dutch community.

A cognisance of these macro level trajectories is imperative in the critical analysis of how international students make meaning of their everyday experiences, encounter the notion of Dutch or local normality and navigate boundaries whilst they attempt to situate themselves in the university space. Within the discourse of migration, institutions hold an important position. Within them lie imagined spheres, customs, practices, interactions, negotiations and identity processes and in this way the university too can be seen as a 'space of migration' (Bava 2011; 499), invested with meaning, where national ideologies or imaginaries are being transformed and asserted. Bowen writes that individuals encounter the state through the social life of institutions. The state is ever-present in the process of boundary making and boundary negotiation through the policies or structures it explicitly or implicitly sanctions. He writes that while educational institutions may not be directly involved in the distribution of power, they may impart notions of normality that are determined within wider discourses of power. On a smaller scale, the institution itself has a 'shaping power' (Bowen 2013; 5) in the way it categorizes individuals and disseminates larger representations (Bowen 2013). Through the analysis of student experiences, this research attempts to understand how this context possibly affects Leiden University and the different ways in which, specifically through its policies and structures, it is responding to the associated challenges.

On the level of everyday life of the university, this research attempts to get to the underlying 'field of knowledge' (Mepschen 2016; 57) that informs social judgements, in order to gauge if the larger discourse on Islam and Muslims has seeped into what is touted to be the 'international' and 'diverse' space of Leiden University. On a structural level, the idea is to gauge if the policies and structures are able to successfully understand differences and ensure diversity as is asserted or if a similar 'denial' or ignorance may be tainting the process. In the midst of this, the central point is how notions of normality are created, within a nexus that involves the university and the different individuals that make it, and how they reverberate across the space of Leiden University, as students attempt to situate themselves within it.

The Issue: Diversity, Integration and Leiden University

Inextricably tied to the issue of inclusiveness and diversity at Leiden University is the understanding of an enduring multiculturalism debate in the Netherlands that has led to the adoption of terminology and approaches that currently form the fundamentals of institutional policies. As discussed in the previous section, the currently widespread opposition to multiculturalism has been predicated on the belief in the superiority of Dutch history, language and culture, with a conviction to protect the superior secular and liberal values that have been fought for and the need to protect these from inundation of other cultures in the country. This entailed a demand from the 'outsiders' to adapt to these standards, and distance themselves from their 'backward' roots (Bowen 2013). Consequently, multiculturalism was widely criticized on the level of policy and institutions too, including criticisms that it undermines common citizenship (Buruma 2006) and that its excessive focus on difference undermines collective identity (Bloemraad 2015).

However analysis of multiculturalism policies implemented in Europe shows that the results are in fact favourable in most countries, especially where majority and minority both see it as a national commitment. Moreover, individuals' identification with their ethnic roots and the institutional recognition of these does not equate a decreased sense of belonging, in fact quite the opposite (Bloemraad 2014; Bloemraad 2015). In the case of the Netherlands however, with the most striking backlash, despite the complete abandonment of the approach in policy, the issues that are supposed to be caused by multiculturalism are still present, as will become evident in further analysis in Chapter 2 as well. This suggests multiculturalism may not have been the primary issue, however one thing its rejection has done, is change the way diversity is essentially approached in policy. While multiculturalism and diversity was valued for society, now it has become something that needs to be managed and curtailed (Uitermark et al 2013).

There is an intense emphasis on maintaining the image of 'tolerance' and 'openness', and this image management often leads to long-winded debates on terminology, from assimilation to integration, difference to diversity, becoming redundant. This is because the focus on terminology remains surface level and detracts from scrutiny on the underlying approaches that persist, despite change in official jargon. The persistence of issues points to the existence and ignorance of an underlying problem. In fact some have expressed scepticism if the Netherlands was ever really multicultural, instead arguing that it maintained a distinct 'monoculturalism' tied to a restricted view of Dutch culture (Duyvendak, Pels, and Rijkschroeff, 2009 in Bloemraad 2014). And it can be argued considering the current socio-political context that this monoculturalism still persists, and perhaps this is the underlying problem hindering true inclusion and diversity that needs to be addressed.

These gaps in diversity policies can mean measures that do not account for individuals, the nature of their issues, and that may perpetuate the very inequalities they set out to counter. Most critically, they may blind the policy makers with a false sense of accomplishment. Sara Ahmed in her book, 'On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life' highlights how institutionalization of diversity may actually obscure racism; having appeased the institution of

having played their role, it gives the false impression that the issue has been resolved. It may subdue those who raise the issue, and also decrease understanding of complex social facts (Ahmed 2012). Because norms are built into the system, such an ignorance may make them invisible. Here we can see how the 'white innocence' that Wekker talked about can translate to the institutional level. So before we delve into the fieldwork, specifically Chapter 2 on the students initial experiences of the university and encounters with these policy created structures, a foray into Leiden University's policy documents and informational content itself is necessary, so that the structures formed through these and their impact can be rightly gauged in student experiences.

The popularity of the terms 'diversity' and 'inclusiveness' in public discourse has been recognised by organisations and institutes, that have used their marketability to validate their position as 'international' and 'cosmopolitan' in an increasingly globalising world. Adopted as measures for the culture and environment of the organisation, unfortunately in the process of implementation they are often quantified with 'diversity quotas' and 'inclusiveness surveys', stripping them of their ability to explain the complexity of underlying processes. Moreover, this creates a skewed focus towards the visible and displayable aspects to be able to claim 'diversity'.

Going through the website content, promotional material and even policy documents of Leiden University, a similar specious understanding of diversity has seemed to taint the overall approach in recent years. One Diversity Symposium advert title reads 'You make all the difference!' (Events and Academic Ceremonies. 2012) It is easy to write off the unease that this title generates as a reaction to a too transparent yet ultimately benign marketing approach. However this approach is in fact harmful because it subtly reinforces the false assumption that international students in some way bring 'diversity' and detracts from any issues that exist within the policies and structures of the institute itself. This makes them the focus of the project of 'integration', and consequently subject to a range of conditions for integration, which may appear in notions of the 'normal' student or the idealised 'student life'. How these are encountered in the experience of international Muslim students will be discussed in the following chapters.

Secondly, this focus on image management uses 'internationalisation', that is, demographic diversity to assert inclusiveness, where the visibility of different ethnicities would appease the implementers that they have somehow achieved 'diversity'. This is also exemplified by the ending note of the advertisement for the diversity week of 2011 that says 'Just come and see how diverse we are!' (Events and Academic Ceremonies 2011). Moreover, at 'the international face of Leiden University' webpage it states, "It is the clear intention of Leiden University to create a more international student body, to strengthen the international character of the University and to internationalise the learning experience for all students." (The International Face of Leiden University- Welcome Page). The university website highlights statistics reflecting its 'internationalisation'. The university annually hosts more than 3000 international and exchange students each year in its Bachelor and Master programmes, almost 1000 international PhD students and more than 800 international academic staff. From a total of 26900 students, 3600 are international students, coming from 115 different nationalities, and alumni in 136 countries (Facts and Figures Leiden University).

This leads to the crucial question of whether juxtaposing diverse individuals is equal to diversity. According to the university policy documents which speak of 'diversity of student population' and achieving a 'substantive ratio of international students' it appears to be largely how diversity is understood. This reflects a rather narrow understanding of diversity. Varenne writes, "Diversity is never simply the end product of substances living together in the same geographical space" (Varenne 27-28 in Vertovec 2011). Diversity is not simply the end product resulting from a set number of students enrolled from different countries but instead needs to be understood as a cultural process. What the presence of students from different parts of the world eventually means for inclusiveness depends entirely on the nature of exchange and interchange between them and if and how this is facilitated. Juxtaposition may not necessarily enrich the experience for all students, and this understanding ignores the individual differences in access to power and boundary making.

Diversity is also linked to creativity within the policy documents and the website content. The website states, 'The greater the diversity on the work floor, the greater the creativity and innovation' (Diversity- Leiden University). The notion that becomes apparent is that having individuals from different cultural backgrounds within classrooms, creates a 'climate of openness and diversity', which in turn leads to innovation and creativity (Institutional Plan 2015; 16) If this creativity results from an exchange of different ideas and methods, how this exchange is facilitated or made possible has not been highlighted. And there is no indication of how this climate of openness is created.

Moreover, the view of international students bringing diversity appears to be a very local perspective. Even in such a surface level conceptualisation, diversity for an international student means an inclusive environment made of not just the 'diverse' international student but also the Dutch students, the faculty, the administration and university at large. However, this vantage point can create a distance between the Dutch members and the international members of the institute, and lead to reductionist notions, from viewing international students in essentialized terms or even as the 'exoticized other' or on the other hand as 'the victim' who is incapable or in some way lacking the knowledge required to operate 'normally' in the social or academic life, and hence must be helped 'integrate'.

Regarding internationalisation, the website states "One of Leiden's key strengths is its ability to offer an international environment to all its students, domestic and international." on the English version of the website. In the translation of the Dutch version of the same title, it states "Contact with diverse cultures and innovative teaching methods characterize our education." While the two versions are different to address the interests of the different Dutch and international audiences, they are not simply translations, which is why differences in what the university emphasises is evident. It also shows the university's recognition of how conflating diversity with this image of foreign cultures would evoke interest. This idea of 'contact with diverse cultures' is emphasised throughout the Dutch version of the website and more so in the events organised as well.

On the university website, the words 'Sugoi!' can also be seen prominently plastered, highlighting the celebration of 2017 as the Leiden Asia Year, that is mentioned includes the opening of an Asian library, exhibitions, lectures, festivals, and workshops on Haikus and Bollywood dancing. The most prominent exhibition here is the 'Cool Japan' exhibition that is said to include "Hello Kitty, samurai, films, robots, high-tech gadgets and cartoons" (Leiden Asian Year 2017). In my visit to the exhibition, I experienced an inundation of Japanese anime and popular culture as soon as I entered the specific hall, with enormous screens playing anime cartoons with the Japanese dialogues unintelligible (for most who like me did not understand the language – and were not helped by a lack of subtitles) yet audible, through every corner of the exhibition. I sensed how the experience of the exhibition was structured to evoke nostalgia or draw on the story narratives of cartoons that for many are the most prominent if not the only aspects of culture that they associate with Japan. There was visual imagery as would be expected from such an emphasis but not much depth in the descriptions of different artefacts that could help a more cultural or historical understanding of what was visible. It is interesting to note here that like the dialogues playing in the museum, there appears to be no translation of the words 'Sugoi!' present. While most who have heard the term in Japanese popular culture use it to mean 'amazing', ironically, in Japanese informal use it can also be used to express 'awful'. Another example of this exoticizing approach is in the Diversity Week page from a few years ago, the schedule most prominently includes a menu of cuisines from 'far off places' (Events and Academic Ceremonies 2011).

While these events create the image of an institution that celebrates diversity, it does raise the question of how far do these go in promoting an understanding of diverse beliefs and values. In the following chapters the research also attempts to discern if students feel that the Dutch and European community of Leiden University tolerate different beliefs when they appear, not as exotic traditions to learn about in a symposium, but when they stand in stark contrast to their own and affect their everyday lives. Religious values and beliefs are specifically ones that considering the socio-political context, stand in contrast to Dutch values.
While one would expect that the norm of secularism will automatically see all those who identify with a religion as different, what soon becomes evident is the fact that it is Islam and Muslims that are at the heart of the Othering, having been constantly derided as being in direct opposition to Dutch culture in the larger discourses. While religions in general are seen as remnants of a past era that had to be overcome by modernisation, Islam is specifically considered to be a current threat to modern values. In the end, this 'backward' religiosity can in no way be as popularized or made as marketable as 'contact with different cultures' is, and this raises the question of what this means in terms of addressing the issues of Muslim students. One way to answer this question is through the experiences of international Muslim students, and how others respond to their identification with Islam, and the different values, beliefs and practices that may fall under it, and this analysis is undertaken in the following chapters.

More recently however, there is an effort to bridge this distance and there is an acknowledgement within the policy documents, specifically in the latest Diversity Workplan 2017-2018, that the university is currently not as inclusive as it needs to be. The university has shifted from 'managing diversity' to 'engaging diversity' through which there is an attempt for a more meaningful

understanding of student's everyday experiences. This will be done through meetings named 'Let's Talk' which are basically 'a series of open, small-scale discussions between students and staff' (Werkplan 2017-2018; 6). However, it can be argued that if issues exist in the physical, social, or symbolic space of the institution, presenting themselves in the everyday domain of interactions, they need to be acknowledged and countered within this domain. A set of separate diversity measures such as a talk organised by the diversity office, or a diversity event do not balance out or negate the issues that exist within the space of the university.

An analysis of the universities policy documents and website content suggests that the university's approach to diversity and inclusiveness is still largely from an economic perspective. Where students are understood as part of university population rather than as distinct individuals. The focus of this research then becomes more consequential, since it attempts to understand student experiences 'from within' the university space and understand what the university means for international students.

The importance of policies cannot be understated and must be taken into account for its impact on the everyday experiences of students. While policies might seem to be distant and irrelevant for the actors who may have never come across these documents directly, they can nevertheless hold profound significance. Vertovec writes that if the border is seen as a kind of political stage, then policies are akin to the scripts for the political stage. This refers to the fact that policies have the ability to sanction or restrict certain ways of operating within an institution. Shore and Wright write "policies not only impose conditions as if from 'outside' or 'above', but influence people's indigenous norms of conduct so that they themselves contribute, not necessarily consciously, to a government's model of social order." (Shore and Wright 1997; 6) Therefore, to understand how the scripts, or ideas of normality are created and internalised, an understanding of the impact of such documents is imperative.

The Research Question and Operationalisation

Research Question: 'How do international Muslim students' experiences influence the way they identify themselves and navigate boundaries within the larger student community of Leiden University?'

The focal point of this thesis are the experiences of the international Muslim students within the space of Leiden University, used to construct a perspective 'from within', in order to investigate the object of this research; normality, and the idea of the 'normal' student, tracing the wider socio-political discourses that influence it and the social norms, institutional policies and structures that may sustain it within the university space. The processes of self-identification and boundary negotiation are key, and give insight into how normality may be encountered, lived, internalized or resisted by international Muslim students.

The Space of Leiden University

'The larger student community of Leiden University' is an empirical operationalisation that reflects the domain of the fieldwork, which is primarily the social space of Leiden University. However, this thesis delves into the different dimensions, physical, social and symbolic, anchored by their relevance in the experiences of the students interviewed. The research studies aspects of the geographical space, that is including the 'cluster of interactions' (Gupta and Ferguson 2012; 339) and also the collection of ideas, attitudes, and beliefs that individuals associate with a location, and use to construct the idea of what is considered normal (Gupta and Ferguson 2012). The study of symbolic space looks at the university with its own distinct identity shaped historically, and by its policies and measures, and also as a microcosm, where the representations and discourses constructed on the macro global, or national level, may have sway. The field of research within these spaces is defined through the chapters respective to the topic of analysis.

International Muslim Students

International students is a term that could be used to define a multitude of different individuals within the university. Some of the students falling into this category include those from outside the European Union (non-EU), students from outside the Netherlands but from within the European Union (EU), students following the Erasmus Exchange Programme, students following year long university affiliated exchange programmes, and students attending International Bachelors Programme of the Psychology institute to name a few. So the use of the term 'international students' does not assume a homogeneous category or attempt to simplify it, but it is used to refer to non-Dutch students.

It is important to consider here that nearly all the international Muslim students I interviewed were non-EU (except from one girl from Spain, with parents originally from Syria, all others were from Indonesia, Turkey, Pakistan, Malaysia, Iran or Egypt). This was not a chosen criterion, in fact I was hoping to make my sample as varied as possible, however was only able to connect with these students. This meant that ethnicity automatically became an important factor, with all of my respondents being non-EU, and this also crucially underscores upcoming discussions on cultural shifts, because most of the students had been living in cultural contexts where Islam was the dominant religion, influencing norms of the physical, social and symbolic space. While this is nevertheless an exceedingly diverse category, it helps understand the differences students report encountering in their new European cultural context.

In speaking of *Muslim students* or students with a Muslim background, this research does not presume a homogeneous set category. In his article, Bowen defines 'Muslim' as used in his writing, to refer to the 'sociological Muslims' (Bowen 2013; 4). These individuals are not defined as 'Muslim' based on what their specific religious beliefs or devotional practices are, nor on how much they highlight this aspect of their identity in general. But primarily because their background and traditions form part of the historically Muslim civilization. Moreover, most of them define themselves as Muslims and are perceived as such by others around them (Bowen 2013). With the awareness of the fact that religion is one dimension of identity, which itself is constantly being negotiated, formed and unformed within different social worlds, 'Muslim' is used to refer to this group so that such processes can be analysed in a focused manner.

Processes of Self-identification and Boundary Navigation

Lastly, in referring to the way students *identify themselves* and *navigate boundaries*, this research focuses on the student's performativity, most prominently using James Ferguson's concept of 'cultivated styles' (Ferguson 1999). Following this focus, rather than identity, it is 'self-identification' that is studied, for it emphasizes the situational and dynamic process, rather than the expression of a pre-existing set. To frame this, perspectives on identity by George Herbert Mead, Erving Goffman, and Fredrick Barth, are considered that emphasize that identity is formed through a two pronged process, internally through self-attribution and externally as ascribed by others (Jenkins 1996). This is referred to by Vertovec who further writes about how these two aspects are intricately linked and come to be within the context of the social world's people live in. This is true for the development of both personal and social identities (Vertovec 2001). Considering this, we can see how migrations effects identity in two ways; first in the way identity is framed externally, through categorization, and secondly how one frames his or her own identity through a process of negotiation and reconfiguration, resulting in one's personal and social self-identification (Jenkins 1994; Nazroo & Karlsen 2003; as cited in Boccagni 2014). In this research it is the personal and social self-identification and categorization that is of importance, instead of identity itself. While boundary is a static term, it is analysed as consisting of these ongoing processes. The use of self-identification is hence to highlight this dynamic and situational nature of identity negotiation (Boccagni 2014).

Methodology

Fieldwork

In line with my research focus on the everyday experiences of international Muslim students, my fieldwork was centred on interviews with international Muslim students. There were 20 students I met individually (interviewing some more than once). However, my research design was constantly evolving and I often 'followed the story' (Marcus 1995; 109) of my respondents. Dealing with self-narratives and self-representations, this approach acted as a check on validity, a way to account for the effects of memory (being introspective accounts and also retrospective especially where students recalled initial experiences of settling in) and it also helped reconstruct the larger field of interactions that encompasses student's everyday life in reality, within the thesis.

This consequently directed me to conduct interviews with members of the university diversity office and international students office, and also student organisations such as *Islamitische Studentenvereniging Sabr* (Islamic Students Organisation), International Student Network (ISN), and Residence Life Program[2], and participant observation at various events including social gatherings,

2 Residence Life was initiated as a pilot program in 2017 and essentially involves the assigning of certain students as Resident Assistants in different student housings, that would facilitate the exchange between students and university or housing management, and also ensure that student have access to assistance (practical or social) at all hours, that would help them feel more 'at home'. Its role will be further elaborated in the following chapters.

an Indonesian student event (HistoRUN) and different policy and academic conferences on Diversity. Through this construction of 'layered accounts' interviews were reflected on with the insights from literature, policy documents, and researcher's experiences, thus not burdening them as ultimate 'measures of truth' (Charmaz, 1983, p.110) (Ellis 1991). I also explored different opportunities of participant observation, for example acting as an OWL Guide in the Orientation Week, and a Resident Assistant, under the Residence Life program at one of the university's student housings.

Not having a rigid methodological structure at the outset in fact helped me, I employed a form of 'snowball sampling' where I started with an acquaintance and often ended up talking to 'a friend of a friend of a friend'. Even with such a long chain of referrals I saw that being introduced by someone helped in developing initial rapport. This specifically helped gain respondents within the well-linked Indonesian student community. A number of them were uncomfortable with the 'one-on-one' dynamic or with the language, but were comforted by the experience of their friends who related that the interview was more like a casual conversation. However, this also meant getting stuck within a relatively similar group of students unless a new link was explored.

One-on-one interviews were my main method and suited best with the in-depth and personal nature of the conversations. While humour helped in building rapport, I found reciprocity to be the most essential, and the fact that I was also an international Muslim student helped as sharing my own experiences helped students open up further. While this informality meant free-flowing and honest discussions, in pragmatic terms it had its disadvantages. Firstly it led to long interviews with long transcriptions, note taking was not an option because of the nature of engagement the interviews demanded, in fact at many times it was after I switched off my recording that I saw respondents become more unreserved and talkative. Unfortunately, I was also unable to enact my initial plan of making portrait photographs as it seemed to create an unease and distance hindering the interview.

Another side of this was that the line between a friend and researcher often became blurred, sometimes in interviewing existing friends and acquaintances, and other times in the course of the interview. I had thought that reciprocity would account for possible dilemmas of this relation but it was more complicated; in three interviews respondents asked if I drank alcohol, went to the international student night, and about my personal social life, while I did not mind giving out this information, I realized immediately in the first such instance that my answer affected the rest of the interview, for example saying that I did attend these events suggested that I subscribed to their importance in 'student life', and caused the interviewee to automatically justify why she did not attend these, so later I tried to appear as neutral as possible. This led me to be constantly self-reflexive in my analysis, making sure that I was not inadvertently reproducing popular discourses.

This resonated with Erving Goffman's 'impression management', that involves viewing the field of research in terms of backstage and front region and states that the 'performers' try to keep the back region out of the audience's perception in order to present a favourable view of themselves. Moreover, I found this to be more apparent in the case of students who were my friends or acquaintances before the interview. Paradoxically, students were very open when I was a stranger

to them, but perhaps otherwise knowing that I was a part of their social nexus made them uneasy to an extent.

I was also careful to counter possible 'ethnographic seduction' (Robben 2012; 165) in this case, which involves counter-transferences that obstruct the research; Baudrillard sees this as 'the manipulation of appearances' (Baudrillard 1990; 8) through which the researcher receives the impression of having established a strong relation with the informant and the impression that he is receiving in depth genuine accounts when instead the ethnographer is only seeing the impression projected by the informant (Robben 2012). Goffman writes that the researcher should divide their research into verbal assertions which can be manipulated and controlled, and an aspect of life where the performer does not have concern or control over the impressions he gives off. The latter can then be used as a check on the validity of the former (Goffman 1959; 7). This is something I was able to do with my close friends, being so present in their everyday lives as well, and also through other roles, for example as a resident assistant I gained additional insight into the lives of international Muslim students who I was responsible for in my building. This will be further exemplified through the following chapters.

Reflexivity

"Every ethnographer, when he reaches the field, is faced immediately with accounting for himself before the people he proposes to learn to know. Only when this has been accomplished can he proceed to his avowed task of seeking to understand and interpret the way of life of those people." (Berreman 2012; 138). Taking a cue from Berreman, before deciding on a methodological framework, I began by being reflexive about my own position as a researcher and as a student. Being an international Muslim student myself, I realized that in a way I was part of the research since before the topic had even been decided on. And this unique position helped in all stages; planning, fieldwork and most significantly the analysis of the research.

I felt that while there is much literature on the subject that deals with Muslim students previously, I feel that my position helped bolster the perspective of the international Muslim student, so that the research looked 'from within' rather than 'from above' as most policy based researches tend to do. Mosse's argument on the inevitable inability to assert 'the truth' of an ethnographic account struck a chord; being aware of your own frames of interpretation connects both the 'desk' and the 'field' by allowing for the creation of layers of analysis as Mosse has himself done (Mosse 2006). I similarly aim to and have checks put on my own analysis by incorporating gained insights into new interviews, rechecking the validity of what came out of a desk analysis back into the field to be possibly scrutinized. The idea that consciousness of your own individuality is what can possibly make your work less individualistic and more collaborative, is something I have attempted to incorporate in my thesis as well.
Through layered accounts, the process of data collection and analysis went in parallel, so I tried to include student voice not only as data but used their insights on wider debates in research analysis too. (Apparent also in Chapter 4)

Being a student myself, I was constantly experiencing the spaces that I researched international Muslims students' experiences in, I was also able to do a phenomenological analysis, as will be highlighted most significantly in Chapter 4. While I had initially planned on a narrative ethnography with more of an inclusion of my own experiences in the style of auto ethnography, I felt that using my own experiences as an ancillary to help me in the analysis of student accounts, rather than as data on their own, helped me maintain a distance and a grasp on the bigger picture, constructed out of insights from different roles, rather than only my position as an international Muslim student. Nevertheless, the structure of the thesis is designed by using insights of my own experience, and is meant to reflect the way experiences unfold; going from initial experiences of settling in, to the first encounters with boundaries, and finally deeper into how intensely possible boundaries can effect in certain cases (also reflecting my own experience as a researcher, discovering the influences of 'normality', with each chapter going successively deeper towards more intense experiences reported by students).

Moreover, considering the idea that, "The ethnographer and his subjects are both performers and audience to one another" (Berreman 2012; 146) reflexive, dyadic interviews were used that also look at the meanings and emotional aspects of the interview itself. This was significant in interviewing policy-makers working in administrative department, especially in the case of Julia, the International Student Advisor that will be discussed in Chapter 2. I realised that I could not rely on self-representations where responses were highly formal and predetermined politically correct statements coming from anthropologically trained individuals. I could see that they too were actors in the 'systems of representation' (Mosse 942).

Ethics

Many of the ethical dilemmas faced during the research were related to in-depth interviews, which often delved into personal instances of everyday life, and to the close intersubjective relationship they entail. Here I exemplify in the light of the official Principles of Professional Responsibility as defined by the American Anthropological Association. I took into consideration that an individual should not feel implicitly pressured to reveal more than that which they are comfortable with. Insights into one's parental, social or personal relationships, social activities, religious beliefs, or specific incidents of exclusion should not be extracted at the cost of possible emotional or psychological distress. Such a distress could be in the form of fear of exposure, fear of negative judgment, embarrassment or guilt (Linked to Principle 1 - 'Do no harm' and Principle 7 - 'Maintain Respectful and Ethical Professional Relationships'). The gravity of this became apparent when one girl completely broke down during her interview, till this point I had not anticipated the subject could cause such emotional distress, however as far as I could judge, noticed that the exchange had an ultimately cathartic effect on her, and ended on an uplifting note rather than leaving her distressed.

Considering this, anonymity and confidentiality were also key, and I attempted to clarify these at the start of each interview (Linked to principle 3 – 'Obtain informed consent and necessary permissions'). When asked, all students said they did not prefer anonymity, but I felt that

confidentiality was nevertheless implied, as is the case with friendly conversations. With snowball sampling, my respondents knew I was connected to their friends, and in some cases referred each other in incidents they related or in judgements. Therefore I assured confidentiality and in certain cases have used pseudonyms as well.

My fieldwork was primarily based on interviews with students, and only dealt with policy makers to a limited extent, but in both cases I felt the challenge of 'turning relationships into data' (Mosse 2006; 937). With students, interviews resembled friendly conversations and I had formed close relations within the field, while in the latter case, to gain deeper insight into my field I had become part of 'Residence Life' and 'Orientation Week Leiden' organisations and events, where my research data and insights were coming from shared experiences, where I was individually in the role of an employee in the organisational context rather than a researcher. So for example, in participant observation, as an RA sitting in on Residence Life meetings, informed consent could be an issue since they may not have been conscious of this in meetings where I was just another employee rather than a researcher (Linked to principle 3 – 'Obtain informed consent and necessary permissions'). However I had introduced my research in an unambiguous manner prior to these meetings and a channel had been left open for solving any confusions regarding the intent or scope of the research (Linked to principle 2 – 'Be honest and open regarding your research'). I did make sure everyone knew of my research and in my thesis I have elaborated on the context when citing from meetings as well.

Since this research is structured under the research internship within FSW, and by extension Leiden University, it is important to be fair in the impression of the university, however I have tried to bring forward conflicts where I observed them. I also accounted for the complexity of interactions between the stakeholder, the students (international, Dutch, European, Muslim etc.), the faculty, the administrative departments and so on, so that a binary is not created between specific groups or between the student and the university as a whole (Linked to Principle 4 - 'Weigh Competing Ethical Obligations Due Collaborators and Affected Parties').

Thesis Structure Overview

In the introduction, the notion of normality and its forthcoming scrutiny is framed through the wider socio-political context and the particular issue of diversity and integration, which clarify the social relevance and subsequent object of this thesis. The methodological framework and challenges are also introduced, although also further elaborated later. Chapter 2 begins from the outset of international Muslims student's experience with their choice of Leiden University, through which the university's image management and students expectations are explored. The structures and peculiarities of the university space and underlying assumptions about diversity are discussed in the analysis of how students reorient themselves within it. While the previous chapter sketches a holistic picture from the students perspective, Chapter 3 zooms into the social space of the university, scrutinising it for the influence of larger discourses on 'the Muslim Other' and as a terrain where implicit boundaries are encountered and navigated, focusing on students' performativity. It particularly focuses on the orientation week as an introduction to the ideal of 'student life' and its inextricable link to 'drinking'. The conflicts of self-identification and 'Pressures of Self-representation' are also highlighted, especially that of 'Apologetic Religiosity'. Having established the different manifestations of normality in the social spaces, Chapter 4 looks at how students identify with the university and make meaning of their experiences. It deals with how dissatisfaction results from the difference between the image of the university and the reality of certain student's experiences, and how students cope with this dissonance. This chapter takes one deeper into the individual lives of students, and through a partially phenomenological analysis, highlights how boundaries can intensify experiences of isolation and alienation for some. Finally Chapter 5 closes the thesis with a conclusion, that attempts to synthesize the diversity of student experiences, giving insights into how inclusive or exclusive the university space is, while also being a point of departure, raising important questions about university policy, structures, and social norms, that emphasise the need to problematize the pristine images of national and institutional identities that can become a guise for underlying boundaries.

Chapter 2
First Impressions
Initial Decision and Experiences of Settling In

Making the Decision: Choosing Leiden University

It can be argued that the international Muslim students' experience of Leiden University begins with their decision, to join the university and to move to the Netherlands. An array of different factors come together to create a unique opportunity at the particular point in students' early lives. This section traces the different elements of the pre-departure experience, the more external such as the image of the institute and of the Netherlands and the Dutch culture, and the more intrinsic elements such as their personal motivations or struggles. Such an analysis may offer an insight into the expectations that underscore the beginning of students' time in Leiden, shedding light on the very individually unique nature of their experiences, how they frequently reoriented and positioned themselves and also how some later experienced and coped with the resulting dissonance between their expectations and reality once in Leiden.

The interviews were conducted from three months to a few years after students had arrived at the university, which naturally meant that the conversations were often in retrospective, and while I initially thought this might be a disadvantage, in fact it gave insight into the contrasts between expectations and reality, since the recollections were informed by the experiences that had taken place since and inevitably tinged by the emotions they evoked.

For international students, sitting thousands of miles away at home, the formal and formulaic webpages, the numerous rankings, the indistinct opinions from acquaintances, all essentially end up becoming the basis on which a decision that will require a tremendous amount of their time and resources will be based. Nevertheless, the first stage of decision making concerns numerous pragmatic factors, such as the specifications of their respective study programs that drew students towards attending, the elsewhere rarely offered February intake option, and the relatively lesser time and money that their degree required, if compared to the US or the UK as most did. However in analysing the interviews I sifted to find the determining factors, beyond the practicalities that set the university apart among similar options. It emerged that the branding of the university, through the university promotional content and website, played a key role.

The Latin motto of the Leiden University, '*Praesidium libertatis'* translates to 'Bastion of Freedom', and appears on the university website and the promotional videos and flyers as a kind of remnant of its historic past, and the history of struggles it has been at the centre of, which have defined its identity. The 'About Us 2017' promotional publication of Leiden University retells of the establishment of the university; *"As the story goes... William of Orange gave Leiden the Academia Lugduno Batava in 1575 in gratitude.. for the inhabitant's courageous resistance during the Spanish Siege." (*About Us 2017- Our History). In the promo video titled 'Four Centuries of Freedom' images of antique books, scrolls, parchment, and Leiden's classic architecture are interspersed with a narration of

this history, and we hear about the incorporation of ideas of Descartes and Newton, and the work of Einstein, all evidence of the university as a bastion of the 'freedom of speech', specifically linked to the protest speeches by professors in 1940 defending their Jewish colleagues and the 'freedom of science'. Reading it transports you to this historical time and place for a minute, and gives the current modern outlook a sort of authentic substance. A number of students stated that the fact that this was the oldest university in the Netherlands gave it a form of prestige that drew them towards it. One student, Fares[3], remembered that he had actually scoured the internet and university website before coming, *"You know they like to tell you that Einstein studied here, it's true though, then when you get here you feel like wow, like you are in a place of import."* The history and legacy is one of the most prominently highlighted features of the university's image, and within this is entrenched a strong assertion of the university as a historical flag-bearer for certain freedoms.

Bowen writes about how members from different 'social locations' (Bowen 2013; 12) within an institution will have distinct claims regarding what their institutions identity is, what principles it is based on, where it stands within the larger society, and the freedom for religious or cultural diversity it offers (Bowen 2013). In this respect, the image that the university presents of itself and the way it is understood by students and other actors within that institution is of immense significance. In the last chapter, the 'imagined modern self' and its supposed opposition to Muslim values was discussed and here while not explicitly stated, these freedoms highlight a struggle for some form of modernity, liberal values, and secularism for example with the struggle for the freedom of science, perhaps alluding to a time when intellectual pursuits had to be protected from religious reproach. While institutes, through their dominant actors, come to have distinct vision and values, these may influence the way actors identify themselves or categorize others, and might leave those who agree with these values in a better position to assert themselves. For example students who strongly identify themselves with a religion may feel like they do not connect to the secular emphasis in the institution's identity, and this is explored in the following chapters. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that a memory and imagination created from selective history, as the one spelled out above, can be problematic.

Wekker talks about how nostalgia in the national imagination could be dangerous because it allows for the valorisation of one culture and a distinct set of values. She talks about how with the "rising tide of Islamic and immigrant barbary coming ever closer" (Wekker 2016; 108), the Dutch feel a growing need to protect their carefully crafted image as "free, emancipated, tolerant, a beacon of civilization" (Wekker 2016; 108) This evokes a nostalgia for their era of struggle and victory over the domination of religion in public life (Van der Veer 2006 in Wekker 2016). In this context, it can be seen how the university's allusion to the past, in a way that maintains the pristine image but does not address the many problematic aspects of this history can be amiss. The university policy documents state, "Leiden University is an open community where everyone

3 Fares is a Master's Student studying International Law. He is 23 years old, from Pakistan and started in February 2017, the same time I started, which is how I became acquainted with him during the Orientation Week Leiden (OWL). First interview was in June, but I also include his comments about his experience when we met during the second semester in November.

who wants to contribute to its ambitions and to all that it stands for will feel at home and gain equal opportunities." (Werkplan 2017-2018; 5). How do international Muslim students relate to the university and 'all that it stands for', encounter and cope with the similarities and the differences of these cultural and institutional values with their own is essential.

The image of **global excellence**, high research standards, and connectedness to an international research community is also made prominent as the promotional online magazine states that the university is 'Innovative, intercultural, international' (About Us 2017 – Our Vision). This is especially an aspect that appealed to the PhD students I interviewed who expected to gain a network and a community of intellectual and academic exchange. Meanwhile, it is notable that while the 'international partnerships' and linkages to international organisations are constantly referred to on the website, these organisations and institutions are predominantly European. Under the 'International Partnerships' the only organisations mentioned are; the 'League of European Research Universities', 'The Europaeum', 'European University Association', 'Erasmus Mundus' and the also European 'Coimbra Group'. This gives a sense of how 'international' is defined, or prioritized ('International' – Leiden University).

The **social impact** of the university is also highlighted with the idea that it is preparing students to take on an important role in social change. The Institutional Plan also presents the university as preparing the students for a globalising and international world. In an introductory video on the 'Why study in Leiden?' page, Rector Magnificus, Professor Carel Stolker is heard addressing new students, *"Think about the major issues in the world today… people often say 'they' will find a solution... 'they' are you, you are the problem solvers...you are not alone in this."* (Why Study in Leiden?) The question here is; who is included in the role of the 'problem solvers' of the world now, and is there an unconscious assumption of Europe or 'the West' as not only being more educated, but also in some way qualitatively more 'enlightened' and capable of solving problems of the world. And are these problems seen as being a result of different levels of development and a plethora of other factors, or are they seen to be linked to the cultures of 'the East'. Such assumptions may cast back on imperialist ideas that created a hierarchical differentiation in the terms of culture or knowledge, and would be in line with the "post-colonial ressentiment" (Essed 2014; 337) that Essed refers to.

When I asked Syiva[4] what she thought of the university before arriving she said, *"One thing I remember thinking was how this was definitely a big internationally oriented university, super organised,* ***super international****!"* An idea vividly present and constantly reverberating in different interviews was the "international" and "diverse" Leiden University located within the "open" and "tolerant" society of the Netherlands. When I asked about "image" or "impression", these stock terms seeped into the expressions of students. While this was perhaps a result of their constant regurgitation in the university's website and promotional content and in general discourse, underlying their use seemed to be a vague notion of a society or university community which was

4 Syiva was the first student I met, she is 24, originally from Indonesia. I was connected with her through Laiba, who is also her classmate doing a Masters in Child Psychology.

so highly educated and intellectually poised, that the people seemed somehow unconcerned or "*above*" racism or discrimination, as Tita said *"I don't think there is any real racism here.. people here are relaxed, they don't care."* And I wondered to what extent this was an internalisation of the image projected of Leiden University and the Netherlands, and to what extent was this based on personal experience.

Some students were more anxious about issues of discrimination and anti-Muslim sentiments though. Abeer for example had in fact particularly researched their possible prevalence, *"I looked at student forums and threads on social media, and I remember reading that the Dutch were very accommodating for Muslims, one page even said that many, or I don't know some people at least, had lately been converting (to Islam) as well!"* This is not to speculate on how right or wrong the information they initially had was, but to highlight that they remembered being unaware or poorly informed on the different issues when they arrived, and in later chapters I explore how disillusionment and dissatisfaction was in some cases intensified by early specious beliefs.

Personal Motivations

In trying to grasp the widely different sets of expectations students come with, and the choices they make, it is important to understand not simply the factors that pulled them towards their study experience, but also the factors that pushed them out of the comfort zones that they left behind. For many students, the decision did not come lightly and was a deeply personal one. I interviewed Julia[5], the International Student Advisor at Leiden University and in discussing how the experience can be personally challenging for students she said "*International students always bring along themselves when they go abroad.*" alluding to how the struggles or challenges of their life back home can continue to influence them here.

While some had lived abroad or alone before, for many this was their first experience. And it had not always come as a natural or spontaneous opportunity but one that they had struggled for, against the opinion of their parents, or their family. Abeer[6] mentioned, *"My family, especially my mother and brother are very open to me, but it was not always like this, my father had his rules always and you can imagine convincing him to send his daughter abroad like this was not easy."* Filiz[7] had similarly mentioned how allowing her to study abroad was such a "brave" decision by her family, "especially at this age".

For some students, it was a lack of opportunity in their home country, where they were unable to find the academic or professional opportunities that they desired. Filiz related that the state of

5 Julia (pseudonym), is the International Student Advisor for 'Practical Matters', which means that she is essentially the go-to person for all International students and has a great deal of direct correspondence with them. She has also been managing different projects for international students, including the Orientation Week Leiden (OWL) and the recently initiated Residence Life Program.

6 Abeer is an 'External' PhD student in Political Science, she is 27 and originally from Egypt, and I was connected with her through the Diversity Office of Leiden University. The office helped me connect to Filiz and Naqi as well.

7 Filiz is also an 'External' PhD student in Political Science/International Relations, she is 26 and originally from Turkey.

academia was not up to the mark when she left, *"I know in my country many academics have no rights to work, even in the private sector, they cannot get touristic passports, and many had been expelled in recent years."*

For some others, especially the Indonesian students, it was receiving the scholarship that made their mind. These were individuals at different stages of their life, some just married, some just promoted, but receiving the government scholarship gave them the opportunity to build their portfolio, while being on what many recognized as a 'study vacation' away from responsibilities of their adult life. Desi[8], who missed not being with her three year old daughter said, *"I jumped at the opportunity, being able to sneak back into the carefree student life even for a year is such a prospect!"* These factors also placed certain pressures on the experiences here, and like Desi, many felt they needed to make the most out of this opportunity, considering what was invested in their decision. Tita, who was similarly studying on the scholarship said she only wanted to focus on her academic life, (which she had explained her current struggles with, having almost failed one of her courses in the first semester) especially because it was the taxpayers money that was paying for her time abroad and she felt a responsibility to honour this as an aspiring government employee.

The 'Study Abroad' Experience and Importance of Narratives

During interviews as I attempted to discern what motivated different individuals, I found that the most cardinal of reasons, did not have to do with pragmatics or pressures, but with an individual desire to 'have the experience'. The idea of a 'study abroad experience' was recognizable in the way most students talked about how they decided to come. Whether it was students who had just started a few months ago, or been here for a few years, when they recalled their decision to go abroad a sense of excitement was immediately palpable in their expression. Fares mentioned how he had visited the Netherlands once but was excited to be here *"not as just a tourist but like a local"* Even the otherwise reserved, talked at length about what going abroad to study meant for them. Galih[9] related how he had researched the Netherlands and Europe, planned to travel and explore the 'rich Dutch culture', *"The whole idea of coming to study abroad had always been just fascinating for me, like an opportunity to do new things, meet new people, really have an experience."*

On the one hand they talked about their expectations about the Dutch culture, the Netherlands and Europe, but on the other it was about the experience of leaving home, moving far away, living alone, and then the narrative of a life of independence and self-exploration that the ideal of a 'study abroad' experience evokes. For international Muslim students sometimes these ideas were more intensified because the cultural contrast between their lives back home and their expectations of student life at Leiden were quite different. For example, all the students I interviewed were either living with their parents or married, for a few of the female students

8 Desi is a Masters student in the Law Faculty, she is 24 and originally from Indonesia. Fares helped connect us.

9 Galih is a Masters student of International Tax Law, this is a separate faculty from the general Law Faculty and is quite removed from the rest of the academic community as will be discussed in the next chapter as well. He is 32 years old and married, and is considering working in the Netherlands and moving with his family following the completion of his program in 2018.

especially it meant coming from contexts where their parents' permission or the general lack of safety in the cities they lived in meant relatively restricted mobility, whereas coming to Leiden meant the ability to live and travel alone without curfews or constant supervision. Filiz mentioned, *"When I came here I did not know how safe it was so I still used to come home early but I feel more free here than in Istanbul where I have lived my whole life, that is so strange."* The fact that students were looking forward to the sensation of independence, which they often saw in an idealistic way, could definitely be seen in their decision-making. However, how this ideal turned out to be for different people will be explored in the following chapters.

This 'study abroad' idea prompted me towards the importance of narratives in making meaning out of our experiences, and of ourselves. The narrative and the self are inextricably linked through experiences, because narratives simultaneously mould experiences and are created from them. They help make sense of chasms between "past, present and imagined worlds" (Ochs and Capps 1996; 19). Moreover, it is important to see how self-narratives of international Muslim students are shaped in institutional contexts, as they can influence how one imagines their membership in a community (Ochs and Capps 1996), for example for the narrative of the idealised 'student life' that is popular in the university's social space, this helps understand the ease with which it is often internalised by students. Narratives also affect how one positions themselves in relation to social discourses (Bamberg 2004 in Dunn 2017), for example neoliberal discourses that idealise independence, personal responsibility, risk-taking and self-management in a fast paced world (Bröckling 2016, McGuigan 2015 in Dunn 2017). In addition to this, considering the negative socio-political discourses that place Islam in opposition to the liberal, secular and modern, the following chapters will explore how narratives influence the way international Muslim students make meaning out of their experiences and identify themselves.

Making the Move: Arrival in Leiden

No matter the factors that have pushed or pulled one towards studying abroad, the magnitude of the undertaking inevitably weighs down on students once they land in Leiden. In these starting days, the gargantuan task of reorienting and adjusting falls on to the individual students. An adjustment is required not only in the multiplicity of practical matters but also psychologically, when one's senses are inundated by the newness and unfamiliarity of everything around them.
Immediately following their move, in a short span of time students have a diverse plethora of experiences through which they are introduced to the physical, social and symbolic space of Leiden University. All of these experiences can potentially have a profound impact on how students are able to position themselves in these spaces and tackle possible hindrances, in the course of their entire time at the university. Delving into these also provides a valuable backdrop for the particular struggles they face as international Muslim students, which will be discussed in the following chapters as well.

Acquainting with the Physical Space

The first task is to acquaint yourself with the physical space, the place; the city of Leiden, and the Netherlands. While students mentioned enjoying the freedom that they felt after arriving, they naturally found the unfamiliarity of the spaces intimidating at times, and it is important to see what made them feel 'at home', something that the university too emphasizes in relation to student support on its website a number of times.

Religiosity and the 'Secular Public'

Religious practices and representations specifically in the case of Muslim students can be very visible as well, from wearing the hijab to praying, fasting or the various intricacies of social interaction that will be discussed more in Chapter 3. Moreover, Islam as a religion is one that has been developed with particular focus to be incorporated in everyday life, so there are specific injunctions for everything, from how one dresses, to how one lives in their house, and to how one presents themselves in the public space. Thus normativity is crucial in the analysis of the public space. Unlike the previously distinguished norm (referring to what is commonplace) and normality (referring to what is considered appropriate or normal), normativity specifically involves moral dictates (referring to what 'should' be done or what is 'right', in this case being largely defined by religious injunctions).

Wekker talks about how the public space for the Dutch is cherished as a space for the creation and expression of the neoliberal self. For those who ascribe to the notion of Islam as the antithetical 'Other', the visibility of Islam in any form triggers nostalgia for "normal times" (Wekker 2016; 108) when a religious surveillance of public life did not undermine secular expression or sexual freedoms. Wekker writes, "In gay circles nostalgia is rampant, too: for the times when we were safe, could kiss and hold hands in public, before Muslims came and rained on our parade." (Wekker 2016; 108) Moors and Salih also discuss the "secular public" (Moors and Salih 2009; 377), how it is created and controlled, through national anxieties that mandate assimilation to dominant normativities and political discourses that dictate Muslim public presence. Specifically the creation of two reductionist tropes, one being the 'secular, assimilable and loyal' and the other 'fundamentalist, radical or extremist' (Moors and Salih 2009; 376) and expressions of religiosity are linked to the latter trope, and deemed unacceptable. It is possible then that international Muslim students may receive subtle or harsh reactions or sanctions that may or may not be intended to, but serve to curb the expression of these sanctions.

Places like 'Home'

International Muslim students may or may not be aware of the socio-political context of the Netherlands, and a large number of students I interviewed largely did not seem to know of the presence of such severe notions (that valorise the secular above the religious way of life) existing in the popular discourses of the country specifically, nevertheless they were all aware of such ideas on a more wider scale of Europe or the Western countries. Consequently, on arrival in the Netherlands they were anxious about how others would respond to them, how would they practically be able to maintain their religious practices and felt the difficult task of pinpointing what the thresholds of religiosity were in the public space. This sense of suddenly being in an unfamiliar and possibly ill-disposed space meant a heightened value of everything that was

familiar, cultural or religious (what one student described as 'Muslimness'). These experiences and observations came up when I asked about things that made students feel more 'at home'.

Syiva explained that she had chosen the Netherlands over US because she wears a hijab and was afraid of how people will react to her, when I asked her if that meant she did not have similar concerns about the Netherlands she said, "*Not really, I'm still afraid of that. Here I have so many other Indonesian friends so not that afraid, but US is so big and I don't know anyone there. When I came here I was shocked and relieved so much to see so many people wearing hijab. Then seniors (from her university in Indonesia) also gave a tour, showed me the prayer room*." Seeing others wear a hijab was definitely something that put many at ease, and this was not restricted to students who themselves wore a hijab.

Moreover, it appears that seemingly little things like presence of a prayer room hold enormous importance for some. For example, Zohra[10] explained, *"In Geneva, a big problem for me was praying, there was always this stress; where do I pray? Here even though the law faculty does not have a designated room but we can still find a place. But still! Since I experienced Geneva more than happy to have it. Like French culture, it (Geneva) has an extremist interpretation of secularism. Some discussion rooms here normally empty, but they are locked so you get the key from the guards. We have to go one by one, and only have 10 minutes, and the guards mostly are nice, but some knowing that you are Muslim very reluctantly give you the key, but most are nice."*

For some the presence of mosques eased them in a similar way. Ayu[11] explained that she preferred to live in the Hague over Leiden because there were more mosques here, she mentioned that there were three mosques at walking distance from her current residence. The fact that she also mentioned never having gone to any of these mosques or intending to suggested that she felt better simply knowing that they were around. Syiva also mentioned how hearing the *azaan* had a calming effect on her here as well. Selman[12] similarly mentioned *"If you try to apply the prophetic injunctions in this city, it is enough for you to do that."* When I asked him how so, he elaborated, *"the city offers you a lot if you are trying to settle in and want to practice your religion; first, there are so many options for halal food, can ask people if they have the option, then there are also mosques, one is two minutes away, when I lived in the US, it took me half an hour drive to reach the closest mosque."* Syiva explained how halal options were always available but expressed confusion over the fact that the social science faculty had stopped serving halal options in the cafeteria since the last semester.

An interesting response of the international Muslim students to the recognition of this clash between their religious beliefs and the secular public was their attempt to bridge this difference. Though it appeared to be an unconscious effort brought on by a general positivity towards their

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10 Zohra is studying at the Law Faculty, having started in Fall 2016. She is 24, originally from Iran, but had been living in Geneva for the last four years for her Bachelors. It was in my interview with Tika that I met her, who had brought her along feeling a bit uneasy with meeting alone. They are both classmates, and while Tika was reserved, Zohra was very eloquent and elaborate in her opinions. However this did mean that she dominated most of the discussion, but nevertheless this was a valuable interview since talking to them together gave me the opportunity to witness as they reflected on the same incidents and how they affected them differently.

11 Ayu is a Masters student of International Relations, she is originally from Indonesia, I was connected with her through Desi. She lives in the Hague and that is where I met her for the interview.

12 Selman is originally from Turkey, he is 24 and studying Law, a classmate and close friend of Fares, who also connected us.

overall experience. They did so by reconceptualising the most starkly visible manifestations of secular and liberal normativities in the public space, acts that would be censured in their own cultural context or 'religious public', in a way that the Dutch culture appeared to be more in line with their moral values. In terms of expression of sexuality, Azizah[13] mentioned that while she had lived abroad for a while, she was more comfortable here in this respect because there are not a lot of public displays of affection in Leiden city or the Netherlands in general. She explained, *"I know it's because Dutch people are not like that my friend told me, like they don't sleep around and most do not start dating until they are older, not like the US where they are just kids. You know they have some morals, it shows."* Another example was in Fares' comment on the drinking culture in the Netherlands. While he mentioned being put off by how much events and festivals such as the Kings Day are filled with drinking, he emphasized that Dutch society still had an *"ethic of drinking"*, explaining that while there are *"some drunk people"* being loud and reckless at night, in general they are not like people in the US or UK, that binge on alcohol all the time. He explained that this shows that Dutch are more restricted than other Europeans too in this respect, making it easy to socialise during evening events as well. Becker writes that religious individuals and communities may use religious tenants and values to create boundaries between themselves and 'the public'. (Becker 1999 in Lamont and Molnar 2002) This shows the significance of such reconceptualization. By bridging the gap between clashes in religious or cultural values on a discursive level, students are also in effect bridging the gap between themselves and the publics they come in contact with.

Acquainting with the Social Space

Unlike the process of acquainting with the place, which is more linked to adjusting in the physical space, here specifically the social space is discussed. At this initial stage, the first interactions that students have and the assistance they gain from pre-existing or new acquaintances directly influences the way students relate with the new spaces and ultimately how their experiences unfold. There is also an aspect of familiarity and the comfort they feel knowing that they can ask someone for help. As Julia mentioned, *"I think we need to consider that when international students come here, they leave their safety net behind, of their friends and family, you should, well you can't fully replace but direct them on how to create a new safety net."*

There is a natural need for **familiarity** at this initial time of arrival but it is interesting to consider what makes someone more 'familiar' or prompts one to call a social group their 'own'. This 'phenomenology of group classification' (Lamont and Molnar 2002), including how individuals consider themselves to be similar or different to others, and how they 'perform' these is important here in understanding how the social space is navigated by students. When I started my research I had a vague idea about how students who have a similar 'culture', which could be constituted by religion, nationality or ethnicity, may be more likely to form social groups. However, this turned out to be a limited understanding because it is not some bounded, static culture that individuals have varying levels of identification with, but culture is constantly being

13 Azizah was the second student I interviewed. She is 24, a Masters student studying Child Psychology, and I met her through her classmate Laiba, who is a friend of mine from Pakistan. She was an important connection in the Indonesian community and helped me connect with many other students.

changed and created in an interconnected nexus of interaction and is deeply tied to perceived identities and constant shifts therein according to the context one finds oneself in. Barth writes about this in terms of ethnic groups and boundary construction, specifically pointing at how common culture results from groups rather than defining them.(Barth 1969) 'Self ascription and ascription by others'(Barth 1969; 13), which can also depend on certain visible cultural features that symbolise difference, also plays an important role in organising groups. Syiva's experience elucidates this, *"I also met a Surinamese Muslim girl here, because I was wearing hijab she approached me, invited me to her house for a celebration and we are still friends."* Barth distinguishes ethnic differences in terms of 'overt diacritical features' and 'basic value orientations' (Barth 1969; 14). The latter idea of similar 'values' also seemed to be very relevant in student's descriptions of certain friend groups.

Following the idea that culture must not be conceptualised as bounded within a geographical space (Gupta and Ferguson 1992), is the crucial recognition of the importance of symbolic boundaries constructed within complex dynamics of identity and culture. Through the study of social groups we can see how symbolic boundaries become manifested as social boundaries in everyday lives. And specifically considering how groups re-assume these elements of commonality when abroad, and adopt an approach of assisting each other shows how symbolic boundaries create inclusive social spaces (Lamont and Molnar 2002).

Assistance

To this backdrop it is important to see how students receive **assistance** at the outset of their experience, and how it helps them connect socially. On arriving, some students come into contact with pre-existing acquaintances, often senior alumni or friends from home, this is especially the case with Indonesian students, considering the very large Indonesian community in Leiden. Syiva explained, *"In Indonesia we have this culture, so when we live abroad we will live together as a community. Indonesians would end up staying in contact. So before coming here, I knew a friend who had studied the same program as me here so I asked her if any other Indonesian students coming here this semester, and we have a group, an Indonesian students association here in Leiden University, from that I made a lot of connections."* Azizah similarly related how having two of her seniors was a big comfort, *"I got here in the morning, and really they were there from picking me from the airport, they fixed my jet lag, I mean everything from getting me a chipkaart to showing me around. I even replaced her in this apartment, and everybody asks me how I got such a great accommodation. Back home I could see that things were in English, but when I got here so much was in Dutch and I would have been so stressed (if they had not helped out)."*

Similarities in 'values' can also lead to 'interdependence and symbiosis' (Barth 1969; 18) that leads to the creation of strong bonds. Apart from the Indonesian group, other students mentioned having similar groups that they relied on, and Selman, from Turkey mentioned that he did have a group of Turkish students and while the group had only all met once before the start of classes, it still gave him a sense of security. *"I'm living here alone, anything could happen to me. But it's not that I'm constantly trying to reach them, just a sense that if there was a need I can contact them, makes it better."* I asked him if he thought he would have found that sense of security with other international friends, he hesitated, and explained that while it was possible, for this you need someone who understands you and you feel comfortable enough with them to ask for help. Here he felt that there was a

general idea that people need to be independent and self-reliant, so it's harder to find people who understand this idea of dependence. I had met Selman through my Pakistani friend Fares, they had both become close friends, and both mentioned in their interviews how potentially awkward social situations that involved drinking alcohol, with their group of international friends, were made easier with the presence of the other. It was not simply that they were both not drinking, but that they felt that the other person understands the rationale behind their choices. Moreover they could possibly rely on the other's strategy for dealing with awkward situations in which one has to expose such aspects of their personality that stand in contradiction with the norm.

Spaces like 'Home': HistoRUN and SABR

HistoRUN

I remember attending the HistoRUN[14] event organised by the Indonesian Student Association with Azizah, who was also part of the organising committee. The entire organising committee with about fifty members was sitting, eating and busily managing last minute blunders in the Lipsius Cafeteria before the event started. I slid into a seat in the corner, trying to not get in the way in the hustle bustle. I hoped that when things would calm down Azizah would be able to introduce me to some other Indonesian students. But soon I was surrounded by Azizah and her group of friends, they were all laughing and chatting loudly. I had previously met Syiva and Azizah only for our interviews, and had the impression of them being rather reserved, this is also something Syiva mentioned when she talked about how difficult it was for her to speak in workgroups in class or in large social groups, but seeing them here I saw them completely uninhibited. I asked Azizah if she knew most of the Indonesian students here, thinking perhaps it was the result of familiarity, but she responded that she was meeting most for the first time that day. I could see the ease in the atmosphere and to an extent recognized what Azizah had earlier said about how it was easier for her to be around Indonesian students because she was assured that they would understand her better.

Apart from her Indonesian group of friends, Azizah had a group of classmates, including students from Pakistan, Turkey and Iran, it also included my Pakistani friend Laiba, through whom I had met Azizah. This led me to wonder what created this ease and sense of comfort for different students. And moreover, how this assuredness that one was not susceptible to external judgement or categorisation, that they were 'understood', affected their disposition and ability to socialise so significantly in different social spaces. This goes to show how inextricably linked the process of self-identification is with the external context. On the one hand external cues or individual judgements about how amenable the social space is, may lead one to adjust their

14 HistoRUN was an event organised by the Indonesian Student Association on 29th April, 2017 at Leiden. It was meant for Indonesian students, families and also open for anyone who wanted to attend. It included workshops, quizzes, activities like treasure hunts, all of which were geared at the celebration of Indonesian heritage and history. The association called PPI has a large membership and is popular among the Indonesian student community, helping connect students and offering guidance on various aspects of settling in.

behaviour, on the other hand in some cases this may lead to a self-perpetuating cycle where different ways of operating in different social spaces may reinforce perceptions.

I attended HistoRUN when I was myself starting out at Leiden University, this made me vigilant to another observation. Unlike what I had experienced so far in groups with Dutch students, in this case, even though this was an Indonesian event, all the students sitting around me immediately switched to speaking in English, even among themselves once they noticed I was sitting on the same table.

Eventually, I became engaged in a conversation with Rora, but in the background I could hear all the students playing Indonesian music and singing Indonesian songs together as they all gathered in a group before the event began. This feeling of conviviality was so strongly present, and reminded me of the event as something reminiscent of 'home' for the students here, and possibly a place of refuge for those struggling with cultural adjustment and fatigue. I wondered if the alleviating quality of the space was not simply a result of an overt celebration of culture, but was also related to the historical context of the event that gave it meaning. This was an event celebrating Indonesian heritage in the Netherlands.

Anna Tsing talks about how each person comes with a history of transformative contaminated encounters that form a part of their identity. This is necessary to understand how new collaborations across diverse groups may transform individuals (Tsing 2015). And here it is interesting to see how students reassert and celebrate their culture and heritage. She also talks about how there is a tendency to avoid recognition of these histories of encounters, because certain histories can implicate certain actors (possibly distorting the image that is currently being presented). However, through the HistoRUN event the celebration is through a recognition rather than an ignorance of this history, and perhaps redefining and reasserting ones relation to a place in terms of national histories, could potentially have a positive impact on one's individual relation to a place.

SABR

Another example of an inclusive space for international Muslim students is SABR, the religious student association for Muslim students at Leiden University. I was keen to learn more about the role it does play or could potentially play in helping international Muslim students. However, looking at the SABR webpage and event pages, most of the content and the majority of the events were in Dutch. I knew that this was not an association meant only for Dutch Muslim students, however I was unable to come into contact with any international student who was a part of it.

Gaining access to the association was tiresome, I was not able to get a response after multiple emails through their official website or their social media page, and my numerous attempts spanned over a period of four months. Incidentally in July, I saw a post about recruitments for the next academic year and so I decided to apply for one of their membership positions as a last resort to get in touch, and in fact ended up with the opportunity to meet the entire board of the association when called for an interview. This interview within an interview ended up being very

valuable; I was able to ask important questions about what membership would mean for me as an international English speaking student (when the organisation had overtime become largely Dutch) and gained an insight into the extent to which boundaries permeated the social space of the association. Moreover, this role reversal meant that I did not receive ceremonial answers but instead very practical, unaffected ones. Nevertheless to ensure informed consent, apart from my emails that involved details of my research, I also mentioned my research project during the interview as one of the reasons why I would be interested in becoming a member.

As in the case of the Indonesian student association, this ease emanating from the knowledge that others understood you was certainly important here too and lead to *"People definitely feeling more at home"*, as Damla, one of the senior board members of SABR explained. It emerged as an example of how religion specifically can become a basis for the creation of a distinct social community. Lamont and Molnar talks about such collectives stating that, "Individuals within such categorical communities have at their disposal common categorization systems to differentiate between insiders and outsiders and common vocabularies and symbols through which they create a shared identity." (Hunter 1974, Wuthnow 1989, Lamont 1992 in Lamont and Molnar 2002; 182). Hence, religion with a core set of values and beliefs, known by all (though related to in a myriad of ways) can lead to the creation of groups.

But this is a dynamic process, because it is not only the similarity of a set of values, but also a similarity of experiences emerging from an identification with these values that brings people together. Moral values that feature strongly in the everyday lives of students, so for example struggles related to socialisation and alcohol can become a connecting factor. Damla explained, "*I think SABR is a community where people are able to feel comfortable since they find people with a similar culture and values as their own. SABR also helps to connect people, not in a business sense but more in a social sense. When you start (at Leiden University) students have many problems, like I don't know how to fit in. So we help out, not in counselling, but help find people for example who study at your faculty, or you get along, it can make issues easier to deal.. When you come to Sabr you laugh about these things and find that others share similar experiences, find people who get it."*

It is also important to consider however that the category of 'Muslim student' is not homogeneous at all, nor is the group of students that are part of SABR. First of all there is a Dutch and International boundary which will be further explored in the following sections. But more significantly, Muslim students have infinitely different repertoires created through their differences in certain beliefs, their interpretation of different religious injunctions, how strongly they relate to different aspects of the religion, or identify with religion as a whole, and of course the multitude of different cultural contexts or ethnicities that students are coming from.

Nevertheless, as Lamont and Molnar mention, members of categorical communities can be understood as being part of one symbolic community, despite their many individual differences (Lamont and Molnar 2002). And in SABR as well there is a focus on bringing the community together by focusing on the core similarities. I asked the board that in considering students for membership, what is the idea of 'Muslim' that is considered and if different interpretations and practices were equally acceptable. Damla explained, "*I think most of us are Sunni so we practice the same*

way. But in our events too we do not give conclusions, we just give a broad idea of all the different schools in Islam and we don't say you have to do this and not this, so we want to don't offend someone or cross a line... We focus on how Islam is same for all of us, it connects us because we all have eeman (faith) and that is what we work for."

Performativity and Style

So far the discussion has focused on some of the inclusive connections and spaces that international Muslim students discover, especially at the outset of their experience. However, over the course of their experience students find many other potentially inclusive spaces and these are not limited to students with whom they share cultural or religious values. So while initial social groupings are more spontaneous and arbitrary, over time the more performative aspect within socialisation is important. The initial groupings do not necessarily hold, and it is important to see what influences social preferences of international Muslim students. This is integral to understanding how students position and identify themselves in the social space. In a study on inclusion and integration into society, the study of boundaries (that may be fluid and situational) through social groups is telling of the process of self-identification (Boccagni 2014).

Ferguson's conceptualisation of performativity in terms of cultivated 'styles' is of crucial importance here. How International Muslim students choose who to socialise with is not necessarily based on spontaneity, or as a search for a familiar safe option, but part of the greater process of cultivation of style, and hence a choice (that may be conscious or unconscious). What style is chosen may be based on different factors. The culture of a social group, the style associated with it, and what it represents, are all determined by the individuals. Some styles may be deemed as more useful than others in terms of helping in social inclusion, on the other hand, this may also depend on practical considerations about the future, such as whether one plans to return back home eventually after their studies or continue living in the Netherlands (Ferguson 1999). What is key here is the idea of style as a competency, that is 'achieved' not simply 'adopted' (Ferguson 1999; 96), and thus one of the ways to consider it is through this analysis of social groups. Since one cannot have a style that is made of an infinite repertoire, choices need to be made in lifestyles and social groups. And one of the ways in which people construct styles is through 'selective socialisation' (Ferguson 1999; 101).

In my conversation with Tita[15], I asked her if she knew many other Indonesian students considering it is such a large community in Leiden, and she responded, *"No no, I don't. When I came here I met some old friends here but no I don't really relate with the whole Indonesian community here.. It's always the same kind of conversations and activities, I mean its fine but I'd rather not."* She emphasised a number of times how she liked to explore the city, and try new activities, and it seemed that at some point she felt that she could not do so with her Indonesian friends and decided on spending more time with other friends. Other students also mentioned how social activities were linked to social groups. Fares mentioned, *"If I want to go to a museum I would prefer to go with one of my international*

15 Tita is an Indonesian Masters student as well, and I was connected with her by Azizah.

friends, it gives you a chance to have a discussion about history that you can't have otherwise, there is a new perspective there."

For Fares, the fact that he had lived abroad for a significant part of his life and intended to work abroad as well was also important, and mentioned how he felt much more at ease with international students than the *"very Pakistani or Indian"* students. On the other hand, many of the Indonesian students seemed to be decided on returning to Indonesia right after their studies, and the fact that they were *"only here for a year"* influenced many of their choices. While explaining how she might not even stay in contact with most of the people she meets in Leiden, Rora[16] mentioned, *"It's nice, you can take your (Indonesian) friends back with you in a way."* An interesting example was Naqi[17] though, who had lived in Leiden for about five years now, and was currently settled with his family, while he had a small group of Indonesian and Turkish friends, yet he explained that he had little to no interaction with other international or Dutch individuals outside of his PhD work. He explained that he wanted to socialise as a family and having a Muslim group made it easier to enjoy their culture, moreover that he had made this choice some years ago, because he wanted himself and his family to stay connected to his *"own culture"*.

Importantly, the choice to attend or not attend the orientation week is also telling, most of the students who had skipped the orientation week, expressed little interest in the idea of *"making new friends and doing new things"* that is associated with the normative ideal of 'student life', and a large number of them often had a persisting association with their initial groups of co-nationals. As will become clearer in the following chapters too, the way students choose to socialise and the social groups they are able to form is a great source of comfort for them and help in navigating the larger social space.

"Little Islands"

Internationalisation, diversity and inclusiveness appear constantly in university communications as one of their main aims. However, as discussed previously, the university's understanding of diversity can be rather limited and quantifying, where it sees juxtaposition of students from diverse cultures as automatically equating a diverse and inclusive environment. Moreover, the implementation of different measures to ensure such an environment often end up being informed more by concerns of image management. In this context, it is interesting to see how the university views the creation of the social groups that have been discussed in preceding section.

"If you put too many people of the same culture together, you get little islands that do not communicate." Julia, the International Student Advisor explained how the formation of "little islands" is an impediment to

16 Rora is another Indonesian student, I met her through Azizah at the HistoRUN event where I interviewed her as well. She is 28 and married, and was almost at the close of her Masters when we met, having started in Fall 2016.

17 Naqi is a PhD student, he was the oldest student I interviewed at 34 and has been living with his family in Leiden for the past five years. I was connected with him by the Diversity Office.

the achievement of 'diversity'. Forming such groups, based on cultural similarities (based on country of origin or religious beliefs) was understood as a fall back option for students who either do not want to integrate or cannot integrate, because of their social inability to mesh well with different people. In either case, becoming the focus of the project of integration, in which international students are expected to meet a certain set of conditions to be able to join the category of a normal student and be considered 'integrated' (Gogolin 2011). Within university publication content, and in the jargon of the diversity office, the term integration is used. The emphasis is social integration, also described as 'meshing in' or 'becoming a part of the student community'.

"I think it's very human and safe to do that. We have to help students overcome that strategy.. I understand that it gives them a feeling of security, a feeling of being connected which is nice, and they can find themselves in the others, that's good, but then why did you go to study abroad, to live in a little China, or a little India? Or whatever." On the one hand Julia appeared sympathetic and concerned, and on the other there was a thinly veiled exasperation, it seemed like she felt it was such a basic thing and was annoyed by why students had such a hard time coming to pace. During her conversation, in relation to the practical problems students came to her with, she mentioned how sometimes it felt like some students were *"quite frankly from a different planet"*, because they did not seem to understand how to complete basic official procedures on their own. The same kind of annoyance was there in the question of socialisation, and I wondered if there was an underlying belief here that students from certain cultural backgrounds are unable to socialise in the 'international' environment of Leiden University.

The emphasis on getting students to come out of their comfort zones and experience the value of an international environment was a positive message, it reflected the way that 'internationalisation' is viewed almost as a celebration, and students are invited to join in the 'international' environment. But it is important to consider what is the context of this celebration, and how much of it is related to the projection of an image. Also, what defines the 'international' environment that students must join in to be considered 'integrated'? Are the assumptions informing these 'international' environments really 'international', or are they possibly defined by the norms of a possible invisible majority?

Julia's responses raised some questions for me. First, is 'diversity' achieved with the juxtaposition of 'difference', by placing students from different cultures together. Was this a necessary and sufficient condition for diversity? Secondly, how is the formation of 'little islands' really problematic for 'diversity', and what does this possibly reveal about the way 'diversity' is understood from the perspective of university policy.

I raised the first question with Julia as well, she responded, *"Well, you need to guard it properly as well. I see that that is not enough sometimes, but if people are willing to take that step, and experience the extra value of these international environments then next time they would choose the more international option themselves. But I think that people need to be pushed a little, because people will always go for the similar."* I asked what could act as that 'push'? And she replied *"Placement."* By this she meant ensuring variegated groups of students, in workgroups in the classroom, in one hall in student buildings or in groups during the

orientation week. I faced a somewhat circular logic; the way to ensure diversity was placing students together, but when I asked what within these mixed groups would ensure a greater understanding and exchange, the answer was again placement. From this I understood that putting people together was considered as a sufficient condition for ensuring diversity. This echoed the relatively quantitative understanding of diversity I had glimpsed in university policy as well.

In answering the second question on if and how these 'little islands' can be problematic for diversity, it is also useful to consider that the formation of groups of Chinese, Indonesian or other Asian students is more prominent in Julia's analysis, while European cliques remain unmentioned, groupings within Dutch students are mentioned as natural and the clear division between the Dutch and international students goes unmentioned as a problem for diversity. This is not to make a judgement about what is in actuality more or less problematic, if at all, but only to highlight the inevitable effect of such a difference in understanding; one group ends up becoming the focus of integration. Another detrimental effect of this is that it focuses the attention on changing the individual, at the cost of realizing the possible limitations of the underlying structure (Gogolin 2011). With such an understanding, the emphasis on changing impressions of the university instead of changing the university itself (Ahmed 2012). So as long as problem is imagined to reside with the student, the university could assume its image as a diverse and international institute.

"The Dutch Bubble"

In my conversation with Julia about the 'diverse' and 'international' environment of Leiden University, she mentioned how the Dutch students live in their own "Dutch Bubble", and while the 'little islands', clusters of same cultural/national/religious origin of the international students were seen as a problem for the diversity agenda, the "Dutch bubble" was seen as a natural social dynamic, it was normal and understandable. The previous section went into how this implicated the international students as the focus of integration, here I delve further into how this strong distinction between Dutch students and the rest of the student body is encountered by the international Muslim students and how it influences their experiences within the social space of the university.

While all students felt this boundary between the Dutch students and international students very clearly and related being initially taken aback by it, different factors affected how strongly students felt it as a hindrance or as problematic. This was also linked to expectations, with some students especially choosing to study in the Netherlands expecting to explore the 'Dutch culture', make social networks with other Dutch students, and perhaps end up working or continuing their studies in the Netherlands. Galih, an Indonesian student studying International Tax Law explained, *"One of my main objectives coming here was to be able to interact with Dutch students which as yet I am completely unable to do, and I have been trying to figure out why it's so hard."* For students such as Galih such a division in the student body is a cause of serious dissonance. While the website emphasizes how deeply entrenched the university is in the Dutch history and culture, this does

not seem to translate into an exposure to it for the international students. Fares a Pakistani law student also explained how he felt disappointed by how little he was able to learn about the Dutch culture through the university.

In the introduction of this thesis, the difference between the Dutch and English versions of the university website was highlighted, where the Dutch version stressed contact with diverse cultures for Dutch students. In many ways, the university's approach still seems to highlight an understanding of diversity that is more focused on the exposure to the 'exotic' and 'foreign' aspects of different cultures, rather than a diverse social and intellectual exchange. The audience such a focus is meant for is the Dutch student population. For the international students, who may have been attracted to the idea of studying in the midst of the Dutch culture, even a superficial attempt to give them that exposure is rarely made. Delving into this also exemplifies how juxtaposition does not automatically result in 'diversity', especially when a social distinction has become so normalised between the Dutch and international students. Azizah explained how her course had 70 students of which 12 were international students, and there was rarely any contact between Dutch and international students except for workgroups, and even within these workgroups if there were enough Dutch students they would often start talking among themselves in Dutch.

Initially when I began my fieldwork I assumed that this distinction was caused by a language barrier, it seemed like a simple conclusion given that in social interactions with Dutch students, the fact that they continued to speak in Dutch created an awkward divide. Selman recalled his first class, "*I remember I was sitting in the middle of Dutch students and I waited but they were just speaking Dutch with each other the whole time, it was a realization then that oh this is the language here so people are going to be speaking it around me how will I manage, but I did interrupt and introduce myself, also asked about whether we should take notes or not."* In these initial interactions people are vigilant about their surroundings trying to discern the norms, and in my respondents accounts I sensed that many quickly adopted this normalisation of difference between the Dutch and the internationals and I wondered if this signalled a presence of a 'monolingual habitus' (Gogolin 2011; 243).

This especially meant that while students were able to have individual interactions with Dutch students if they tried, they were not similarly successful meshing with Dutch groups. I asked Fares if he faced any social difficulties with Dutch students in the three months that he had studied at the university having started in Spring with me, "*I do have Dutch friends, but in a group that happens.. It still bothers me actually. I had heard that Dutch people were kind of standoffish, individually I did not experience that, the only problem was that they would start speaking in Dutch together and then you are immediately at a disadvantage.*"

In some student's accounts the reliance on schemas about "The Dutch" was also evident. In some cases it seemed to be brought on by a distance; judgements in stereotypical terms were present where student said that they had not had much if any social interaction with Dutch students. For example, Rora also related similar difficulties socialising among Dutch students, while she had a large social group with other international students both Muslim and non-Muslim, *"The Dutch like to hang out within their own groups, I don't think they would ever initiate a conversation with*

you much less include you in their group." For some others it seemed to be a result of their frustration with the inability to understand the cause of the boundaries and distance that they experienced, and perhaps also felt strongly after being unable to create a connection after trying.

Over the course of my fieldwork however it became clear that while language difference was a factor, the problem was more complex, while language may account for hindrances in initial social interaction it did not necessarily account for the prevailing differences, even after months of studying in the same class, or working in the same work group. One student Ayu, who was at the end of her two year Masters at Leiden University said it seemed like Dutch and internationals operated in "different dimensions". *"The Dutch always seem a bit confused and a bit annoyed when they find an international student is in their dimension and they would have to deal with them."* This seemed to be an allusion to the distinct spaces within the university, a Dutch space, and an international space where the whole project of diversity is undertaken. In Ayu's experience she felt that some Dutch members of the community were annoyed if they felt that their space or the norms that defined it were being changed, and they would have to adapt to these changes.

Moreover, my respondents were often confused and traced their own experiences as they wondered at the cause of this division. Azizah related, *"Dutch people are friendly, but hard to get to know them or strike up a conversation. Maybe that has to do with European culture, being individualistic and having more of a sense of personal space and privacy etc. I feel like this must have more to do with personality than with having a different language."*
Selman explained how he had experienced the "invisible distinction" in his class, "*When I see my Dutch friends I say hello or nod to them and they nod back, but with my international friends when I see them it's not just that, we have a proper conversation, they ask how things are going, about your experiences, and your culture, it seems that they are actually interested, but with Dutch students the conversation ends there are no questions." I asked him if that was the 'invisible line' he had earlier mentioned, "Yes that's what I meant, maybe not even a line, more like a wall."*

When the question came up in my conversation with Selman, of why this "wall" exists when the university space seems so above discrimination, he elaborated in detail, clarifying that this is something he had given some serious thought. *"There is not just one reason, language is one. Main reason could be that Dutch students know each other beforehand, they do not need to enlarge their friend community, and the international students want to explore the city etc., but Dutch students not that interested. So can't really make plans like that. Another main reason, international students came here only to study, but Dutch students and some European students they have to cover their fees themselves. Most Dutch students also doing part time jobs, may take them away from social activities with other students. So don't have time to engage outside classroom."* He paused for a few seconds then and wondered to himself, *"But I don't know it doesn't take much to have a conversation, does it?"*

For students who had described facing serious difficulties in positioning themselves within a social nexus after they arrived, this distinction was the cause of a great deal of frustration. For them, this inexplicable divide coupled with their prevailing social difficulties caused them to question their own selves as they tried to find the cause for it. Abeer recounted, "*I had heard from different friends (before arriving), that Dutch people take time to build friendships... I found that it takes time for*

them to trust you, make conversation with you, so in the start I am feeling alone, did I do something wrong what do I do (laughs) but later I realised it's just their style." While Abeer had accepted this, being in the Netherlands for a year, Filiz appeared to be more vexed, perhaps because she had been in the Netherlands for less time, and was currently considering abandoning her program because of the different problems she had been facing. "*They are helpful, honest... so honest, so rude, to be honest. I mean honesty is one thing being rude is another they don't know the limits of either. They don't want to make friends with new people, they are so introverted and closed as far as I see. I mean it's their country they should prioritize their own but still, they are good at speaking English, but then you want to be friends, and I don't mean too much warmth and closeness but just a little bit of communication, but no they close the door. Sometimes you just crash into a wall like I said, and you wonder, what am I doing wrong? Am I not good at making communication and you start to think negative things about your life, maybe I need to change myself. But no you don't change yourself, you are who you are, but it's just so strange.*"
When she began speaking her tone was strong and conveyed her frustration, but by the end she was on the verge of tears, it felt like this was something she had wanted to say for a long time. This 'wall' she talks about crashing in may not have been the only reason for her distress, but it's hard to say how much it had contributed to making her feel helpless and confused.

Her account also exemplified how such distinctions while seemingly harmless, a natural, normalised way of social order, could potentially cause angst and distress for some students. These issues linger in the social space like landmines, for those who are unaffected, they could pass by almost oblivious to their existence, but those already suffering from social difficulties are more vulnerable to these, and they could build upon other issues to make situations impossibly difficult for some. In terms of policy measures, a skewed perspective is inevitably detrimental, creating blind spots and gaps that could adversely affect some more than others.

In my conversation with Damla, a Dutch board member from the Muslim students association, SABR, she mentioned the existence of a division between Dutch and international students within the organisation as well. While she assured me that if I joined I would be able to participate since the main talking points in meetings are in English, I could see that with the majority of members being Dutch, and all of the board members being Dutch, it would be hard for an international Muslim students to socialise beyond the meetings. While in my research I do not delve into the 'other side' of this story, from the perspective of the Dutch students, this is an important topic for possible future research. Nevertheless, it does become clear that this division supersedes religious communities as well. While a Muslims student association does exist; an organisation that could be very helpful for students in dealing with possible boundaries or in struggles of self-identification, its usefulness is very limited for the international Muslim students. This goes to show how such divisions can decrease the effectiveness of actually beneficial structures and measures as well.

This made me wonder what an international Muslim student's response could be here, would trying to establish a new international Muslim student association be helpful (considering there are a number of Christian associations some particularly divided along these lines). That would only perpetuate the divide. Diversity and difference will be an inevitable part of any such organisation. One of the simplest solutions could be to involve more international students in

SABR, and use English as the default means of communication, not only for supplementary talking points, but for online communication and social interaction in general as well. In such a way, instead of a student, the focus would be to adapt the organisation, SABR, in a way that international students are no longer considered an exception.

Chapter 3
The Blindspots
The Social Space and Implicit Boundaries

The Muslim 'Other'

In the first chapter, the discussion elaborated on the creation of the image of 'the Muslim' as the antithetical 'Other', with Islam being seen in opposition to all the values that constituted the Dutch national identity as tolerant, modern, 'progressive', and the champion of secular freedoms and sexual emancipation (Uitermark et al 2013). Following the notion of 'White Innocence' by Gloria Wekker, the previous chapter charted how this imagination of the Dutch self-perpetuates an ignorance in the policy measures on the level of the university. Here, this discussion is taken further into the social space of Leiden University, through the lens of the international Muslim student, to gauge if this conceptualisation also creates blindspots on the micro level of everyday life. This chapter tries to question if the larger public discourses and the entailing representations about Muslims seep through in the apparently impermeable and tolerant social space of the university, and if so, how this is experienced by the international Muslim students.

In the political and media discourses, the existing fears for the protection of superiorly deemed Dutch cultural values, coupled with the current threat of terrorism has placed Muslims as the present-day "witches" (Silverstein 2005; 366), under constant scrutiny and suspicion. This has led to the 'Us' vs 'Them' binary, that has created a distance and consequently essentialist representations. Gullestad writes about the power that such notions can have stating that these social imaginaries imbue the nations understanding of categories, groups and social values (Gullestad 2006). These "discourses of power" (Uitermark et al 2013; 247), can be used by the majority to discriminate, exclude and create structural inequalities, hence it is crucial to judge their pervasiveness in the everyday life of the university. The space of the university can also be viewed as a setting for this cultural politics; in this intermix of discourses, policies and the institution, this is the place where representations are most starkly used or contested (Vertovec 2011).

The role of representations and the "microfoundations of large scale representations" (Bowen 2013; 17) are critical here, and are understood through the theoretical notions of schemas and scripts. As discussed earlier in the theoretical framework, s*chemas* provide default assumptions enabling the quick processing of otherwise complex ideas, and consequently guide action by providing *scripts* for behaviour. (Bowen 2013) For example the 'neoculturalist schema' about Muslims targets them as traditional, homophobic, and sexually backward (Uitermark et al 2013; 236). However, in the public discourse, reductionist tropes and emblems that are imbued with the same conception are formed and have gradually created a knowable 'other'. Some of the tropes include that of the 'young Muslim man' (Silverstein 2005; 367), who is often suspected to be a *jihadi*, or seen as a threat to feminist freedoms, with a beard or goatee being the associated physical marker. Another is that of the 'oppressed Muslim women' (Moors and Salih 2009).

Often individuals fall back on such reserved expressions of cultural fundamentalism because their regurgitation in public discourses has disguised them as a common sense view (Vertovec 2011).

Therefore, it is important to zoom in on the social space(s) of Leiden University, taking from the approaches of microsociology[18] and symbolic interactionism, to gauge if such representations have seeped into the sensibilities of individuals, with the meaning that is otherwise attached to them. From the perspective of the international Muslim students, we can see how these are encountered, and also how perhaps more significantly these are resisted or internalised. To understand how students cope with possible stereotypical or exclusionary spaces, Ferguson's notion of styles is used here. Styles have their own particular "micropolitical weight" (Ferguson 1999; 113), and it is interesting to see if these effect student's performativity in navigating boundaries, and the way they identify themselves.

Introductions and Schematic Judgements

In the sociological focus on the intricacies of everyday life, performative approaches dealt under genres such as microsociology or the symbolic interactionism, deal with in depth analysis of encounters. The aim is to shed light on the implicit, to highlight the apparently ordinary facets of human behaviour and extrapolate the myriad of meaning making processes embedded within them. This approach can be limited in its ability to grasp macro-level processes. However this can be overcome with the consideration of larger structures of power (Ferguson 1999). Here the performative approach employed is that of 'Cultivated Styles' by Ferguson, who has built on the idea of gendered styles and performances by Judith Butler, presented in her book 'Gender Trouble'. She crucially highlighted that performances needed to be analysed not simply as expression of difference, but a process through which distinct social types may be created (Butler 1990 in Ferguson 1999). Here we look at schemas, which help decode the intricacies using the knowledge of the wider power structures. The schematic judgements made are often spontaneous and momentary, hence we consider international Muslim students' accounts of initial interactions and first personal introductions, where the fleeting nature of such judgements is most accentuated. During my research, I found that some of the most memorable or most vividly recalled instances in student's experiences were those of their 'firsts', the first time they interacted in class, the first person they met when they arrived, moreover, in these first introductions students recalled not only how they had assessed others but felt they could fairly guess how they were being received. I felt that these interactions were thus important indicators, or perceived to be as such by the students I interviewed, and worth delving into, through the intricate lens of microsociology.

18 While anthropology studies culture in a broader sense, with ethnography understanding experiences from the perspectives of those being researched to gain insights into norms and values, microsociology specifically focuses on how individuals interact with one another, face to face. This impacts the methodological approach of observation, drawing attention to nuances, that would in the broader picture appear ordinary and trivial, as potentially revealing of underlying social processes.

This thesis does not employ intricate psychological research designs, and while observation was involved in different settings, as I took on different roles within the student community, it did not involve any dramatic covert observations, and I was sceptical, considering the intensely personal nature of such encounters, how much students would want to open up, or I will be able to learn primarily through interviews, that is, until my meeting with Abeer. The rapport developed allowed for a profoundly insightful and honest conversation that became one of the most vital moments of my research. I will discuss the experiences related by numerous students in this chapter, but I begin here with one that Abeer related, since it connects to so many of the themes that follow.

"*When I introduce myself as a Muslim to Dutch people there is this idea. Now there are different versions of Islam, and also based on countries, like Egyptian, Pakistani, Saudi, now in their minds mostly it is the Saudi version! Do you know, just today I was attending a seminar. After the seminar ended, the lecturer and my supervisor shook hands before they walked together outside the auditorium. And I was standing there and my supervisor, well she is so nice, but she feels that she has to apologize for me, because he extended his hand, for me to shake and she was immediately like 'Oh I'm sorry no' to him, she thought that as long as I am a Muslim I will not shake hands with other men. But it is not in a violent way, I mean she is caring, it is nice, but still.*"

This makes one speculate on the assumption that might have prompted this reaction by the supervisor, was she perhaps unconsciously referring to the trope of the Muslim woman, who is supposed to be strictly controlled in her interactions in the public space, especially with the opposite sex. Moors and Salih, who argue for the use of affective discourses and implicit forms of communication in understanding how secular normativities influence the creation of different publics, specifically study the effects of women's visible bodily performances, citing examples such as wearing covered clothing, ritualistic praying, and refraining from physical contact with the opposite sex, specifically shaking hands (Moors and Salih 2009). Following the schema, scrutiny on such performances prompt Muslim women to constantly self-reflect and tailor their behaviour.

This highlights that categorisations are not always violent or meant to disparage, they may in fact be well-meaning, but they can nevertheless exclude. Such instances that might be easily summed as 'awkward' in general terms, can create anxieties for the actors that far exceed the particular instance and context. For Abeer this triggered the pressure of representation. On the first count, she felt embarrassed, feeling as though she could not conduct herself in the 'secular public' (Moors and Salih 2009; 377), she might be judged as "too traditional" for the basic criteria of normal social introduction. She had these immediate self-reflections even though she did not have qualms about shaking hands with the lecturer as she explained. Secondly, this placed her on the other side of a boundary that she was not part of constructing, she did not define the rules of interactions, but these were instead assumed and settled, leaving her outside the process of boundary-making. And then she felt guilt, because she felt that this assumption was triggered by the fact that she wore hijab, and this caused others to see her as very religious, while unlike some of her friends back home who were "full, pure Muslim", she was, in her own words, "open Muslim", and thus not "super religious". We can see that Abeer herself has schemas of 'versions' of Islam, based on nationalities. Her spectrum from 'extremely religious' to 'moderately religious' places the 'Saudi' type to be the most extreme, and Egyptian one as the more moderate one.

Hijab, with contemplations on the way it influenced impressions, often featured in students accounts of first introductions. Fira[19] reflected, "*I did feel awkward at first, in my program I am the only Asian, only Muslim, so I stand out, nobody spoke to me at first, only started talking to people once we were eventually divided in groups. So that was awkward. I guess it's natural if someone looks different you are hesitant to approach them... I think I was assuming that my hijab was the reason, then I thought my grades were the reason people weren't talking to me, but maybe it was just my assumption, I don't focus on that stuff so much now.*"

For others the surfacing of stereotypes came as a challenge. Selman related, "*When it comes to introducing myself as a Muslim, I expect certain topics to come up. If someone wants to ask something for example about polygamy, and there are so many disagreements (in religious discourse), so I always welcome these discussions. But large majority is not comfortable asking. When asked, I give detailed reasons and sources to my answers they get shocked, because most have stereotypes from media, and sources that are wrong mostly. They have no access to true sources of Islamic law. So inside perspective is more interesting to them... I get excited, feel like this is an opportunity, to give the right representation. And I feel like I'm a person who can also personally reflect these ideas, through my personality.* "

Selman's interpretation is important in highlighting the 'performativity' of actors, and also individual differences in dealing with stereotypes; Selman also mentioned *"I think I am confident so it is easy for me."* Any pressure of representation prompted by the surfacing of popular media-propagated images of Muslims in interactions is taken as a challenge, where he feels it is his duty to represent, not only in words but also in his everyday conduct the 'true' image. During my fieldwork I found that even in the seemingly neutral environment of the university, you could see that the public discourses, of otherization and consequent exclusion of Muslims, had to some extent seeped in, in the way people made matter of fact judgements. Students mentioned that people were in general overly cautious about approaching the subject of Islam even when other religions were being discussed, perhaps with the idea that Muslims are easily offended, as Selman reflected. When the subject came up, ideas that Muslim women are usually pressured into marriage, and that polygamy is widespread in all Muslim societies were present. Moreover, in my interview with Julia when I asked her about how the placement policy related to Muslim students she mentioned that Muslims also have different *streams*[20] so putting them together could be disastrous. Filiz' recalled similar perceptions reflected in some class discussions, while emphasising that some of her closest friends were Shia, while she was a Sunni. While sects exist in most religions, such judgements are perhaps based on the assumption that Muslims are generally violent, conflict driven people (Uitermark et al 2013).

19 Fira is 25 years old, doing her Masters in Economic Psychology, having started in Spring 2017. She is married and living in Leiden with her husband.

20 There are different schools of thought within Islam, with the two major ones being Sunni and Shia. This is not a particular feature of Islam, and many other religions also have separate sects and streams, however, in the media, this fact is used within arguments against immigration, where proponents against it forward the assumption that different streams are inevitably going to be in violent conflict against one another, following the idea that Muslims are in general violent 'extremist' individuals.

In my interview with Rora the ideas of 'normal' and 'blending in' came up. When I asked her if she faced any stereotypes or comments that made her uncomfortable she responded, "*It's fine really, as long as you act normal and don't make a big deal.*" When I asked her what 'acting normal' entailed she said, *"Just don't be blunt, like if someone asks me if I am a Muslim I would say yes, but I won't so bluntly say I'm a Muslim just in the first introduction. Basically you shouldn't preach thinking your way is better, be neutral."* She explained that it was easier for her to blend in because she did not wear a hijab, and recalled that a friend of hers was shocked to discover that Rora was a Muslim and had commented *"but you look so normal!"* This conversation made me wonder how wearing a hijab was essentially an introduction of yourself "bluntly" as a Muslim, and what this visible marker of identity might mean for students.

Hijab

An enormous body of anthropological literature deals with the hijab as a representation, for the incredible symbolic weight it has come to have in cultural politics, public discourse and public spaces, as well as the meaning it holds in self-identification (Voas and Fleischmann 2012). In Europe, and in the Netherlands specifically, the hijab has become a symbol of female subordination, patriarchal and 'backward' gender values. Not only is it used to purport that Islamic values are in opposition to Dutch values, but is also used as a "progressive guise for Islamophobia" (Voas and Fleischmann 2012; 534). This is also linked to the trope of the 'oppressed Muslim women'. It is important to analyse if these representations feature in the everyday lives of international Muslim students, if the hijab clashes with prevailing normativities, how it features in the development of 'style' and performativity, and consequently influences self-identification.

Muslim women's relation to public space, restriction on dress, adoption of certain dress codes act as boundary markers between communities and the hijab is a key example of a visible form of religiosity that clashes with the normativities of the secular public. (Moors and Salih 2009) While students were eased by seeing others wearing hijab in the city space, they nevertheless reported feeling how starkly it defined them, mentioning how people immediately assumed they were "super religious" because of it. This visibility made it difficult to 'blend in' the public spaces, creating certain limitations within the social space of the university. I also wanted to explore how this aspect affected male students, in relation to clothing, having a beard or in related mannerisms, but when asked none of the male students expressed similar pressures. I did remember however that a friend studying in Amsterdam had once said that being ethnically South-Asian in Europe, having a 'hipster beard' does not work, suggesting that it makes you look like a stereotypical extremist Muslim instead, and I wondered if that could be related to why all the male students I interviewed had a rather formal, 'spick and span' appearance, even in casual gatherings, although it was hard to say since I had not interviewed many male students.

Syiva also explained why she chose to miss the orientation week and why she would prefer to opt out of ISN events and trips as well. "*It really interests me these events and trips, and I really want to join but being, (hesitates), like I am a Muslim, sometimes I really want to go but I don't have friends to go... if I just go*

when they are drinking and I am wearing hijab. I think it's different when you are not wearing hijab, you can just go just like that, blend in. But it is kind of hard for me, so I can't go alone." Fira also mentioned how her hijab makes her *"very prominent"*, which is why she would never accept an invitation from her friends going to spend time in a bar. She said, "*If I go to such a place I constantly feel like people stare at me, like what is she doing here, so if I could choose I would definitely rather not, it's just the setting otherwise I'm fine."* This sentiment was echoed in my conversation with Tita and Zohra as well. Zohra said, "*I feel strange at a bar or a place like that. Me wearing hijab it is funny to be there, it is paradoxical so I just can't go. There may be a girl who wears hijab and wants to hang out there that's fine, but a place designated for drinking, I would just feel weird.*"

This feeling of being out of place, described as "being in the town but never of it" (Epstein 1967 in Ferguson 1999) in Ferguson's research, can be to an extent associated with the clash of the norm of 'secular' and 'modern', with the hijab being popularised as mirroring highly 'religious' and 'traditional'. Student's accounts reflect their awareness of this clash, and while it is hard to discern in the analysis of such encounters, how much these are a matter of self-conscious perception, or based on real external cues, they cannot be written off. This 'traditional vs modern' binary that is present in the public discourse surrounding Muslims, and also present in the narratives of some students as will be discussed in the following sections, also finds a parallel in Ferguson's analysis of 'rural vs urban' binary in the narratives of Zambian copper-belt workers migration, with urban standing for 'modern', 'educated' and 'European', and a failure to achieve this leaving one 'rural'. These cliché binaries were crafted by an internalisation of the modernization theory (Ferguson 1999; 84). It was strange to find such binaries existing in the jargon of students, but perhaps these reflect how easy it is to fall back on simplistic definitions. From students' accounts it did not seem that they necessarily deem one to be better than the other, but it reflected more a recognition that one was more compatible with the norms of their current context. Considering this, Ferguson's concept of cultivated 'styles' helps in the analysis of how students identify themselves and position themselves in the social space.

With reference to the hijab, it can be argued that it does not allow for the successful emulation of the normative 'modern' style because it perceived to be so strongly associated with opposing values in the Netherlands. A crucial element of a style is that it does not reflect a pre-existing set of values, but the individual is involved in a process of creating a style, where contradictory and different norms can coexist (Ferguson 1999). The hijab can be used to place an individual in a box, leaving them unable to express their unique repertoire. Ferguson uses the 'culture as fashion' metaphor, like fashion is not about wearing but being able to wear something, similarly style is not about believing in dominant norms and values but about their visible personification and performance. To extend this metaphor; can a style associated with the normative of secular modernity be 'pulled off' in parallel with a visible marker symbolically imbued with its contradiction? This will be further analysed in the following sections, especially on the orientation week, 'student life' and on the 'pressures of representation'.

Most of the interviewed students who wore a hijab, were not uncertain about what it meant for them, but some were anxious about what it represented in this new context. Conversations related to the hijab often entailed references to 'blending in' and being 'neutral'. It is important to

consider to what extent diversity or difference is tolerable in the 'normal' public. Desi mentioned that after having spent some time studying abroad she had learned to answer question regarding her religious choices "*correctly*". When I asked what this entailed, she explained, *"A more diplomatic answer is always better I would say. For example if someone asks why I wear a hijab when other Muslims don't I would say this is my interpretation, this way I am not crossing any boundaries, this is an answer they would not have an issue with, and it would also not accuse other Muslims."* It could perhaps be that students who are so visibly identifiable as religious, being automatically placed on one end of the spectrum, feel the need to balance the effect by remaining as 'neutral' as possible in their discourse.

Classroom Interactions

Following the experiences of the students I interviewed also led me to explore classroom interactions to a limited extent, and I was able to analyse these for pervasiveness of stereotypes from wider political discourses. Representations and visible markers of being a Muslim were again important here, becoming cues that activated certain schemas and consequently scripts for behaviour. Nimra expressed discomfort with the fact that every discussion in class prompted by a news of Muslim extremist behaviour made the atmosphere very uncomfortable for her. "Am I supposed to be the spokesperson for the entire Muslim community? Last time it was when honour killings and Qandeel Baloch[21] came up in class... everyone looks at me like I should be ready to explain why Muslim women are so oppressed."

Rora related a class discussion on banning Burqa, where a student supposedly humorously remarked "Sure why not, you don't know if they're carrying a bomb under that." She recalled feeling stunned at the caustic response of her classmate who she had considered a likable acquaintance before this remark. This made me cast back on Wekker's analysis of how irony and humour can be used as a pretence to make remarks that would be otherwise deemed racist or inappropriate (Wekker 2016). In the same vein, "Dutch straightforwardness" which was also brought up by students who felt it sometimes verged on rudeness, can have a similar effect. In my conversation with one of the diversity officers of Leiden University, Janita Ravesloot, she related an incident that occurred last year where during a sports physical examination for a university team, one of the Muslim female students declined the examination because it was being conducted by a male physical instructor, following which she was criticized by the Dutch female instructor managing the session for being too impractical. She mentioned this in passing, so I was not able to ask for details on the incident, but I remember her alluding to a similar straight forward attitude that can often be unsympathetic to concerns of religious students.

21 Qandeel Baloch was a controversial, rather provocative celebrity in Pakistan. She was murdered by her brother on 15th July, 2016 as a so called 'honour killing', sparking widespread outrage in the country.

Zohra also had a similar account, "*There is a thin line between nice and patronising... Even though he (program coordinator) probably chose me for a scholarship, he was never like "this poor girl from Iran'.*" In contrast, she related that one of her professors had asked her specifically in the first class where she was from, "*she said 'wow you must be really strong, should be proud of yourself to be here because women in your country have no voice, cannot speak for themselves, you are a strong woman then.' She was complimenting but very patronising. Singling me out like that!*" Zohra recalled feeling annoyed but also guilty for garnering praise for something so routine when women suffer and overcome much more in Iran. She felt this pressure of representation, but it is interesting to note that she did take a stand with her professor, which shows the performative aspect as well, when actors in an institution take control of representations, and choose to redefine the way they are categorised. She said *"A few years ago I would have let that go but now I feel I have the courage so I went up to her in break and said, 'I am not as strong at all, what I am doing is not a big thing for Irani woman at all.'"* She also recalled another professor asking her if she was allowed to travel to the Netherlands, during a different discussion in her class, which she emphasized did not call for such a directed question to her in class.

Orientation Week Leiden: An Introduction to the 'Student Life'

The Orientation Week Leiden (OWL) is a three to five daylong event that takes place immediately preceding the start of classes and is meant to welcome students into the university. Also noteworthy is that OWL is organised under the university and the International Student Network (ISN), this also means that while Dutch students may participate as guides, none of the incoming Dutch students are part of the entire event. Nevertheless the event is meant to introduce them to the social space and acquaint them with the pragmatics of studying at Leiden University. However, in the course of this research it emerged most significantly as an integration into 'student life' and consequently also the social norms that define it, specifically the norm of 'drinking' that dominates most social activities and events.

In my interview with Julia, the international student advisor at Leiden University, she emphasised the importance of OWL in helping students reorient, and create a new "safety net". She explained that once a student was socially integrated into the community, they were ready for the academic life and could hope to succeed. From the university perspective, the OWL is also an introduction into the 'international' and 'diverse' environment of the university, thus it is also important to consider what constitutes an 'integration' into it, and if the structure is based on certain normativities that possibly point to the existence of an apparently invisible majority. The analysis in this section is based on my interviews with international Muslim students, the perspectives of those who attended and those who chose not to, my own experience as a student attending the Winter OWL 2017, and then later as an OWL Guide in the Summer OWL 2017.

Julia explained that many student skip the OWL week for pragmatic concerns including time and cost concerns. *"You can find party-like student-like activities and then if there are people who don't like the really student life kind of activities, then also more serious activities. So the whole group that OWL has to cater for is very diverse. So exchange are more the party people, while Masters, LLM, postdoc, advance masters, hardly*

have time." OWL has day events, which are normally geared towards being more informative and structured, and it has evening events, that are social gatherings or parties, often based around drinking alcohol. Perhaps these are what is referred to as "*the really student life kind of activities".*

The association of 'student life' with 'partying' was something present in the accounts of most students. Ideas of exploring, risk taking, "no judgement" and independence seemed to be part of this narrative, and partying was associated with leisure outside the bounds of any parental sanctions or moral restrictions. Whether students took part in, or wanted to take part in such activities or not, in the conversation of most students this image of 'student life' had been internalised as the ideal of a study abroad experience. For example Laiba reflected on her experience studying at Leiden, alluding to this idea, "I've travelled a lot, so much! I think this makes up for not getting so into student life here."

'Drinking' and 'Drunk People': Taboos and Limits

Laiba was one of my friends from Pakistan, and as the end of her program drew near, often mentioned how the only thing left to do in her 'study abroad experience' was trying alcohol or attending a party, clarifying immediately that this is not something she wanted to do. But the fact that she was conflicted was evident. At one point she asked a friend to bring wine for the dinner she had at her place, and planned to try some. Three days following this dinner she called me to ask what she should do with the bottle, she laughed about how she could not bring herself to try it, "Just didn't have the guts!"

Her conflict with trying alcohol was also a conflict between religious and parental injunctions and the norms of her current context, and an understanding of this conflict helps give insight into how the popularisation of 'drinking' as a norm of student life could cause anxieties for students and perhaps to avoid this conflict they may opt out of many social events, including the OWL. Laiba mentioned in her interview while discussing how grateful she was that her parents had ignored the extended family's opinion and allowed her to go for her Masters abroad. *"They have been so supportive, especially my mother, she says I should travel and study and explore, and all that she asks with that is that I remember my hadd (limit)."* Her statement was reminiscent of the way a number of other students talked about their experiences. *Hadd* while literally translated to limit, is a rather religiously loaded term, often used to refer to moral boundaries.

Taboos related to alcohol are often part and parcel of a social context that forbids it. Most international Muslim students I interviewed came from such social contexts, and especially in the beginning when students are trying to figure out their 'limits', such taboos based on sensationalized and reductionist ideas, act as schemas to fall back on. For example, it is not only the substance of alcohol that is considered *haram* (forbidden) but everything it comes in contact with, from the glass that is used to the places it is consumed in. So for example for a student who has never been to a bar, and knows about the tabooed connotations of being a place of "temptations and profanity", as Laiba once humorously mentioned her mother would describe it, might feel uncomfortable socialising with others in it.

The taboo that is associated with alcohol is also reflected for example in the way students talk about *"drunk people"* or *"drinking kind of parties"*. Syiva for example talked about social activities that she preferred to engage in, *"Yes there are parties at my housing but they are all night time drinking kind of affairs so I don't go."*, when I asked her if she was making any travel plans for the summer she mentioned, *"Yes I can go and there is no permission issue with my parents, I mean it's fine as long as I'm not out all night or anything, and they know I am not roaming around at night, because there are drunk people there. I think there are more drunk people in the summers not so much in the winters so maybe winters would be fine."* The idea that girls must be back at home after sun down because the city can be dangerous at night is something that is evident in the way Syiva talks about spaces and activities. Then this idea of 'drunk people' as reckless and dangerous, it is linked with the idea that consuming the smallest quantity of alcohol too turns you into a different person, and that any person who drinks alcohol is possibly an alcoholic, addicted to the substance. Filiz explained, *"Just the idea of drinking is so intimidating for Muslim people, even with my friends here, they think one drink will make them crazy."*

In talking to Abeer, I asked her if she took part in the Kings Day Celebrations this year since she expressed her desire to explore Dutch culture. *"No, no, to be honest I got warnings from other Egyptian friends about Kings Day, that people are alcoholic. I don't know about their behaviour I don't trust. Don't know if they would harass you, maybe because I know in Egypt when people drink there is harassment. Unconsciously I feel someone would grab my hijab, so it's better to stay away."* This also shows that apart from discomfort, these taboos create fears around certain activities and spaces as well. Initially when students arrive in Leiden, these negative connotations attached with drinking, coupled with the more general fear of new things can cause certain activities to be very intimidating and may affect participation and socialisation.

'Drinking', OWL, and 'Student Life'

Narratives of 'Student life' and the 'Study abroad experience' are standard in the social space of the university, and popularised through the OWL and other activities as well. The OWL can also be seen as an important point where individuals identify themselves, in a way a test of style and performance. However, following Ferguson's notion of 'style' as a 'mode of signification' (Ferguson 1999; 97), identification is not simply the expression of some existing set of beliefs or traits, but is being constantly constructed as one acquaints him or herself with the prevailing norms. Ferguson talks about style as a performative competence that must be fully internalised, and successfully emulated with a certain 'ease'. It can be argued that the conflicts that are described above, hinder the performance by creating discomfort and 'awkwardness' for students. The simple fact that students do not know 'how' to socialise in a club or a bar, in a way places them at a disadvantage in a social space.

Despite a growing cognisance that 'drinking' was key in understanding the larger value conflicts that Muslim students might face, going into my fieldwork I was still largely unaware of the degree to which it could become potentially restrictive in the social life of some students. The unease associated with the idea of drinking, and the intimidation felt in social spaces where drinking took place was most augmented for students during the Orientation Week when there is also a general

unease with how new everything is, and students are more likely to be self-conscious. OWL is also the first time students come to face how inextricably 'student life' can be tied to drinking alcohol. While I had expected that some would opt out of attending certain evening events from the orientation week due to these reasons, I had not anticipated that the unease would cause them to opt out of attending the entire orientation event.

In the first interview I conducted with Syiva she explained that she had not attended the orientation week in the Fall 2016 when she had joined because she had looked at the schedule and it was all "pubcrawl pubcrawl pubcrawl". She gave me an exasperated, knowing look, as she felt this was a common issue I must have faced as well. So far in the discussion I had not brought up the subject of drinking. I myself had attended the orientation in winter, so I was unsure of what her schedule would have included, but I tried to explain that as far as I recalled the night events were optional, and had to be paid for with a separate ticket and were not included in the initial cost, and that there was only one pubcrawl, and many other informative day events. She was enthusiastic to learn about the day events, asked me about my experiences, but insisted that she was very sure there were many pubcrawls, at least three. Later, I talked to Laiba, my friend who had attended the orientation session in question, but had left out all evening events, and she agreed that there were in fact many pubcrawls, at least two, except for other parties.

Eventually, on checking the past year's schedule myself I found that there were two drinking events, both optional. But it was important to consider she had skipped the orientation week with this understanding, which made her discomfort or disinterest logical, which is why looking back after a few months, she was inclined to remember it in a way that accounted for her decision. This also provoked me to be self-reflexive about my own memory, and the way I remembered interviews and recalled events for analysis.

In interviews many mentioned how reading about the drinking events or hearing about them being a lot about 'partying' had made them uneasy causing them to opt out of OWL, which they now regretted, Azizah mentioned, *"I think I have this prejudice about orientation week, before I know many people like to drink and I don't. But now that I have lived here for quite a while, I find that it is hard to get to know other people, for example especially Dutch people or even other international students, I find that it is very hard to strike up a conversation with them or meet them, having not attended the orientation week. It's a bit regretful I think."*

In his ethnography on immigrant's selective ethnicity appropriation, Paolo Boccagni explains that ethnic boundaries can be gauged from stereotypes in public discourses, and the 'perceived' gap between immigrants and natives; this includes their little interpersonal relations and the structural or even spontaneous segregation between them. In this context, he cites three sources of boundary making that affect self-identification of immigrants; coexistence with co-nationals abroad (he states that this affects individual attitudes and public mannerisms - which has been highlighted in the discussion in Chapter 1 on social groups as well), 'scope for incorporation' (Boccagni 2014; 59) in the new context (which includes personal acquaintances developed after arriving, and access to work, education and housing), and to a limited extent also the policies and public discourses(in the new context and back home). (Boccagni 2014) In the analysis of OWL, it

can be argued that the fact that 'drinking' is seemingly so central in the majority of social events, and thus to socialisation in 'student life', it limits the 'scope for incorporation' for other students, because it limits their ability to make personal acquaintances, and if they choose to skip OWL entirely because of their discomfort, it also disconnects them from important ways of enhance their educational experience, which are also introduced in the OWL.

Another element here is 'boundary transgression strategies' (Boccagni 2014; 60), and in some cases, it can be argued that following a recognition of the implicit social boundary created by alcohol, certain students may feel the need to adopt drinking as a boundary transgression strategy. One of the students I spoke to, Galih, explained that one of his friends drinks even though he believes it to be morally wrong and is always apologetic when the topic comes up, he explains that its 'social drinking' so its harmless, "He tells us that 'I drink to be with my friends, but I don't get drunk so it's not really that bad.'"

Another connection drinking seemed to have was with perceived sexuality. Nimra related, *"I've noticed that guys are kind of reserved, they know I'm from Pakistan, I'm a Muslim... So in a conversation drinking came up and I mentioned that I had tried alcohol, and this guy was immediately more talkative with me, like he was directly talking to me and texting me after that."* In public discourse, Muslim women are currently seen as sexually backward, oppressed and asexual (Lutz 1991 in Wekker 2016). Perhaps knowing that a girl drinks makes her appear less religious and less sexually conservative. This did shed light on the gendered differences in the way boundaries are experienced.

The choice to drink alcohol or to refrain from it was explained in different ways, while some described it as a religious value, some followed by explaining it in more 'rational' terms, such as a health choice, for example Selman emphasized that *"it is basically a poison that everyone seems to be enjoying so much."* This value influenced student's social groups. International Muslim students often naturally fell in the same social groups within the larger group of classmates, preferring to go for coffee in the day rather than drinks in the evening, but it also happened with Muslim and non-Muslim students. Fares explained that in one of his friend groups, while the rest are European, they only occasionally drink if at all, because their parents always stressed how unhealthy it was. He explained, "*Like me, when I make a case for not drinking it's because of health reasons rather than religious reasons so we match like that. Also in terms of cognition, I don't like to not be not in control of myself... So basically it's nice to be around people who carry the same values as you do."*

For some students social groups also helped overcome initial feelings of discomfort, Rora related, *"Initially I was a bit concerned but I find that people are really supportive if you tell them you don't drink. My friends now even keep drinks like soda for me at dinner parties because they know I don't drink alcohol."* Rora was generally considered to be an outgoing person among her group of Indonesian friends, and during my interview as well I found her to be very casual and unreserved, and it made me wonder how personality differences may mean that similar potentially awkward moments are approached and experienced very differently by different people. Rora also spoke against the conflation of drinking with the fun aspects of student life. She said, "*It's not like you can't have fun and be outgoing if you don't drink, in fact you know I think they need alcohol to loosen up and relax, I know I don't, just yesterday I was in the main square on Kings Day partying and no that did not include alcohol.*"

Drinking and Introversion

This ideal of 'student life', where alcohol is conflated with fun and partying also results in a particular self-identification for some. Many students who do not take part in these activities end up identifying themselves as being or becoming 'introverts'. Azizah, who was introduced to me by another friend as a very socially active person, and outspoken in class, often mentioned herself as a 'homebody' or 'one of the quiet kids'. She related, *"The drinking itself is not an issue for me but I don't like the atmosphere there, when I attend these parties I think that I am a very introverted person. The atmosphere is kind of intimidating. Maybe it would be easier for me to go with friends. I don't know I feel like right now I don't have that kind of a group to go out with."*

I found another example of this in the case of Zohra, however it was her past experiences of racism in Geneva that had predominantly created this notion, while her time in Leiden had helped her reassess this self-identification. She talked about her experiences, "*I became more introverted when I left Iran... In Geneva I was the only one with hijab and there you were always the stranger, I had some friends but that feeling of being different, it moved me to my solitude"* She explained that over time she read about introversion and social anxiety, and when she came to Leiden she had a better sense of how to deal with these feelings, so she felt less pressure and also fortunately found a good friend group, "*Two years ago when I used to sit alone I felt like there is something wrong with me but here I was fine being alone, and yet I found good people, had to adjust my introversion to be part of the group but was worth it. I saw they respect my beliefs, and it made it easier."* In trying to distinguish why she felt uneasy attending certain social events I asked her if whether or not drinking in these events affected her decision to attend them, or would she not attend them either way because she is generally introverted as she explains. Zohra replied, "*Of course drinking makes me uncomfortable and lucky that in our group most of us are Asians. Before this I was in Geneva and there all of the social gatherings either drinking partying drinking drinking drinking... So I didn't go anywhere. And when every birthday, gathering etc. is drinking I am automatically excluded. But even here in Leiden if I'm deciding I automatically go through the filter of drinking, it takes me a while to be comfortable with new people still I know that as long as there is no drinking I would be okay attending the event."*

Feeling uncomfortable in a certain setting, experiencing perhaps an exclusionary social space may cause students to look within themselves for the cause, and while individual differences and many other extraneous factors that construct the experience of space may account for the degree to which it affects them, it is still worth considering that such a gap is felt by a significant number of students.

A Backstage Look

Having considered the orientation week from the student's perspective, it also helps to understand the process through which such events are approached and structured. During my research, I explored opportunities for participant observation and was able to become part of 'Residence Life', as a Resident Assistant for my accommodation. As a member of the Residence Life team I helped organised the Cultural Festival, and being on the other side of the event, part

of the planning process, I was able to gain insight into how certain normative assumptions shape events.

This particular instalment of the Cultural Festival, was relatively smaller and especially held for including the new refugee students into the university. The meeting was to include all the students who were members of and the university administration members who were managing the Residence Life program. As we waited for all the members to arrive at the aptly named 'Meeting Point' at Plexus, the conversation, as it often does on Thursdays, shifted to grousing about hangover's following the previous night's weekly Wednesday international student night at Einstein, a local bar in Leiden, with others chatting about details of the night and laughing as they tried to recall drunken conversations and revelry. Soon all the resident assistants were present and brainstorming ideas for the event, with a member from the international student office present to help in the planning. Raja, the head RA, emphasized that in the end the main question is *"How do we get students to come to the event?";* a reflection of the marketing approach that often underlies the planning of such events.

One of the RAs, Chris, exclaimed, *"Beer!"* and was joined in enthusiastic agreement by the rest, including the head RA. I wondered at this point if I should voice my concern regarding how it is important to make sure the event does not revolve around drinking alcohol, even more so considering it is primarily meant for refugee students, many of whom I assumed were Muslim and did not drink. But I chose to be a silent observer at this point, curious if this would really end up being the centre of an event that is emphasized to 'help people bring out diverse cultures' according to Raja. Chris continued to elaborate on the idea, suggesting a beer walk, where every country team would have one drink from their country included. A few minutes into the budgeting for this beer walk, one of the university admin members interrupted, *"Maybe this is not such a good idea, consider that refugee students don't drink you see."* After a moment adding light-heartedly, *"I mean I respect your beer but the focus in this particular event should maybe not be alcohol."* Later she also mentioned her concern that perhaps the university does not allow drinks to be served this way, gesturing to her colleague, *"Remember 'that' event caused quite a problem"*, I later tried to inquire more about this event but she brushed the matter aside. This was also an example of the assumption of homogeneity that shows that diversity is still regarded as an exception (Gogolin 2011), placing students from different backgrounds as exceptions to the norm.

I was relieved to see her step in and highlight that alcohol as the central attraction of the event would have been entirely counter-intuitive, it showed that she was vigilant about assumptions, especially since she was the one initiating a special event for the refugee students, she wanted to ensure an atmosphere where they would feel comfortable. On the other hand, I also felt that the issue was not only that the event was meant for refugee students, but that it was a cultural event, potentially helping in creating a truly diverse environment with an opportunity to increase cultural understanding and exchange. It is not that alcohol should not be present at these events, but it should not be a central feature of the event, made so with the assumption that drinking alcohol is the norm when a large group of students do not drink alcohol, not only Muslims who refrain due to religious reasons but also a large number of Chinese and Asian students as Julia had mentioned. It also shows how the marketing approach, that recognises the popularity of 'diversity'

with the 'exotic' connotations of culture, can place it above more pressing aims, in this case, to the point that the event would have become counter intuitive to its main goal.

Another insight comes from Julia's response when I brought up the issue of 'drinking' in OWL activities. I asked what she would suggest as an alternative way for international Muslim students to socially engage, considering it is sometimes harder for them to be part of social gatherings involving alcohol. She responded, *"(Without the OWL) its way hard. Personally I think OWL should be made aware of this, and they should also put up a note, that if you mention pubquiz it is very okay if you order a cola. All activities can be attended without being forced into alcohol."* Her next response was an example of her veiled exasperation with the subject of religion which I could glimpse at different point in the interview; while she attempted to be sympathetic to concerns of Muslims students, she consistently emphasised that *"Personally, religion is not a concern for me."* The way she said it seemed to suggest that religion was a non-issue, or a tiresome concern, and there are more important things to consider. However, it made me cast back on Wekker's 'White Innocence'; in her book she discusses how the Dutch self image is predicated on a confident belief that the society is tolerant and above racism. In the previous chapter I talked about how this belief on the level of the institute can blind to important concerns of those in the minority. Similarly here, I wondered if an approach that looked at religion as a lesser concern, would also trivialise the issues of religious students, and in fact lead to an unawareness of related concerns.

Her next response was more blunt, "So if you don't want to mingle with people who drink alcohol then you can't study at an internationally focused university, then you should go study at a Muslim university or an alcohol free whatever place." An inability to integrate to the normative of student life, as it is, seemed to also be a problem for the 'internationalisation' agenda. Sensing her annoyance, I tried to clarify that it is not that Muslim students would not want to socialize with other students who drink or judge them negatively, but it is often the setting that might make them uncomfortable. Hearing this she returned to her composed and 'correct' demeanour agreeing that it is definitely something that needs to be considered. But at this point I had this sudden feeling of how the explanation I gave seemed like something out of a typical immigrant exchange. Where one feels the need to constantly explain that refraining from an activity does not imply a reluctance to engage, or a reluctance to integrate, but is instead related to a set of personal values that may limit one's engagement.

Pressures of Self-Representation

Irrespective of how or to what degree students identified with being a Muslim, I found if they sensed stereotypes, they felt a pressure of self-representation. Either arising from a 'duty' to give the 'true' picture or a need to dissipate a negative assumption that personally affects how they are viewed individually. Often this was related to a struggle of self-identification between "traditional" and "modern". "Modern" was used to refer to the normal way of being in their current context, and was linked to values of the secular society that ascribed to 'liberal' ideas, on the other hand traditional was used synonymously with religious and conservative, and sometimes as a euphemism for extremist.

This binary is not only at the level of rhetoric, it appeared that student's also felt the pressure to emulate the 'modern', as will be discussed below. Ferguson quotes Judith Butler on gendered styles, writing that styles are always created under "situations of duress", and their enactment is "a strategy of survival under compulsory systems" (Butler 1990; 139 in Ferguson 1999; 99). He explains how this understanding connects the disciplinary emphasis on structures (in this case the wider public discourses on Muslims, multiculturalism and diversity) with performance theory's emphasis on enacted styles (everyday life experience and performance of students). So the macro and micro viewpoints combine into a "micropolitical economy of cultural practice" (Ferguson 1999; 100). Therefore, in studying these pressures of self-representation, there is a consideration of wider public discourses that emerge as stereotypes in the university space, and through understanding how these ideas of 'modern' and 'traditional' are enacted, we can see how it influences the international Muslim student's identification in the university's social space.

Filiz, while she did not wear a hijab, commented on the possible pervasiveness of Muslim stereotypes from larger public discourses within the university, "*Sometimes if I introduce myself as a Muslim, they change the way they behave. I think they still have ridiculous prejudices against Muslims, even in the academia.. Its irritating to me if someone with hijab comes forth they change their behaviour, people seem a bit uncomfortable and I wonder why.. Then I do feel this pressure to portray, just don't want to become a stereotype.*"

An unprecedented consequence of researching this pressure of self-representation appeared however; the interview seemed to mimic this effect. Many students mentioned feeling anxious at the idea of having to represent the perspective of the 'international Muslim student community' at Leiden, Muslim students from their particular nationality or just the religious community in general. Many were alleviated of these anxieties once I explained that I was also an international Muslim students, and also when the interview opened as a general conversation about their experiences rather than as a religious or political debate. One student, Tika[22], (from Indonesia, following a Master's program in financial law) was so nervous that she brought a friend with her in the interview, quickly explaining that *"I think Zohra can be a better person to explain the Muslim perspective than me"*. I was taken by surprise and initially concerned because while Tika appeared shy and diffident, her friend Zohra, in stark contrast was quite brazen in not only the content of her responses but also her sharp tone, and I wondered if she would dominate the entire conversation. However, while it was difficult to keep Tika engaged in the conversation, their responses provided a good contrast when they related similar incidents.

Zohra had previously lived in Geneva, and as she related, had gone through some rather intense experiences of exclusion, at one point stating *"When you are so used to the cashier or your neighbours not even smiling or saying hello in response, Leiden is a pretty great change."* Her past experiences meant that she was very aware of ways one can face exclusion, on the other hand, she had either negative expectations or no expectations at all, so in every instance she related, she followed by explaining that it was all very tolerable. In her especially and in many other students I felt a need to resist the

22 Tika is currently doing her Masters in the Law Faculty, she is 25. I met her through Azizah.

'victim narrative', where students during the interview did not want to appear to be complaining about a situation that was not as violent or negative as they had previously experiences or could possibly imagine to experience.

Abeer explained, *"People apologize when they eat in front of me in Ramzan, or when the food we ordered is not halal, and I want to tell them no need I can manage well. I might let go of the halal thing too maybe.. I feel the need to tell them I can hug and shake hands with my friends too, and I told my supervisor too that look it's okay for me."* Here it is important to emphasize that while these small instances are seemingly trivial, they are still potentially symbolic and meaningful for the students. When Abeer talked about physical contact with the opposite sex she talked about how the revolution in Egypt was bringing change; while her parents would not approve if they knew, but she nevertheless hugged her male friends in Egypt now too. Inherent in this context is another part of her struggle of identification, a guilt that in being 'modern' she is going against the injunctions of her religion and the will of her parents.

Apologetic Religiosity

Voas and Fleischmann in their paper highlight an important distinction between religious beliefs and religious practices; while religious beliefs may remain more or less unchanged, the degree and type of religiosity may be affected by a myriad of other factors (Voas and Fleischmann 2012). Following from this, I extend the notion of religiosity to 'Apologetic Religiosity', a term I use to encompass an important finding emerging from my research. Reflecting on interviews with international Muslim students, I recognized that the students I interviewed, and myself, always had a particular apologetic attitude when during interviews we discussed how we practised Islam since arriving at Leiden University. Whether an individual was stringent in devotional practises or lax, there was always the guilt that they were not doing enough. This approach that appeared consistently in different interviews reflects that all respondents largely agreed on the 'correct' standard of religiosity, (while they were rethinking aspects of their beliefs, as further discussed in Chapter 6), and this is important to understand because any understanding of the pressures that come from prevailing norms in the university space must be underscored by an understanding of the pressures posed by an existing set of norms that students come with, emanating from their religious and cultural backgrounds.

Ferguson highlights that performances are a 'mode of signification' (Ferguson 1999; 97), but individuals can ascribe to contradictory norms at a time, and those enacting the same style can also have diverse motivations, beliefs and worldviews. He points to a need to recognise that despite these binaries of 'modern' or 'traditional' etc., there is remarkable diversity in the way different beliefs or performances are used in an individual's repertoire and norms that seem to exist to opposing styles can coexist in an individual and a space. However, a person cannot have an infinite repertoire, so choices have to be made, and here apologetic religiosity shows how such choices can cause stress for students. Most significantly, because this complexity is not understood in the public space where people rely on schematic reasoning.

To grasp the intricacies of implicit social interactions, identification of the distinct cultural, social and religious backgrounds and histories is essential. It gives insight into students' struggles of self-identification between the tug of old and new normativities. While discussing how she felt her hijab falsely represented her, Abeer related, *"As a young girl, when we were living in Kuwait, I remember being the only girl without hijab. It was a social pressure, and my father also wanted me to, so I started covering in prep school, later it became a part of my routine.. I feel like I am not a good practising Muslim, like in terms of salat(prayer), and then I hug my (male) friends, I mean I don't drink, but if friends would ask me to go to a club I would say yes, will not say no its haram(forbidden)."* Here we can see that while the way she practices might be changing, Abeer's judgements reflect that her beliefs on what is right and wrong remain largely the same, where she gives these as part of her argument that she is not being a good Muslim.

She continued, *"Here when people categorise me I try to understand why, feel the need to explain myself. Like the clothes I wear now, in Egypt they would not show me as a good Muslim, I should have been wearing a long scarf and skirt rather than skinny jeans. But I didn't change my dress when I came here, I can wear this in Egypt too, but still need to tell people, believe me I am not a good Muslim, don't need to treat me as such!"* Abeer's quote elucidates firstly the importance of dress in self-identification. Other than veil, the differences in the way the value of morality is understood and internalised among different groups of people and how it affects the social dynamics is also important. The idea of 'modest' clothing also reflects this. Such differences are also likely to surface in interactions with the opposite sex. The text by Moors and Salih cites two forms of conduct; not shaking hands with the opposite sex in the 'secular public' and eating in front of Muslims in Ramzan, as having 'unsettling effects' on different publics (Moors and Salih 2009; 377).

But more significantly this quote encompasses both sides of the story. On the one hand Abeer feels guilt for not practising properly and not meeting the ideal of the 'good Muslim', then she feels guilty for giving of a false impression of herself as this idealised good Muslim simply because of her hijab, which makes her appear not only Muslim, but *"very Muslim"* to those around her. On the other, she recognises a differential treatment because of this appearance, underscored by the a set of stereotypes attached with the idea of being religious or Muslim in her current context. She grapples with these categorisations and internal dilemmas of identification, all the while maintaining a confident exterior, someone who is proud of their identity and their heritage, even when the meanings these hold are constantly changing.

Chapter 4
Disillusions
On Belonging and Coping with Dissatisfaction

"Some Kind of Being Here": A Sense of Belonging

One of the parallels that emerged in interviews with international Muslim students was a search for a sense of belonging. One student, Miray[23], described her struggle to find a place for herself as 'a student of Leiden University', explaining that she was not looking for much, just *"some kind of being here"*. This chapter crucially focuses on how students make sense of their experience as a whole, and what they take away from their time at Leiden University. There are different dimensions to the sense of belonging students may or may not take away, it is related to feeling like one is a member of the community, and perhaps most fundamentally it emerges from how strongly one relates to the identity of an institution. However different students will have different notions about what they consider Leiden University's identity to be; this is based on their unique "social location" (Bowen 2013; 12), how the university is embedded in the wider national context and the 'social function' its claims to play, and the platform it provides for the performance of religious or cultural diversity. Thus, identity is not a fixed structure, nor does it emerge solely from pre-existing policy and structures, instead the identity of an institution and how students would relate to it is constantly being transformed through the dynamics of negotiation (Bowen 2013).

The identity of a place emerges from both the physical space and the social nexus made of the myriad of interactions within it (Gupta and Ferguson 2012; 376). The previous chapters focus on the latter, the social space of Leiden University, however this chapter delves more into the private space. In studying how international Muslim students relate to Leiden University, it attempts a phenomenological analysis of the experiences of the place, the university spaces, the campus, the housing, the city of Leiden and the Netherlands at large. Through 'Everyday Loneliness' we consider how the isolation that is present in the nature of student experience at Leiden University specifically affects those students who are facing boundaries, and on the other hand, how this isolation can serve to perpetuate certain boundaries.

Following from the discussion on student expectations in Chapter 2, based on the image that the university projects and the personal motivations, such as the influence of the 'study abroad' narrative, this chapter looks at the dissonance students experience when the reality of their experience does not match up. Chapter 3 also highlighted different norms that pervade, that create ideals that students feel pressured to emulate such as those of the 'student life' and being 'modern'. This chapter further focuses on the ideal of 'independence'. Taking from Anna Tsing's notion of 'precarity', we consider how this state of precarity is emergent in the student's lives and

23 Miray (pseudonym) is a 26 year old external PhD student from Turkey.

in the nature of their everyday experiences, and how it can create pressures to emulate the 'independent, self-contained' individual, an ideal that has emerged from the capitalist normatives (Tsing 2015). This chapter investigates how these dynamics affect international Muslim student's everyday lives and their self-identification, sometimes causing disillusionment. Finally looking at how students cope with dissatisfaction in different ways.

Taskforce Report: The University's Take

In the course of my fieldwork I attended a number of university organised events and symposiums on diversity, one of these was an event held primarily to present the year's 'The Future is Diversity' Taskforce Report on 'Bicultural Students' study success and experience that included interventions, deliverables and recommendation. This was a collaborative effort between three universities; Leiden University, Vrije University Amsterdam and Erasmus University Rotterdam. The focus on the category of 'bicultural students' was interesting. The focus was on "especially those with a non-western migration background" who struggled with success unlike the "ethnic Dutch students" (Taskforce Report 2017; 5) and made a case for why the society needs these talented individuals. Whether this category included international Muslim students was unclear in the report but the panel discussions and presentations seemed to include them in this category. One thing that was clear was a recognition that bicultural students are often left with a "less than acceptable experience". Isabella Hoving, the Diversity Officer heading diversity and inclusiveness initiatives at the university explained the failure to provide a "sense of belonging" and an "inspiring, inclusive, environment" to bicultural students.

Despite this formal recognition of the issue, there was still an underlying emphasis on image management evident. As explained in Chapter 2, such an approach and the entailing declarations of commitment can create a false sense of accomplishment that may dissuade from actual action (Ahmed 2012). The event was important in potentially bringing the issues to the surface of consciousness by the simple act of discussing the issue. However, the actual content of the event seemed to be based around the celebration of the accomplishment of the 'taskforce'. It also included panel discussions where different policy makers and researchers expressed what they felt was most crucial as they detailed their extensive experience and research on the issue. In analysing the deliverables[24] in the report and the measures discussed, I found little if at all that was focused on impacting the everyday life of students (Taskforce Report 2016-17). The reiterated slogan of 'Visible not verbal equality', still seemed problematic because it focused on change that was 'visible', it is important to revisit the importance of representations here, and the importance of recognising how subjective such a method of judging success could potentially be. To a large extent, the deliverables and this event itself were examples of what Ahmed calls 'non-performative' institutional measures, which do not create a genuine impact in the issues that they successfully highlight their commitment to.

24 The four deliverables included designing a database, promoting inter-university collaboration, interventions and collaborations for successful transition of students to the labour market, and the creation of new national and international networks. (Taskforce Report 16)

In literature, belonging of bicultural individuals is linked to the negotiation of a bicultural identity, that is based not on how compatible one sees the two cultures to be, but on whether one can construct a logical self-narrative of belonging to the two socio-cultural worlds (Ozyurt 2013). This following sections will explore different struggles that emerge when students attempt to create such a self-narrative and when they are hindered in doing so, especially by structural normativities.

'A Student of Leiden University': Identifying with the University

In trying to gauge the sense of belonging for the students I interviewed, all of whom had now been studying at Leiden University for different amounts of time, from three months to several years, I considered what it meant for them to be 'a student of Leiden University'. Following from the discussion in Chapter 2, expectations on what being a student of Leiden University would mean are influenced by the image that the university projects; of becoming a part of the legacy of the historically embedded university, part of making a global social impact, working within a revered academic community, experiencing the Dutch culture and experiencing the very advertised 'international' and 'diverse' environment. However, for some this disconnect with the university's 'legacy' became quickly apparent; Fares related how he went to a fraternity's event only to realize that fraternities were very exclusive student societies only for Dutch students, *"When I had mentioned in my OWL group that I wanted to join a fraternity, the guides(also international students) told me that it probably is not for us, but I went with a friend and honestly, it was very Dutch, very white, we left after twenty minutes."*

It seems that most students felt a certain disconnect and dissatisfaction. This issue was most salient in the case of PhD students specifically the external PhD students including Abeer, Filiz and Miray and also Galih, a Masters student from the International Tax Law Faculty. Miray related how she struggled to orient herself as an external PhD, not being affiliated with a particular faculty as a full-time student. "*Then you don't feel like I belong to this university, you are just another outsider. It's so strange not well organised... And I am not looking for financial things, but looking for some kind of 'being here', to say that I belong to the university, I belong to this group, I belong to this people. Whenever I go to office not looking for them to give me a computer or a phone but a seat and a table, a place where I can come a place designated for me, where I can leave my things and come back to."*

Filiz similarly recounted that she was not able to find the academic work environment she was hoping for. She said, *"I was technically supposed to be working under the Hague faculty then and when I went there they told me there will be no working space for external PhD students, if you would like to work here please register yourself, and it was a humiliation for me. You start to think about yourself, that am I a researcher or a student or am I an outsider."* These accounts are crucial in understanding how stark the contrast between the image that students are conveyed by the university and the reality of their experience can be. These students also explained that in their direct correspondence with university administration such as study advisors and program coordinators they were given a very different image of the experience as an external PhD. It was supposed to provide independence while still providing an affiliation, which was also indicated would include working at the university as part of the faculty or doing some form of research. In reality, when they arrived they found that it was

only a possibility if the vacancies were available and Filiz mentioned that the preference for many opportunity is perhaps the other PhD candidates working under the university. *"I expected to find academic job, they gave some kind of promise that I will get paid but not getting job, now seriously considering going back since there is no serious motivation for me."*

They had also expected being immersed in an academic community, being in contact with members of the faculty and a community of other PhD students, but they ended up being only in contact with their research supervisor. They felt that with the individualistic nature of PhD, making connections with other members of the academia was very important, and they were missing out on that intellectual exchange. When I asked Abeer if she met other PhD students she responded *"No, no, no, never, never met any PhD student. That's another thing I don't like here, that until now we are scattered. Now in the African studies I feel like I am connected, to be in this small place is making me feel like I am affiliated to something though I am not officially affiliated with them."* Abeer was introduced to the African studies centre by an Ethiopian student her supervisor introduced her to. Technically she was supposed to be affiliated with the Hague campus researching governance, but she could not find a space for herself there either. In fact this lack of a feeling of belonging translated on to the space of the Hague campus and the city for her, she recalled, *"I owe them for introducing me honestly, that building (the Hague Campus) is new in every respect, and we are very literally disconnected from the rest of the campus and I am feeling alienation whenever I am going to this building."* Abeer talked about how she would have been depressed had she not been embraced by the students she met in this centre, *"My work is different from them but we are often sharing about our work, and that makes me feel at home."* Galih also explained that the ITC faculty was so separate, with its own cafe, library, dormitory etc. with very little connection with the rest of the student community, *"I don't even feel like I'm a student of Leiden University.. when I looked at the website and the information I could not interpret this at all."*

Moreover, student's expectations were also influenced by the oft-romanticized version of the 'study abroad experience' that some students came with, which it can be argued became one of the factors that caused them to internalise the 'student life' ideal based on prevailing normativities, popularised in the university. During the aforementioned RA training, the international student counsellor alluded to the nature of anxieties students face when they arrive for their programs. They come expecting a buzzing life full of social activity and excitement, but soon after the orientation, when the program starts, their academic pressure begins to take a toll on them, the pace of social life becomes slower and "the pink glasses come off"; the reality and enormity of their undertaking dawns on them and the initial "honeymoon phase", when everything seems pleasant and agreeable ends and they begin to notice the problems and also the negative aspects of what they expected to or had initially seemed perfect.

In analysing interviews with international Muslim students a similar kind of 'disillusionment' was evident. Sometimes students face serious issues of adjustment, more often at the outset of their time here, and this bubble or image that they had in their mind breaks in a way. At this point they struggle to re-evaluate their entire experience to make sense of it. This often leads to a conscious or subconscious calculation, where a student might constantly wonder if they should or should not stay, or on a smaller scale if they should or should not attend an event and so on. For Muslim students, sometimes they may take a risk and engage in activities they know fall out of the way

religion is understood by the majority for example, in trying alcohol at a party. Once they do this, they might either internalise it as a positive experience or feel as if they have invested something and feel a greater pressure that they need to get something back out of this experience. If they can't get a satisfactory situation then, they may feel a sense of disillusionment. And this may affect the way they perceive their entire experience.

The "Premium Price"

Apart from the implicit boundaries that have so far been the predominant focus, there is one very tangible boundary evident that creates a clear differentiation, but goes completely unmentioned in diversity concerns. This is created by the phenomenally higher tuition fees required from non-European international students unlike the Dutch or European students. For example, in the case of the majority of Master's program, for the year 2017/2018 the tuition fee for European students is around 2000 euros, for the international students it ranges from 16,600 to 17,800 (Tuition Fee Amounts – Leiden University). While the non-European international students is also a wide category, the majority of international Muslim students fall under it, with only one out of my entire pool of respondents being a European Muslim student. But more importantly, European students and Dutch students having to pay a significantly less amount, is very telling about what the 'invisible majority' at Leiden University is. It is hard to pinpoint one category as being the dominant majority and one being the minority without being reductionist since each category of students consists of such variegated group of students. However in more ways than one, it becomes apparent towards whom the university programs are primarily geared towards.

While the difference is rarely mentioned or brought forth in conversations in general, there is an acute awareness of this ever-present form of differentiation in the students who have to pay it, and definitely causes them to consider what this difference is supposed to mean for them as students. In stark contrast from the other students I interviewed, Rora referred to this difference as a 'premium' price, and how it means that she should be getting special attention, when in fact non-European international students often end up getting the short end of the stick, especially if analysing from an economic, monetary perspective of how much you are getting out of what you are spending. When I asked Rora if she was satisfied with her program she said, "*I have to be straightforward I don't like it at all, I have a class with 200 students can you imagine what that means, it means nobody gives cares about you and I pay a 'premium' price, I pay much more as an international student while the rest of my class is filled with mostly European students who did not pay as much.*" So if in a class of 200 students with all the different category of students, if there is a problem that affects everyone equally, the students paying a significantly higher price are nevertheless getting the least value out of their investment.

However, this issue is much deeper than the economic returns, and while it may not come forth in discourse, for the students who pay the higher price this causes them to question what their position in the university is. While Rora realises that she is not being treated as, nor is supposed to be a 'premium member' of the community, perhaps calling it a premium price is a way to

assert a higher position to detract from the clearly relatively disadvantaged position. Galih expressed his irritation with the differentiation, *"If you would bring it up, they would say yes that does not make sense, but it is so strange because the difference (in tuition fees) is so much, but everyone seems okay with it... I don't know maybe we are just supposed to kind of be happy to be here."* When he tried to evaluate the cause of the gap, he felt that perhaps the non-European international students are being charged a higher price because it is assumed that they do not otherwise have access to the touted high standard of education or the international environment, so they should basically just be happy to be part of the *"advanced"* environment. On the one hand there is a consideration in students that on the administrative level, it is about getting as many profits as possible and given that there are people willing to pay, the university will continue to maintain this phenomenal price difference, but it does not make the question of why this difference is there to begin with, any less pressing.

Some students also expressed that their study programs did not meet their expectation, they were not as demanding or as enriching as they had hoped, and seemed to be more suited to the requirements of the Dutch or European students, and also more in line with the price that they paid for the program. Some mentioned that elective courses for 'international' program specialisations, for example in the case of political science or international relations, were predominantly based on European or Western politics, others mentioned that internships were more geared towards students who would continue to work in Europe rather than connecting with international organisation or concerns. While this research did not delve into curriculum content analysis, it does appear that the touted 'global' expertise and knowledge mostly encompass Europe and Western countries. This reflects the larger discourses that hold that global knowledge has historically and still originates solely from the West, part of the imperialist imagination that deems the Western intellectuals as having the 'grand responsibility' of solving the problems of the rest of the world.

Critical Reflections on Public Discourses

In the previous section the focus was on how students identify with Leiden University, here the focus is on how students identify with the Netherlands, and thus the larger social and political context the university is embedded in. This is done by considering student's critical reflections on the larger discourses, their pervasiveness in the university space and how it affects them, thus including their voice in the larger analysis undertaken in this thesis.

For example, following from the discussion above on the imperialistic undertones to curriculum focus, one student Fares reflected on Eurocentric discourses he had encountered, *"I do occasionally have political discussions here, for example I've talked about how Europeans can be very Eurocentric, and how there is a sense of, (hesitates) I don't want to say superiority, but the idea that culture and knowledge emanates from Europe seems to be ingrained within their personalities, and that does become apparent and come off in instances. That assumption can be felt."* Considering this, it seemed he was very vigilant to if these ideas were reflected in his interactions with others. *"I also feel like most of Europe except for Germany does not own up to their colonial past, but in conversations I have had with European friends I have seen them destroy European history, and that was very interesting and cathartic for me in a way. It was nice to see them own*

up to it the way that they did... It's good to see them talking about Rwanda *for example, especially outside an academic discussion. Some people can be very defensive though, I met a guy here who talked about the 'great British history', you meet all sorts of people."*

How these ideas were dealt with was profoundly important for him, this can be seen in how apparently subtle concurrences to such ideas, which may otherwise go unnoticed, were immediately registered by him, and by the cathartic effect he said a rejection of these had. This cathartic effect crucially makes evident the existence of a constant stress that the prevalence of exclusionary discourses creates for international Muslim students. This can also be linked to a constant struggle for identification with the institute and its community, these seemingly distant discourses play a very central role in student's lives, helping them gauge how others place them and the national, cultural or religious contexts they identify with.

On political discourses, many students felt that slogans such as 'Be Normal and Be Gone' were largely ploys to win votes, and while there was a general demure acceptance about the negative image of Muslims in the Western media, students recalled being shocked when they first realized that such ideas had a hold in political debates in the Netherlands as well. Selman reflected on the recent elections (that had taken place a few weeks before the interview), *"I did keep up with that, personally as a Muslim student I was very concerned about the Dutch election, and even more so I was concerned with the French election but given the fact that both of these elections ended up being in favour of more progressive ideas, I am very happy, felt like they are generally more intelligent than the Americans, but still can't believe that someone(like Wilders) got that much traction over here, that there are people who are not afraid to say it out loud that we don't want you here and we should keep it homogeneous, more white!.. It hasn't passed maybe it's just the beginning, I mean if you look at France or Germany there is a lot of specifically anti-Muslim sentiment emanating from PEGIDA[25] and the like. Quite frankly, it's frightening."*

Fira explained, "*I haven't had such an experience though it makes you think about it, but hard to spot in academic environment because people are so politically correct."* While students reported not having faced any aggressive form of racism, they said that the prevalence of racism in the Netherlands at large, made them cautious. Fares explained how the presence of such ideas *"out there"* affected him, *"It is an issue! Since you don't know who agrees with the far right, need to be more careful about what you say. That's something I'm not a fan of because I feel like I should never have to be careful about what I say. It's been an issue for me in Pakistan too, I'm outspoken there too and have been reprimanded for it (for expressing his views on religion as he later explained), to the point where I have received notices for it from the university. But I did not think at least this will be an issue here, but it is."* The university presents this ideal of being the historical purveyor of freedoms, mirroring the grander ideal of the Western society where every individual has absolute freedom of expression and difference, however Fares' experience shows how these freedoms are subject to the prevailing norms that dictate what is politically correct and what is not. In this case, Fares felt disillusioned by the realization that the aforementioned ideal does not exactly translate in reality, or that he is excluded from it.

25 Standing for 'Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the West', PEGIDA is a far-right, anti-Islam political movement based in Germany, and founded in 2014.

‘Everyday Loneliness’: Experiences of Isolation and the Physical Space of Leiden University

The term ‘everyday loneliness’ is used here to refer to the feelings of isolation, melancholy and alienation that was apparent in the accounts of some students or that some students reported experiencing in their everyday lives at Leiden University. In exploring the nature of these experiences, we can see how students attempt to identify with and find a sense of belonging in the physical spaces of the university. Here, these include the campus, the university housing (focusing on one housing location; Kloosterpoort), the city of Leiden and the Netherlands at large. Previous chapters explored how norms can create ideals that students feel a pressure to emulate, one of these is the ‘student life’ ideal which includes a particular idea of socialisation. Another is the pressure to be ‘modern’, and possibly linked to this is the ideal to emulate ‘independence’ that is explored in this section.

‘Independence’ is understood in Anna Tsing’s terms, as the idealised conceptualisation of an individual created by the capitalistic notions that dictate the state of ‘modernity’. However, opposed to ‘modernity’ is ‘precarity’, that she argues is the condition of the current times. She translates these abstract concepts to the individual scale. In her book she discusses how progress and the promise of modernity it entailed, featured a particular kind of ‘logical’, mathematical way of thinking and being. This was a result of the capitalistic ideals and necessary for the fulfilment of capitalistic requirements of scalability and profit. This consequently led to the veneration of the ‘independent’, ‘self-contained’ individual, bound by a strict structure and hierarchy (Tsing 2015). And this section explores how students might similarly feel pressures to emulate this ideal in what they consider to be the more ‘modern’ context. For a number of students interviewed, coming to a Leiden was the first time they were experiencing living independently, and it can be argued that this lifestyle is an enormous shift, from living at home within a nexus of support and possibly in a more collectivist cultural context.

On the other hand, in some ways students can be seen to be in a state of precarity themselves, being away from home, and being largely unaware of and unable to determine their future, they experience a lack of certainty in their everyday lives. In Tsing’s terms, precarity makes them more open to collaboration and the profound impact these can have, and also more vulnerable to others, as one cannot operate alone and must rely on encounters. Moreover, in analysing how students approach differences in values, the ‘traditional vs modern’ binary can also be seen as being constructed around the opposition or acceptance of capitalistic ideals, including supporting progressive ‘liberal’, secular ideas. The following section also attempts a phenomenological analysis to understand how precarity may be built into the fabric of the everyday life of students.

The “Dark Days”

Being part of the ‘Residence Life’ program as a Resident Assistant(RA) I was required to attend a training session for the new RAs, designed to instruct us on the pragmatics of being an RA, essentially preparing the new cohort with the knowledge necessary to assist the students we were responsible for in our respective residences. It was emphasised that we were not there simply for

practical difficulties but also for more social and personal difficulties, which is why we needed to be aware of certain fundamentals of student experiences in Leiden. In a session given by the International Student Counsellor, also the go-to person for anyone facing psychological difficulties(as opposed to previously quoted student adviser Julia, who was the go-to person for practical difficulties) or in need of general counselling, she explained how the coming months from October were *"dark days"*. She explained how this time of the year means a lot of rainy days, the sun doesn't come out for days at a time and it is a big adjustment, both psychologically and physically, stating that many are unaware of the need to take supplements to counter the vitamin deficiencies, irritability and lethargy this can trigger, especially for students coming from warmer regions. As she talked about the coming months in a foreboding ominous way, I could not help but think back to my conversation with students who had started in the Spring, who had mentioned how the initial hustle bustle of the summer orientation was soon followed by a strange "lull", where they suddenly found themselves being cooped up in their rooms for days as they worked in the middle of rainy and cold days. I remember how my friend Laiba warned me in my first week, when I complained about how hectic the ongoing winter orientation was, *"You should enjoy this while it lasts, I remember after the summer orientation, all this hustle bustle dies down and you're suddenly at home and thinking woah! where am I, what's going on. It hits you as soon as you're alone."*

While the 'dark days' being referred to were literal and real, there was a metaphorical tinge to it, because for the students who experienced them, recalled them as nothing less than some sinister trials that everyone goes through. What was perhaps implied, and often unmentioned was the underlying feelings of isolation and gloom the weather brought on, directly or indirectly pushing one to solitude. This was also reflected in my conversation with Abeer, "*So if you ask me how I'm spending my weekend, sometimes, almost always only me, so I'll go out too on my own, and then with this weather I'm mostly not going.. So this is a shift in terms of weather, in terms of where is my comfort zone, I missed it and it takes time to build another one over here."*

Reorienting after the 'shift'

"This is a big shift, and it weighs on me.", Abeer spoke of her adjustment. The 'shift' is a profoundly impactful experience, it can be as sensational and prodigious as many students expect it to be, but before it can be anything else, it is an adjustment. Previous chapters focused more on the social adjustment but it is also crucially an adjustment to a change of physical place, and while the pragmatics of a move to a different country can themselves be exacting, the need to psychologically reorient oneself that comes with these changes can also be a daunting task in itself. Julia in her interview mentioned how students often skip the orientation week because they underestimate this shift, *"Students don't realise that they are arriving in a new culture, a new country and have to find their balance again, you help yourself if you join the OWL then.. it gives students the initial push they need.. once you are socially integrated then you are ready for your studies and can hope to succeed."* While Julia mentioned OWL as the remedy, I asked her what about the students for whom this 'push' does not work for some reason. A number of students I talked to mentioned feeling a disconnect with the kind of activities that the orientation week had, and as mentioned before, for different reasons some students opt out of attending the orientation. Therefore, there is a need to consider this process of readjustment beyond the orientation week. Also considering that some students

do not have the option to attend either, in my respondents this included students studying International Tax Law, which is in many ways separate from the rest of the faculties, and also PhD students.

Abeer recalled arriving in the Netherlands and suddenly facing the stress of acquainting herself with the pragmatics of settling in, without any guidance from the university. *"They give me a book on Holland, nothing else. The only orientation was an academic one about plagiarism and university's history or something. It does not matter if I'm a PhD or a Bachelor student, I am new to this country, please is there nothing to direct me?"* She detailed the initial practicalities she dealt with, which all students have to go through, but it was more difficult for her considering her status as an 'external PhD' which meant she could not always gain access to facilities present for regular students. *"Now in terms of communication I was feeling lost. I checked websites, they are complicated and in Dutch. Every office you need to take appointment. So what about transport, insurance, and had to find accommodation. If I don't have accommodation, I can't get bank account, so could not access my scholarship money. So eventually I found out all these things, but then at that time I was in stress!"*

Miray recalled a similar experience of her arrival at the end of October 2016, about seven months before the interview in May. Following a PhD program in Political Science, she expected to continue here for the following four years at least. *"Was expecting something, did not get a welcome, a program procedure, an orientation.. There was no one I met or saw here besides my advisor, no other PhD candidates. Only met people casually and occasionally, PhD is so introverted, you need to make networking and connections but didn't really find that here. The problem is there is no structure, no process and for me no courses, it affects your motivation unfortunately and it did affect my work."*

Time to Yourself

While students arrived for their study abroad experience looking forward to in their new found independence, unexpectedly for many, it also came with many hours of solitude, and many commented that they had expected to be fully engaged with coursework and eventful social life, instead the free time on their own was something they did not entirely anticipate. The international student advisor in the RA training referred to this point as the time when the *"pink glasses come off"* and the *"honeymoon phase"* is over. Miray related, *"The first two, three months were just so empty for me."* How one begins their experience is often crucial in setting the tone, and for those who felt disoriented in the start, in the absence of a proper network or guidance, it took them a substantial amount of time to recreate a comfort zone, some actively tried to find activities to do on their own. Fares explained, *"I expected the study program to be more time consuming, (in the start) constantly felt like I should be doing more. Now I read most of the time, there is work to do but you're still left with a lot of free time on your own.. I guess I've seen every museum there is to see, I go cycling too."* This feeling that one should be doing more, without being able to find something to adequately engage oneself in can be quite stressful for some students. It is also deeply connected to the expectations students arrive with, that often paint a certain picture, and while it may take some time to have that busy social and academic life, in some ways this fear is not entirely invalid, because many of the opportunities to take part in social or extra-curricular activities aiming at integrating students take place at the start of the academic year, and if one is not aware of them, there is a chance you

miss out. Moreover, some students end up becoming more of a *"homebody"* as Azizah described it, than they ever recalled themselves being.

Class schedules also contributed to this free time, for many students their past bachelor courses had involved several classes per week, but in Leiden they had to adapt to having only one, or two classes the entire week, with most of the work to be done on their own. Ayu explained, *"I only have one class in a week, so six days a week I am basically free. I've gotten used to working at home, when I'm free I go to the centrum for window shopping.. not with friends no, everyone has their schedule and honestly I've started to prefer doing some things on my own."* Desi explained her schedule as a PhD student, *"It's very individualistic really. Five months here now and I'm not feeling like I'm very surrounded or busy. Other colleagues from Malaysia I know are not living in Leiden, also everyone is PhD so hard to match schedules."*

It was in my conversation with Abeer that I could truly see the strain she must have felt for months come to the surface. Her tone was dejected as she remembered her early days in Leiden, and while she laughed recalling certain aspects, I could see that she was on some level still struggling with some of the issues she mentioned. *"...Because I was here arriving in January, I mean I am living alone in Delft and coming here, don't know where to go, and literally I was depressed, and even I could not share my depression with Egyptian colleagues or friends, yes they are so generous but not from the first day I want to go and cry to them. (Laughs) So I think it would have been easy for me to make the decision to go back to Cairo, just tell my supervisor I can work from home and leave."* For one I could see that she had perhaps not gotten a chance to share her depression with anyone since she had arrived, this was also something she alluded to at the end of the interview, and I could see that being able to express her incredulity had a clearly cathartic effect on her. Her account is also telling of how deeply the absence of the social support system they have left behind is felt by students. Often the most one can hope for is to make acquaintances in the start, whether its connecting with nationals or meeting people at the orientation week, inevitably they cannot replace the network of friends and family back home. In such times, the struggles one faces can have a much more intense impact, in Abeer's case too, it was not solely the solitude or initial disorientation that caused her to consider abandoning her program and going back to Cairo, but instead these factors built upon the struggles she otherwise faced, including the boundaries she encountered in her social life. The absence of someone to share these issues with, coupled with the rumination and self-doubt brought about in solitude is often enough to push one towards depressive thinking.

Longing for the 'Complicated' Life

Abeer also spoke about her longing for the 'complicated' life in Cairo, compared to the 'structured' life in Leiden. *"..Also the atmosphere is a bit (hesitates), I mean I love Cairo with its complicated everyday life, you have so much going on, and I was very engaged in the civil society there too.. I asked Nadia if she knew of something for me to use my time, some volunteer work, and she told me to try to go out, soon I will be stuck in study… But here everything is completely organised, scheduled, from the bus to meetings and even in daily life, you know the supermarket is closed at 6... Then the cafe too, they say we are going to close now so they take your coffee cup away, so you push me back to my room to sit down and watch movies alone, so that is what I'm doing!"*

These ideas about the 'structured' life, and how it paradoxically created a yearning for the 'complicated' life in some ways resonated with Tsing's ideas regarding the contrasts of precarity and modernity. Perhaps the disinclination students mention feeling for the 'structured' life has to do with an unconscious referral to the more 'precarious' settings they are used to. Unlike the current context where the apparent structured, organised and flawless life seems to be a guise for the more daunting, gruelling and in the end isolated life, where everyone must essentially fend for themselves. Especially after coming from a life where one is able to and used to rely on others, whether it is the strong network of family and friends or the collaborative nature of operating in a more collectivistic society, the perfectly structured life can cast back on the looming and no doubt colossal task of emulating the 'independent' and 'self-contained' individual (Tsing 2015).

The 'Perfect' City

"I remember when I came to the city, it was so beautiful but it was so quiet! It must have been 11 pm only and it seemed like the city was already asleep. I was dragging my suitcase and literally every time the wheels hit the cobblestones you could hear the echo in the streets, I felt like people might come out of their homes yelling that I'd woken them up or something.. I was laughing to myself that what ghost town have I come to!" Laiba remembered her first night in the city, and vividly remembered how quiet and isolated it felt, she explained how this effect of the city underscored how she was on an "adventure" alone. Coming from Lahore in Pakistan, notorious for its bustling city life, where Laiba remembered that streets were *"not safe but were full of life"*, she did not expect she would miss it over the safety and consequently the freedom that Leiden offered.

This complicated vs structured binary was also present in the way students explained their experiences of spaces. Fares explained, *"I expected to be fine alone.. But I miss Karachi, find myself drawn to the imperfections of Pakistan when I'm here, sometimes the world here seems too perfect, gets intimidating and eerie.. This was something unexpected, the quiet nights here are so eerie. And that makes you feel lonely, that definitely makes me feel lonely."* Desi also talked about the 'quietness' and how it took her time to get used to it, *"Quiet back home meant unsafe, I know it's not the same here, but the effect it has is so strange, hard to get used to honestly."* Analysing the different interviews I found that while a number of students mentioned the disconcerting effect that the quiet and remote outlook of the city had, the way and the degree to which it affected students depended on their experiences over the course of the year. In some ways the quiet, eerie streets painted a blank canvas for their experiences. My own experience was also echoed in Laiba's experience, she explained how, as she explored the city with her friends, and began to discover the life of the city in the day and at night, the streets began to slowly seem less and less ghostly and intimidating, until they eventually ceased to have such an intense effect. But for others such as Desi and Abeer, they were not familiarised with the city, in fact spaces still had some of the same connotations they had back home, where sundown meant the streets were not safe anymore, or that bars at night meant reckless *"drunk people"* needed to be avoided. Instead the loneliness they felt initially, intensified over the course of their experience, as they struggled to connect with others.

Through different ways students tried to maintain their equilibrium, minimise this effect and not let it intervene in their work. Syiva explained that while many prefer Leiden, she has shifted her

residence to the Hague after six months of living in Leiden. *"It gets so quiet there, and Hague is a big city, I like to surround myself with this kind of an atmosphere, there is a commute to my classes but I don't get bored alone here."* Others found that religious places, or the presence of something related to their religion in their surrounding helped them feel more at 'home' as discussed in Chapter 3.

Housing and Living Alone

There are different kinds of living arrangements possible, private or shared to varying degrees, under university housing or individual renting. All of the students I talked to were living in relatively private housing, studios or private rooms with shared facilities. In general, housing is seriously limited. For international students the most reliable option is applying for housing through the university, and there is only one offer made in response which students have to take if it is financially feasible. Otherwise many have to rely on existing acquaintances or references to find housing on their own.

'Ghosts in the Hall': Kloosterpoort Case Study

I chose to focus my analysis of housing on Kloosterpoort, since five of the students I interviewed resided in Kloosterpoort at the time of the interview, I myself resided there for one year and also acted as the Resident Assistant for the building, which gave me the opportunity to interact with almost all of the students living there, and gave me insight into the particular issues faced by different individuals. One of the students I met in the building, Azra[26], a Masters students who had just arrived two months ago shared how she felt the isolated nature of the housing made her uneasy, *"It feels like we're basically all ghosts here, you can hear people sometimes, well mostly not even that.. you just have a sense that people are there, you hear the ghosts in the hall, but you barely get a glimpse, much less talk to anyone."* Kloosterpoort is one of the two major housing complexes in Leiden for students, consisting of predominantly private studios, and without a common room there is little if any contact between students. Strangely an entire community of students living together have had virtually no contact with each other, often meeting their neighbours in social gatherings elsewhere rather than in their own hall. Tita similarly related, *"Nobody talks to each other here.. I used to leave my door open but people seem so used to the place. Could not find anyone when I arrived here, everyone is in their room, it's really so lonely in the housing."* She also mentioned not being able to have a large gathering in her room because it is not allowed. Abeer, who lives privately also mentioned that her landlord had strict rules and did not allow gatherings in the house.

There was a certain recognition of this as a real issue and a need felt to address it though as the Residence Life was initiated as a pilot program at the start of September 2017 in Kloosterpoort. Julia explained, *"The aim of the project is definitely to create this safety net after office hours, during office hours students are following classes or in library, and then they come home, and then things happen, either very practical or technical, or emotional, and then nobody is there because sorry we are closed."* So the idea was that the Resident Assistants would be able to organise a student community and network and address the

26 Azra was a Masters student in the Law Faculty, 24 years old, and originally from Turkey.

problems of the housing being residents themselves. In my experience as an RA, I saw that organising social gatherings in the start of the year was successful and students enthusiastically joined in. Students were also connected with each other on WhatsApp and Facebook groups, while these were informal groups they nevertheless have limited use socially, and are mostly used to share practical concerns which is nevertheless helpful. However the consensus between the RAs slowly became that it has become increasingly difficult to create a social network through organised gatherings. While this helped initially because it allowed students to make acquaintances when they did not know anyone, as students become more adjusted they seek out opportunities for a more meaningful social interaction that often comes from organic settings, where the interaction does not seem artificial or forced. Having a common room for example is much more helpful as evident from the case of other housings than organising 'social drinks' or outings.

Since residence is such a central part of everyday life, the way life is structured through it profoundly impacts student's entire experience. Housing is an example of a structure that can cause exclusion and inequality to be internalised in the everyday life without any visible conflict. It may also do so by limiting student's access to social interactions, in the process making them the focus of integration policies (Zhao 2016). In many ways, the way Kloosterpoort was structured showed how student's feelings of exclusion could only be perpetuated, without a proper effort to create inclusive spaces. As discussed in Chapter 2 in Julia's interview, university concerns only went as far as a 'placement policy' that placed 'diverse' students together, but there was clearly more attention needed for creating an atmosphere that would promote social exchange.

Moreover it appeared that student's who asked me for help with practical problems seemed to be needing some moral support more than actual technical assistance, in some cases I accompanied them to administrative offices, or just talked them through the issues they were facing. I remember the head RA asked me to help out an international Muslim student who had complained of a heating problem in her room. When he had gone to her room she spoke from behind her closed door and said that the problem was solved now. We realized she might be uncomfortable having a male student in her room, and when I went to her, she let me in her room, took off her hijab, offered me a seat and explained the issue in detail. She explained during our conversation that during her first week she had complained, the DUWO organisation's caretaker had come to her room and asked to enter, feeling flustered by the sudden visit she opened the door and he came inside to inspect, she recalled feeling extremely uneasy with her clothes and entire private space on display. He announced that he could not see the issue, and perhaps with Betul's uneasiness she did not press the matter and being reluctant to ask for help again she had to live with the faulty heating for the next two months. This reflects how small issues can become prolonged problems when one faces such a particular hindrance. She felt too shy to ask specifically for a female RA to help her, perhaps because she felt this should not be an issue in normal conduct and the request might present her as backward or too religious.

Effects on Self Identification

Introversion

Previously introversion was discussed as a self-identification resulting from struggles in social life, however it can also be seen as a result of the intense feelings of loneliness and alienation experienced by some students. At the end of my interview with Filiz, I asked her if she felt the experience had affected or changed her. She responded, *"Unfortunately yes, I have become much more silent I feel. Somehow, much more insistent on the thing I would like to get."* To cope with the lack of interaction in everyday life, some found solace offered by the distraction of social media and messaging services. Abeer mentioned, *"It's like a life shifting thing, I have become addicted to Facebook! I never was before. Now I don't find it strange to share my thought feelings, confusions on Facebook,."* I wondered if Facebook became a medium for her through which she could reach out, and gain a semblance of community. However it was clearly not a true replacement for daily interactions, as she continued to feel isolated and disconnected.

Religiosity and Religious Identification

Voas and Flieischmann describe religiosity to include one's beliefs and practices. Rather than religious identity which they explain to be more involuntary and static, in this thesis religiosity has been considered in performative terms, as a part of the cultivation of a style. It was also discussed how some students may adopt new mannerisms (e.g. trying alcohol) or reiterate their religious choices in more 'rational' terms as 'boundary transgression strategies', in trying to conform to the prevailing normatives. Literature on the subject argues that prejudice and discrimination may either lead to an unconscious scaling back of one's religiosity and religious identification, which can be seen in international Muslim students to an extent, or it may lead to a heightened form of religiosity as a form of retaliation to external pressures, which I did not find to be applicable here at all (Voas and Fleischmann 2012; 537). However, one effect I observed was a rethinking of their religious beliefs following the new 'ways of looking' in Tsing's terms, prompted by their experience. This does not mean a decrease in their religious beliefs or even necessarily a change, but it definitely involved a reassertion of their beliefs as distinctly their own, as interpretations and conclusions that they have arrived at independently and not because of their cultural context, religious sanctions or familial influences. This led to many engrossing conversation during my interviews. For instance, Fares and I discussed how the veneration of 'blind faith' was a pitfall; declarations of having blind faith were an easy way to receive praise in religious debates, but it essentially infringed on the importance of individual reasoning. Similarly, he discussed how 'literal' interpretations of religious texts take away from their metaphorical value and formulaic ideas about rewards were so widespread they could not be opposed in the public space in Pakistan. In a religious debate with Nimra and Laiba, they felt the tinge of independence there was to being able to have such a debate sitting in a cafe, not worrying about someone disparaging you for being 'too liberal' in your manner of discussing religious ideas. Selman reflected on religious discussions with non-Muslim friends, *"Some things I feel cannot be explained. Like in the Western world mind and science are always above, but in the philosophy of religion, religion is something above the science. Above the mind and rationality. Science is something that changes every day. So in Muslim discourse too we look for a*

rational way of thinking but there is still this margin that some things can't be explained with rationality and science alone." Thus there was no one way of thinking, but a general renewed interest and engagement with such ideas.

Coping with Dissatisfaction

"Having Faith": Coping through religion

I remember being approached on the street by a student as I walked back home, he handed me a pamphlet for a Christian student association and politely inquire if he could ask a few questions, the first being, 'What gives you peace in your life?'. Religious student organisations generally connect to this sense of conflict, anxiety or disillusionment that students may face in everyday life. In my interview with Damla from the Muslim student association at Leiden University, there was a similar draw of finding 'peace' with yourself and others. She mentioned, *"What connects us all is having eeman (faith), and that is what we all work for."* So in many ways religious communities provide that sense of belonging and support that might be lacking for some.

When recounting struggles with isolation or disillusionment, students sometimes mentioned how it made them turn to prayer, ask for forgiveness, and look to God for guidance. So it is possible to see how the alienation and loneliness of the experience 'creates a psychological need for consolation provided by religion' (Voas and Fleischmann 2012; 529) and the change is interpreted through religion. Sometimes this consolation can be in the simple form of a prayer, and other times, religion becomes part of a more intellectual and complex process of reflection and self-identification.

Rationalisations: "Only here for a year so it's okay"

One way I sensed most of my respondents coping was through rationalisations; often right after mentioning or detailing an issue they faced, they would follow with an explanation that trivialises the issue. One frequent example reiterated in different scenarios was, *"Yes, but I'm only here for a year so it's okay."* Azizah detailed how she had faced hindrances in socializing outside the Indonesian circle, and followed by saying, *"I feel like it's okay I'm only one year so not that important to have Dutch or international friends, but also regretful that I don't know any Dutch people at all. Weird when you think about, but maybe not big thing to miss out."* After relating similar issues Syiva explained, *"I know it seems like it would get lonely in the housing, but it's okay, I have a really good college friend who lives in Rotterdam, so it's fine mostly."*

Many also explained away the social boundaries they faced in a number of ways. For example rationalising that their academic pressures are enough to keep them occupied enough that they do not really feel the absence of social activity in their daily lives. For example, for Zohra drinking events had the possibility of exclusion as she explained was the case in her past experiences, so she avoided attending any such events, even the ones she felt really motivated to attend initially, however she maintained that it was not the drinking that made her mind. This is exemplified in the following exchange;

Do you like to travel, such as the ISN student trips?
Z: *"Oh I've always loved to travel. But not the ISN trips, they have drinking events so I don't know what trips would be like, and in any case I don't like travelling with big groups on a schedule."*
You could go with your friends, and trips often have a lot of free time to plan on your own too
Z: *"Yeah but it's fine we also have a lot of workload, hard to schedule with friends. Also I'm not that much of a travelling fan."*

There were also other ways that veiled anxieties came to the surface. In most of the interviews I noticed that it was after I switched off the recorder on my phone that conversations suddenly became more informal and respondents became more talkative. Often students would ask me about my experiences, and assuming that I had been conversing with a large number of international Muslim students, they would inquire if I had noticed similar responses from the rest of my interviewees as well. In Tika's case especially, she maintained a very nonchalant demeanour during our conversation, often to the point of appearing rather cold and unresponsive at times. She repeatedly described the environment, the social life, the academic life as being very *"chill"* in Leiden. However, as soon as I thanked her for her time and turned off my recorder she shifted in her seat and leaned in with apparent interest and asked me if I knew of other students who were struggling, and related that *"I know a friend of mine, also from Indonesia has situations, she struggles sometimes but we both talk about it so she seems fine, but it can be difficult right?"*

Calculations: To Stay or Not to Stay

Students experienced feelings of disillusionment and dissatisfaction in different aspects of their lives, and with the strong realization of how much they had invested in making the decision to come to Leiden University, they were often left conflicted. Especially for those who experienced serious difficulties, every new manifestation of an underlying problem triggered the question of 'should I stay or should I leave'. This could be brought on by a number of different factors including institution's structural problems, struggles with implicit boundaries or the concerns brought on by exclusionary public and media discourse.

Abeer and Filiz both described how they questioned their decision during different phases of their struggles since arriving. Feeling a lack of belonging or affiliation, and then facing social boundaries that exacerbated their feelings of isolation and alienation led them to consider abandoning their programs midway and return to their home countries. However, their reasoning process featured not only current dissatisfactions but also the weight of the decision, with the time, finances invested, and also the emotional investment for example Filiz mentioned how it was a *"brave decision"* for her parents to allow her to study abroad at the particular point in time. Another factor that they had to consider was the practical reality of working or researching back home. Filiz explained, *"The problem then is that if you don't have any motivation to stay but don't want to go back either, you are left in the middle confused. I know in my country many academics have no rights to work even in the private sector, don't have touristic passports, and many were expelled. Before I had this plan to return to Turkey to give my academic knowledge back to the students but now no, not at all. I hear from my professors and colleagues that it is not okay for an academic anymore. So stuck in a difficult position. It was a tough decision and now with this constant dissatisfaction I'm in a place I can't tell you, it's on my face you can see it."*

This is in many ways a manifestation of the state of 'precarity' Tsing talks about. The inability to 'look ahead' and reason teleologically is supposed to force one to 'look around', urging new ways of noticing and connecting. However, in this constant state of decision making, one's ability to explore opportunities depends on how you position yourself in your current context. If one feels like an outsider, or are in a very real way disconnected from possibilities and opportunities, the anxiety can leave you unable to reap the benefits of precarity, such as creative explorations, that Tsing mentions (Tsing 2015).

This can also be seen as connected to debates in existing literature on Muslims' experiences of migration and transnational citizenship, that calls for understanding students as 'temporary migrants' (Zhao 2016; 346), given that they are meaningfully engaged in the larger society and are also susceptible to different prevailing forms of exclusion or exploitation (Zhao 2016). Fares, in discussing the political discourses regarding Muslims in the Netherlands described how it triggered a similar process of calculation. *"It adds into the question of ten to fifteen years from now, do I want to settle here, because I definitely do want to work here. So more significant for me. I constantly have to evaluate whether or not it is a smart idea, where is the best place I can work, or the best place I can have a family, it has definitely been tough for me in this regard."*

Chapter 5
Conclusion

This research began with the aim to study diversity and inclusiveness within Leiden University, through the experiences of the international Muslim students, in order to discern the presence of a possible notion of 'normality'. If this was encountered by international Muslim students in their everyday lives, and consequently how it was lived, internalised or resisted in the space of the university was the primary focus. With a growing cognisance of the complexity of these issues, I began, expecting to face the challenges of self-reflexivity, and the arduousness of understanding the deeper processes of boundary construction and self-identification through the apparently commonplace aspects of life. Unexpectedly however, over the course of my fieldwork, I gained insight into a stunning holistic of student life, perhaps beyond the scope of the thesis, but it nevertheless lead me to some questions that are grounded at the fundamentals of the larger academic debates, public discourses and research arguments that have been discussed throughout the preceding chapters. This chapter traces the various debates presented throughout the thesis, to conclude the investigation of the research question.

The first chapter introduced the socio-political context of the Netherlands, specifically with respect to the growing antipathy against Islam, which is brazenly demonized in political rhetoric as 'traditional', 'backward' and not only in direct opposition to but also a threat to Dutch values. Normality is predicated on culturalist notions of being 'originally' Dutch and inclusion on the absolute acceptance of all 'Western' values, leading to the otherization of Muslims (Mepschen 2016). This idea of superiority of Dutch values has therefore also affected the debates on multiculturalism and integration. Paradoxically these manifestations of 'cultural racism' (Vertovec 2011; 243) are underscored by the vociferous propagation of Dutch society as a champion for tolerance and by the accompanying denial of racism (Wekker 2016). Wekker's book on 'White Innocence' introduced me to this idea of the invisibility of racism and exclusion on the macro scale of the society. Inequalities built into the structures and weaved into public discourses, can shroud racism under the guise of a defence of 'modernity', grander nationalistic narratives of reclaiming the country, nostalgia for 'normal times' or the anxieties about immigrants and extremism (Essed 2014). And as I analysed my findings and the implicit boundaries students faced, I wondered if this invisibility is also present on the level of institutions, presenting itself on a micro level, appearing with lesser intensity of both style and degree, in the everyday lives of individuals.

Commitment to ensuring a 'diverse' and 'international' environment on the level of the university is formalised for the purpose of negating the influence of such exclusionary trends, however Sara Ahmed highlights how diversity policies and initiatives, can in their implementation become reduced to a means of image management. If the ideas of diversity are still informed by subjective notions of normality, they may end up perpetuating the inequalities they set out to counter. All the while, creating a false impression of accomplishment, that can ultimately obscure racism (Ahmed 2012). In the particular case of Leiden University, in the analysis of policies and programs, a similar focus on 'visibility' and a surface level understanding of diversity, based on

demographic diversity, and inclusion as automatically resulting from juxtaposition of different individuals was evident. Chapter 2 looked at the image of the university and how it featured in student's choice of and expectations from Leiden University, with the idea of becoming part of a 'diverse' and 'international' academic community with its particular historical prestige and social influences. However this chapter also highlighted the subjectivities inherent in these ideas. For example the agenda for diversity does not include Dutch students, it is restricted to the international students, and those who do not or cannot 'integrate' to this idea, for example forming 'Little Islands' are seen as disrupting diversity. To requote the international student advisor, *"So if you don't want to mingle with people who drink alcohol then you can't study at an internationally focused university, then you should go study at a Muslim university or an alcohol free whatever place."*. Here the 'internationally focused' university, while a reiteration of a commitment to creating an international environment for students, is evidently not an entirely neutral space, and seems to be based on a rather Western understanding of socialisation, creating conditions which all students are expected to meet for the proliferation of diversity. This conceptualisation of diversity hence puts the onus on the students, effectively moving the focus away from potential issues in the structures or policies of the university, to the particular 'cultural' characteristics of individuals.

Chapter 3 delved into the social space of the university to examine the manifestations of normality. The microlevel analysis into the nuances of social interaction also highlighted implicit boundaries, and a similar invisibility of the norms and the exclusionary dynamics they create. The preceding analysis on the national and institutional level showed the importance of images and representations. This chapter examined how these were significant on the individual level as well. Representations are analysed as discourses of power, having a bearing on social inclusion and self-identification. How certain representations, such as that of the 'Muslim other' and the associated tropes and stereotypes create a 'perceivable' other, and hold importance in the everyday social interactions in the form of schemas which people rely on as 'common sense' views is exemplified through students' accounts. It can be seen that the imposition of normality, whether in explicit or implicit ways, creates a terrain of struggle within the social space, where individuals grapple to adapt themselves to the ideals that it creates such as that of the 'student life'. How 'visible' deviations from normality in the various religious symbols and practices can end up excluding some students is also discussed.

Representations based on essentialistic and reductionist notions create binaries that seep into the consciousness of individuals, including the international Muslims students, who use these in the process of self-identification. Pressures to create a self-representation that is more 'modern', as opposed to 'traditional' or 'conservative' and in line with the norms of their new context appears to be present in the accounts of some students as well. On a microlevel analysis of the social space, normality creates thresholds and boundaries, leading to invisible struggles. Often they appear as commonsensical understanding of 'appropriate' behaviour, or more than norms, ideals to be emulated such as a thrilling 'student life'. Social struggles for inclusion can to a large extent be based on 'keeping up appearances', which by its nature involves the concealment of any struggle. This is elaborated through Ferguson's concept of 'cultivated styles' where acquiring a style is seen as a competency or a socially valuable asset. He highlights individual performativity in designing a repertoire that involves choices between 'modern' and 'traditional'. However, the

successful emulation is based on 'ease' and effortless adaptability (Ferguson 1999). The fact that struggles are obscured may in fact serve to strengthen the hegemony of norms, and these blindspots, inaccessible from the top down view of policy making, can also add to a false appearance of a perfect space.

Among the student's I interviewed, there was a varied spectrum of experiences; while the accounts of nearly all students reflected encounters with norms in one form or the other, not all reported feeling significantly constrained by them, and a smaller number still expressed facing intense anxieties and distress from their encounters. It is important to consider here that boundary struggles are not occurring in a vacuum and I found that for all students, if they faced boundaries, how they did or did not affect them, depended on a multiplicity of other factors. Many students had found inclusive social spaces, not only the 'little islands' of co-nationals or religious students but groups with other international students as well, and they had been able to build their own comfort zones within their new context, which meant that negative instances were seen as an exception and did not significantly impact how they made sense of their experiences or of themselves. However, for a significant number of students, the boundary struggles built on other issues they faced to create intense difficulties. Chapter 4 specifically delved into some of these issues; the first being the challenges of adjustment and reorientation in the social and physical space of a new university and country, then the dissatisfaction with the reality of the university programs and academic environment which did not meet the expectations(set by the university's image and personal motivations), a general sense of a lack of belonging adding to 'everyday loneliness' and feelings of alienation, and then disillusionment with the loss of ideals of their experience and of themselves triggered by struggles of self-identification.

In this chapter I also elaborated on how all these issues added to the 'state of precarity' of students' lives. In her book, Anna Tsing's notion of precarity concluded with the significance of 'latent commons'. These are unnoticed common resources emerging unexpectedly in the carnage of capitalist ruin, in spaces that offer possibilities for unpredictable transformative collaborations that can allow for a different teleological understanding of the future than 'progress'. On the level of this research, it can be argued that a truly diverse academic and social environment can give access to these latent commons, and to the accompanying 'precarious possibilities' including the use of personal talents, traditional knowledge, collaborative learning and social connections. And exclusion brought about by implicit and explicit boundaries created by normative assumptions and a limited understanding of diversity, can block student's access to the latent commons, while they feel under the strain of emulating the ideals of 'progress' and 'modernity'. In a way, the latent commons can also include elements of the cultural and religious contexts that students come from, perhaps in contexts where emulating 'modernity' is not the norm, there are other 'precarious' strategies and ways of being. Tsing writes about how progress alienates individuals from the 'networks of commons'. Here it can be said that pressures to represent themselves as modern, secular and progressive can also block students from gaining from these elements, the adoption of which student may fear would be seen as 'traditional' or 'backward' (Tsing 2015). Thus, it can be argued that as students attempt to pursue new possibilities, by blocking access, boundaries stop students in their tracks without giving them a stable ground to fall back on.

For me, this raised the question of what should a university's role be and what is its responsibility towards international Muslim students? What difference in approach is needed to address the unique issues they face? And to what extent can and should the university provide a sense of belonging to these students? Tsing emphasises the need to understand individuals' history of transformative encounters, and by highlighting student's individual motivations, struggles and past experiences, I have attempted to do this specifically in Chapter 2, and it is of relevance here. In considering the university's responsibility towards international Muslim students, it is important to consider the fact that when making their decision, their 'move' and the entailing investments, students have been primed with an image that the university has created of an 'international' and 'diverse' space, and it is important to consider what this means for the students, instead of policies or measures that reflect a particularly Dutch, European or Western subjective understanding of diversity. A more substantial understanding that understands that the achievement of a diverse environment is not only linked to 'diverse' individuals, it should include all members, and consequently measures should also encompass the entire student community, to avoid the assumption of homogeneity.

Rather than policies that focus on 'visible change' perhaps more 'real' measures that directly influence the reality of student's everyday lives are important, that reflect a consideration of difference by the university. To an extent these are already being implemented by the university, and I found that these are the measures that have perhaps the most significant impact on influencing the way students relate to the university. Before this research, I used to wonder why issues such as the availability of halal food, or the presence of a prayer room became so momentous in discourses on academic environments. Through conversations with students, I realized that their importance lies in the consideration of difference they convey. They are symbolic of the fact that the university recognizes a difference in values, beliefs or practices, and beyond apparent neutrality, it accepts this difference and makes room for it, for example by its larger conception of how the university space should be structured, in the midst of what may be a 'secular public'. This would alleviate students of the strain to adapt to norms, to curtail their various expressions of religious or cultural difference, or to always be 'politically correct'.

In considering the university's role it is also important to be cognizant of the unique pressures that Muslim students face in the socio-political context of the world, with the dominant discourses painting them as antagonists and arguably in the absence of a powerful counter-narrative on a global level. To a lesser or higher degree, students have this at the back of their consciousness, as was apparent in my interviews as well when students mentioned anticipations regarding coming to live abroad, or settling in the Netherlands. In this context, a 'sense of belonging' in an 'international' environment can have a different meaning for international Muslim students. An international academic and social space that responds to these wider discourses by actively and unambiguously countering them and the representations and schemas they create, can not only provide them with a sense of belonging and sense of community at the level of the university, but potentially allow them to reimagine their membership in the world at large, and perhaps help them tackle the larger conflicts of religiosity, secularism, modernity and progress as they appear in their individual lives. Therefore, addressing diversity and inclusiveness within the space of the university entails not only a recognition of existing issues within policies

and the way they structure student life, while countering the implicit nature of the boundaries they create and of the consequent struggles, but also the cognisance of the profoundly positive impact that such measures can potentially have.

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