The Politics of Vulnerability and Protection: Analysing the Case of LGBT Asylum Seekers in the Netherlands in Light of Securitization and Homonationalist Discourses

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For many decades the question of safety in relation to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people has been debated, as violence has historically been perpetrated towards gender and sexual minorities. This broader dynamic has taken on a new direction in the wake of the global refugee crisis. For many LGBT[1] asylum seekers coming to Europe, violence, discrimination, and intolerance continue to be a daily battle (Broomfield, 2017; Campanna and Ioannou, 2018; Tsagkari, 2017). This is exacerbated by the fact that individuals applying for asylum on the basis of discrimination due to sexual orientation and gender identity must undergo a process of 'credibility assessment' in which the state decides if they are sufficiently 'homosexual' or 'transgender' to be afforded legal status. As many scholars and activists have shown, this state assessment process is often invasive and violent in and of itself. The threat of violence is further compounded by the fact that refugees are placed in restrictive housing compounds while awaiting decisions on their applications. In the Netherlands, several organizations have asked the government to provide separate housing for asylum seekers[2] who identify as LGBT, as many have detailed discrimination and violence in *asielzoekerscentra* or Asylum Seeker Centres (AZCs). The leading party in the Netherlands (VVD) has responded by saying that instead of providing separate housing for LGBT asylum seekers, they prefer to separate the instigators of this violence.

This public discussion illustrates several important points. Firstly, both the government and LGBT organizations lobbying for this separation posit LGBT people as 'vulnerable' and in need of protection from their environment. The naming of these individuals as vulnerable is not an innocent move: it shapes power relations between the state and the LGBT migrant and between the LGBT migrant and the migrant framed as 'inherently homophobic'. In this rhetoric, the Dutch state

figures as the protector, capable of saving the vulnerable LGBT refugee from 'their culture' (Bracke, 2012). That is, the Dutch state presents itself as benevolent and as gay- and trans-friendly, thereby obscuring the complexities of anti-LGBT discrimination and violence and concealing the state's own potential homophobia and transphobia (Buijs et al., 2011). The debate about safe spaces for LGBT asylum seekers is one specific case in which the polarizing effects of the rescue narrative become salient while simultaneously highlighting the imbrication of safety, vulnerability, and sexuality.

Secondly, while LGBT organizations tend to insist on prioritizing the safety of LGBT asylum seekers through the creation of separate housing, the government's perspective differs in that it proposes punishing the perpetrators. The Dutch government proposes a strategy of *sanctioning* in order to solve homophobic and transphobic violence, but this sanctioning is explicitly directed towards cis-gendered heterosexual migrants (i.e., those whose gender identity corresponds to their sex assigned at birth). The selectiveness of this move is striking: although little is done to combat anti-LGBT violence in the Netherlands more broadly, asylum seekers are literally set apart due to expressions considered homophobic or transphobic. This strategy rests upon a punitive logic that does not address the root of the problem but instead treats the 'symptoms', thereby individualizing the violence and its potential eradication.

In this chapter, we illustrate (1) how LGBT asylum seekers encounter specific types of violence (physical, institutional, symbolic, etc.) and (2) how specific notions of 'safety' are drawn upon, depending on if and how these forms of violence are perceived by the state, LGBT organizations, AZCs, or asylum seekers themselves. Through this specific case study that brings together security, homonationalism and bordering practices, we seek to contribute to the wider scholarly debate on media and migration. We specifically interrogate what the notion of safety

does in this context and how it can be contested through the debate around safe spaces for LGBT asylum seekers. The politics of safety results in a proliferation of internal borders and embodied border-making practices that are sustained, in part, by performing the script of the 'good' and 'grateful' refugee (Ghorashi, 2014). Additionally, a rhetoric of vulnerability reproduces the idea of the Dutch nation-state as LGBT-friendly while the cis-gendered, heterosexual refugee is posited as the threatening other.

DUTCH MEDIA AND POLITICAL FRAMINGS OF LGBT MIGRANTS

When an asylum seeker first arrives in the Netherlands, they are housed at the reception facility in Ter Apel in the north or at the reception facility in Budel-Cranendonck in the south. Individuals are asked to identify themselves and are then registered, after which they typically stay at the location for 3–10 days. Asylum seekers are then placed in AZCs, where they reside during the general asylum procedure. These facilities are managed by Centraal Orgaan opvang asielzoekers (COA), which falls under the Ministry of Justice and Security but is an independent administrative body. There, they can prepare their asylum application while receiving support from lawyers and from the Dutch Council for Refugees (VluchtelingenWerk Nederland), an organization that supports asylum seekers during their asylum process. While some asylum seekers may find an apartment elsewhere, most reside in AZCs during the lengthy procedure.

Research by various Dutch organizations has pointed out that LGBT refugees face a disproportionate risk of bullying or violence in AZCs (Elferink and Emmen, 2017; Luit, 2013). Furthermore, many feel socially isolated because they fear leaving their rooms and feel like they cannot be open about being LGBT (Elferink and Emmen, 2017: 17).

Moreover, COA employees often do not adequately respond to reports of homophobic or transphobic discrimination and violence, or they may even themselves be the instigators of such violence (Luit, 2013). In the media, the issue of anti-gay LGBT violence in AZCs has been repeatedly addressed; however, news outlets often do not account for the complexity of the issue.[3] That is, they frame other asylum seekers as the sole problem and ask Dutch organizations to discuss solutions to this problem. For example, VluchtelingenWerk was quoted in a recent news article as stating that diverse backgrounds and cultures are not a reason to accept intolerance, a statement that subtly equated such diverse cultural backgrounds with intolerance and located homophobia solely within 'migrant communities' (Voermans, 2015). Similarly, in *de Volkskrant*, Klaas Dijkhoff, a Dutch politician and member of the conservative-liberal VVD party, is quoted as saying that he is not in favour of providing separate housing for LGBT asylum seekers because (1) all inhabitants of AZCs who are bullied, threatened, or discriminated can go to a COA employee, and (2) 'the government should punish the perpetrators, not isolate the victims' (Mebius, 2016).[4] Dijkhoff marks the COA as a benevolent actor, always available to help, while positing the perpetrators as other asylum seekers, which disregards the fact that COA employees may be a source of the discrimination.

MIGRATION AND SECURITIZATION: METHODOLOGICAL REFLECTIONS

In much of the research connecting security studies with migration, the focus has been placed on the way in which migration is framed as a security concern. Migration has increasingly been defined as a threat and linked with the necessity for securitization, especially in the West (Guiraudon, 2000; Huysmans, 2000; Huysmans, 2006; Koslowski, 1998). In detailing the migration–security nexus, Thomas Faist (2006: 104) argues that the term securitization 'refers to a perception of an existent threat to the ability of a nationally bound society to maintain and reproduce itself'. Wæver et al. (1993) stress how the protection of cultural identity becomes a key aspect of the securitization rhetoric and comes to define migration, linking this phenomenon with the reproduction of the myth of cultural homogeneity. According to Jef Huysmans (2000: 757), security policy 'conserves or transforms political integration and criteria of membership through the identification of existential threats'. In this process, migrants are defined as a threat to European culture and homogeneity. The need for 'security' thus illustrates more than an objective account of 'danger', but rather points to a political investment in the maintenance of a specific culture that is conceptualized as being threatened by outsiders.

It is in this light that notions of cultural citizenship and belonging come to the fore, and when we speak of gender and sexual minorities, this carries particular weight. Jasbir Puar (2007) coined the term homonationalism to analyse how nationalist politics (particularly in the United States) have come to embrace particular LGBT subjects in the national imaginary, while other racialized and queer subjects are excluded. Building upon Puar's analysis as well as Duyvendak's (2011) notion of 'culturalized citizenship', Mepschen et al. (2010) argue that Dutch citizenship has similarly come to rely heavily on normative understandings of sexuality, including the idea that the Dutch are tolerant of gay and lesbian sexualities. This 'tolerance' is often framed in opposition to 'Muslim culture', which becomes seen as 'traditional' and 'backward' (Bracke, 2012; Jivraj and de Jong, 2011). In this framework, Dutch citizenship thus demands the acceptance of LGBT people, a requirement that is specifically targeted towards Muslim communities (Butler, 2008).

Applying this intersecting framework of securitization and homonationalism to our case study, we ask how particular conceptualisations

of safety sustain mechanisms that simultaneously bolster an image of Dutch tolerance and enact certain forms of exclusion. To respond to this question, we conducted five in-depth interviews with individuals who have intimate, first-hand knowledge of LGBT asylum policies in the Netherlands. Two of our informants (Sara and Rico) work for a large government-funded LGBT organization.[5] Sara is Dutch, in her 30s and has been working as a project assistant for this organization for 10 years. Rico, who is in his late 20s, is a PhD student from Germany and began volunteering for the organization in 2015. He now coordinates one of the independent city-based projects focussed on LGBT asylum seekers. Another of our informants was Julian, who is Dutch, in his 70s, and self-identifies as a gay man. He co-organizes (together with Daniel, who will be introduced ahead) a semi-independent organization that has been working with LGBT asylum seekers since 2015. This collective receives funding from various bodies, but it is primarily based on volunteer input, both from Dutch people and from refugees themselves. We also conducted interviews with two asylum seekers. They both come from East Africa and are involved with the aforementioned organization. Daniel identifies as a bisexual refugee and is in his 40s; although he arrived in the Netherlands approximately eight years ago, he has only recently received status. Due to the long waiting time Daniel experienced in AZCs, and the negligence of LGBT issues he encountered there, he became an activist and now works with several organizations, including serving as co-director, alongside Julian, of the aforementioned organization for LGBT refugees. Finally, Malik is a self-identified gay refugee in his late 20s who, by the time we spoke with him, had just received legal status, although he was still living in an AZC. He had been an activist in his country of origin and came to the Netherlands to avoid oppression he faced due to his activist work.

After asking each informant where they would be most comfortable talking, we generally conducted the interview at that chosen location to safeguard anonymity and privacy. Two of the interviews took place in the interviewee's home, two in a café, and one by phone. We left as much room as possible for each individual to talk about whatever they found relevant. This meant that sometimes interviews lasted 2.5 hours, while others were only 45 minutes. We felt it was important to maintain this openness and flexibility so as to encourage different topics to emerge, as they could inform us on how specific concepts were connected and mobilized (Riessman, 2012).

While we in no way claim to present an all-encompassing picture of the issue of safety in AZCs, we do argue that the stories we gathered illustrate how certain cultural logics (including those related to safety, vulnerability, and European securitization) pass into people's own narratives. The testimonies also help to illustrate how discourses that present LGBT asylum seekers as 'particularly vulnerable' are key to a securitization logic that comes to impact LGBT-related topics in the Netherlands. We approach each story of our interviewees as 'a specimen of cultural knowledge, logic, and meaning making' (Nikander, 2012: 410). As such, the interviews do not stand on their own; rather, we view their narratives as collectively and culturally informed. We adopt Sanna Talja's (1999: 459) discourse analytic method, which entails striving to 'recognize cultural regularities in participants' accounts to examine the phenomena studied at a macrosociologic level'. This means refraining from seeing the individual as a 'coherent, consistent unit' (Nikander, 2012: 464) and instead looking at the ways in which individuals draw upon cultural narratives. Consequently, our objective is not to determine the general stance of either LGBT organizations or LGBT refugees towards the question of safety in AZCs. Rather, we aim to address and understand how the concept of safety has been mobilized by our interviewees, and how those mobilizations draw from larger macro-political narratives that are informed by, among others, homonationalist and security logics and discourses.

As researchers with feelings about the current situation of migration and the politics of sexuality, positioning ourselves in this research has been a challenging task. While the people and organizations we spoke with have good intentions for LGBT refugees, we did notice that certain narratives around sexuality and culture were perpetuated. Because we wish to challenge such discourses, navigating these critiques was complex. As researchers, we are fully aware that we are not 'neutrally' observing a phenomenon, but we are simultaneously political actors. In that sense, we take Ian Maxey's (1999: 202) words as our point of departure: '[t]heoretical positions and the way we relate to our work […] can become part of our activism'.

EXCEPTIONAL VULNERABILITY

Both 'safety' and 'vulnerability' were recurrent themes throughout the interviews we conducted. In the words of Julian (2017), 'sometimes we ask what brought them here, or what they appreciate here, and one of the first issues is the safety. That they feel safe to be LGBT'. Julian (2017) further reflects on this by making a clear connection to vulnerability:

> As a Dutch gay man… I think if I would be working in an AZC, being gay, if I would be attacked as a gay man, I can go out and I go home, and I have my own relatives, friends, etc. I can separate from it. But these people, they are already traumatized, vulnerable, and it's the place where they have to stay. They have nowhere to go, so I think you should protect them.

Their particular position is hence read as especially vulnerable, and it is the isolation, their traumatic pasts, the indefinite waiting, and the lack of social resources and alternatives in terms of where to go, that come to the fore in calling for protection.

Vulnerability has indeed become an important concept for constructing an alternative and critical corporeal ontology that recognizes the centrality of interdependency for the conformation of the subject, and in this regard, distinguishing between 'vulnerable' and 'threatening' bodies is key for the state (Butler, 2009; Fineman, 2008). There are, however, dangers in labelling certain groups as vulnerable; as Fineman (2008: 8) states, this label risks immediate association with 'victimhood, deprivation, dependency, or pathology'. Judith Butler (2009) argues that although vulnerability is shared, precarity is unevenly distributed. Which lives are recognized as vulnerable and worthy of protection and which are excluded from such recognition has profound political consequences. In the specific context of LGBT asylum cases, Thibaut Raboin (2017: 114) further details how 'sympathy', while functioning as an important affect that can bring groups together, also strips claimants of their agency as they become an 'object of our sympathy'. Similarly, the danger of vulnerability leans on 'using discourses of vulnerability and protection to justify unwarranted paternalism and coercion of individuals and groups identified as vulnerable' (Mackenzie et al., 2014: 2). This recognition involves the risk of victimisation, which is problematic not just because it may erase agency but also because it reproduces a stereotypical and oppressive definition of 'how' a victim should act or feel.

Daniel and Malik, the two asylum seekers we interviewed, also drew on a discourse of safety in discussing their experiences in AZCs. Talking about his experiences upon arriving to the Netherlands, Malik (2018) detailed how he had to struggle to achieve a feeling of safety by fighting to have his own living space: 'I had to insist. But I was like "Well I'm here for protection, and if I don't get this feeling from the beginning, that I can be safe, then I want to reconsider my decision of asking for asylum in this country"'. He said this laughingly, aware of the irony of countering a presupposed logic that would assume a complete lack of options on his part. Haleh Ghorashi (2014) has highlighted the ways in which refugees are expected to perform 'gratefulness'. In this example, though,

Malik subtly counters this discourse, flipping the script to which Ghorashi refers. He was reluctant to accept a passive position and play into a rhetoric of victimization. In demanding safety – which he clearly expressed in the need for institutional protection – he was also cognizant that protection requires a complexification of how safety is understood and negotiated.

The way in which the conditions of a possibility for safety also come to be linked with the distribution of conditions of vulnerability and protection represents a fundamental bio- and necro-political negotiation (Agamben, 1998; Butler, 2009; Mbembe, 2003). With regard to gender minorities, Aren Aizura (2016: 124) argues that vulnerability can be understood as a biopolitical category that has become 'a method to extract value in the form of spectatorial sympathy'. This 'spectatorial sympathy' is problematic because it determines that only some stories come to be included in the category of exceptional vulnerability; meanwhile, this vulnerability is defined at the expense of other (and sometimes the same) bodies that 'are rendered disposable by an immigration reform agenda that seeks to detain and deport "criminals"' (Aizura, 2016: 124). As Julian's statements above indicate, this dynamic can be transposed onto Dutch policies regarding LGBT asylum seekers, which simultaneously highlight the homonationalist moves to 'save LGBT victimized others' from their own culture.

COMPLICATING 'SAFE SPACES'

In line with scholars working on the notion of 'safe spaces' who have argued that there is little interrogation about the precise meaning of safety and how it is actualized (Fetner et al., 2012; Quinan, 2016), in all the interviews we conducted, the meaning of 'safety' appeared similarly elusive. Malik (2018) explained that safety entailed both freedom from physical harm, which for him meant a space of his own, and a sense of community or a feeling of comfort among the inhabitants of AZCs. A 'safe space', then, was not simply a physical space, as he stressed: 'for me, what safety means, is number one: mind. That I want to be in a place where I am really sure, in my mind, that okay, this place I am safe' (2018). When we asked how he deals with this need for safety, he told us that when he was in an AZC, he would organize meetings twice a month where everyone was welcome to share their stories, why they came to the Netherlands and if they felt it was worth it. This communal activity contributed to his sense of safety. In the public debate around safety, only the former definition of safety (i.e., having a space where one is physically protected) is acknowledged, with little to no attention paid to enhancing the more communal form of safety upon which Malik relied.

At the same time, Malik told us that it was challenging to create such a community because it required everyone to open up, and that meant people would know he is gay. While it contributed to his sense of safety, it also put him at risk. This feeling was worsened by the fact that asylum seekers are constantly moved from centre to centre, so the bonds that are formed must be continuously made with new people. And when Malik would be moved, he emphasized that people in the new centre would have already heard that he is gay. That, he felt, was a threat to his safety:

> And the problem is, as you trying to [make] the environment safe, almost every day there are new people, so [it] is the same thing and the same thing and the same thing… So yes, when you think, now I feel safe, everything changes. And the rooms change so quickly, so… putting into consideration that people are getting status for their sexuality. When they come to the AZC, they would know me before I know them. So they would come like: hey, I know you! So sometimes it's a good thing, but you never know. Of course there are things that have happened in the camp. (Malik, 2018)

In our conversations with Dutch LGBT organizations, safety seemed to always imply

having a private space away from non-LGBT refugees. For example, when we asked Sara, who works for a government-funded LGBT organization, about the proposed 'solution' of separate housing, she responded that 'the main reason is actually that we have heard various stories from the refugees that they feel unsafe and cannot sleep' (2017). Here, she provided anecdotal evidence that LGBT individuals in AZCs feel unsafe, but she did not explain why a separate facility is appropriate. Similarly, in our interview with Julian, the physical separation of LGBT asylum seekers from others was explained using the vocabulary of safety:

> Well I tend to say more and more that you should offer them a safe place, because most of these people are already so traumatized by what they went through before they even came here. And you should as well punish the people who attacked them, but… I think for their own benefit you have to put them separately in a safe place. And of course, you have to… It's very very very important to educate people who are homophobic that that's not the way we live here, and you have to work on it, but I don't think you can make people victims of our principles. (2017)

There are two important details in Julian's conceptualization: (1) that safety is achieved when LGBT refugees are put in a separate space and (2) that Dutch people are not homophobic, so others (non-LGBT asylum seekers) must be educated on the (Dutch) values of LGBT acceptance. Here, the Dutch nation-state is seen as ensuring safety and is therefore excluded from being viewed as a potential threat to that safety.

Consistent with this avoidance of communal understandings of safety, Malik stressed that, in AZCs, asylum seekers are usually separated on the basis of nationality. Here again returns the logic of separation in the objective to provide people with the best housing possible. However, Malik (2018) expressed his disapproval of this separation:

> Cause when I first come, I am put in a room with an African person, from my country. How will I know how good Syrians are? Maybe I was in a room with them, then I know 'oh', cause I know they always portray Syrians as bad, which is the contrary! Because I have been with them in the camp and I find them very goodhearted people. I am always saying 'Oh my god'. That's what I was saying – that the Dutch media are telling you that they are bad, but I say no! They are very good people. And that one person has a bad head, of course, but it doesn't have to do with the country or… But every time you tell COA they're like 'yeah, yeah, you know', there's always a good defence for not doing anything.

Separation occurs on the basis of assumptions about who may be more prone to violent behaviour, neglecting the notion of community-building as in fact being essential to safety.

In this regard, another central theme that emerged was the distinction between the individual and the community or the 'cultural'. Firstly, we noticed a sharp distinction being made, particularly by LGBT organizations, between homophobia coming from COA employees and homophobia from asylum seekers in AZCs. Often, violence or discrimination coming from COA employees was analysed as an individual problem, instead of a structural or cultural one. For example, while acknowledging that Dutch COA employees may commit homophobic acts, Sara coded these instances of violence as individual cases that are simply bound to happen from time to time. When we asked her to elaborate on the measures taken when an LGBT asylum seeker reports such a case, she stated:

> COA also tries to ensure that the training we provide is being followed and actualized, but of course it is very difficult to verify whether they really live up to it. That is just a bit of confidence you have to have; and I do have the idea that in some places they are following this very meticulously, but also that in some places nothing happens. It is just important to remember: COA is human work, there are people who may be Dutch, who live under Dutch law, but who cannot deal with homosexuals, or are against them, or have an opinion about them. And yes, do you bring that to work or not? We advise not to, but we are not entirely sure about that. (2017)

Thus, she argues that despite the fact that COA staff are Dutch, they may not be able to handle cases of homophobia. Interestingly, she does not mention actual examples of homophobia, only an unwillingness to deal with these cases. It is also worth noting that she proposes that we should have 'confidence' in the success of the training provided. On this basis, then, it is implied that issues are unlikely to arise, though when they do, they are seen as one-time, individualized problems.

The individualization of homophobic violence and discrimination instigated by COA staff also translated into a tendency to refrain from using the label 'homophobia'. This recurred in Julian's account of sexual harassment of LGBT refugees by COA employees. It is important to note that this account was second-hand knowledge, as Julian heard this story from someone else. However, his account is particularly interesting:

> [N]ot an anti-LGBT aggression from the Dutch people, but it's more that they [LGBT refugees] are vulnerable, so they can be used as a… Well, they [COA employees] can have sex with them. They can't refuse it, we can do whatever… And as far as I heard from her, is that, indeed you can't generalize, but it's not always taken action against it as it should be done. But it's only from second hand that I've heard it, so I have to be very careful with it. Because I am sure there are many who do their job professionally. (2017)

Julian did not classify this kind of sexual harassment as 'anti-LGBT'. Furthermore, he saw it as an exceptional situation, as 'there are many who do their job professionally'. It is noteworthy how such cases of anti-LGBT violence by COA employees seem to be regarded as exceptions, individual lone-wolf-type problems that are difficult to overcome, whereas the violence coming from asylum seekers tends to be framed as a cultural problem. Both Sara and Rico reproduce this narrative that the Netherlands is a safe space. In the words of Rico, '[w]hen we go away for weekend [on organization-sponsored events], people tell us, it's been the best weekend.

They can finally be themselves, they don't have to be afraid. They can, you know, feel comfortable' (2018). Sara (2017) elaborates on this point:

> [M]any people flee in order to get liberty and safety, to a country that they think is able to provide that. And the Netherlands is such a country. However, when they finally arrive in an asylum seeker centre (AZC), the reality appears to be slightly different. Because, after all, there are a lot of different cultures in there, but also employees who are 'shy' in their contacts with LGBTI people.

Here, the homophobia of other refugees is seen as a cultural problem, whereas the Netherlands is seen as a tolerant country, even if some people may not really know how to deal with LGBT people. In general, violence coming from Dutch COA employees seems to be trivialized, as it is described as simple 'shyness' or inability to deal with homosexuals.

A RHETORIC OF CULPABILITY

The logic of individualization also conforms to the way with which violence is dealt. Malik (2018) stressed, for example, that COA staff advise LGBT people to 'tone down' their sexuality so as not to cause trouble: 'What you get sometimes is: "You just have to turn down, Malik, just be cool, just be slow"'. This stands in sharp contrast to the fact that, in the procedural interviews with Immigration and Naturalization Services (IND), LGBT refugees are required to speak openly about their sexuality (Jansen and Spijkerboer, 2011). Both Malik and Daniel are critical of these kinds of 'recommendations', aware of how they place the responsibility squarely on their own shoulders. Nonetheless, Daniel (2018) told us how, after experiencing several violent situations and being repeatedly advised to 'be more careful', this discourse ended up impacting him: 'I considered myself, like, "yeah, this happened to me, maybe I should keep silent, I could be less open in the centre, or I could be more in my room, when there

aren't many people in the kitchen I can cook there'".

Here, the responsibility rests on LGBT asylum seekers to 'take care of themselves' by keeping a 'low profile', avoiding crowded places and being 'discrete' in public. Beyond the fact that these kinds of recommendations may be problematic, they reproduce some of the factors that contribute to feelings of unsafety, in particular isolation and self-blame. Moreover, the responsibility of 'hiding' their sexual or gender identity also reproduces a radical separation from their own cultures, from which they are assumed to be excluded, which then precludes the possibility of recognition. If keeping a low profile does not help, they are encouraged to speak out. This paradigm, nonetheless, also places a burden on the victims. Daniel, for instance, talked about how speaking out was very difficult because by the time he was attacked, he felt alone. He elaborated further:

> [The COA employees] told me: if you want, you can [move to a different] AZC. That is what they told me. And then they gave me an option also, that if I want, I can change the room, to go to another building. And then, because I didn't tell them "let me change the building or the AZC", because I had friends there, and I asked myself if I go to another place, where am I going to start from. So I stayed in the AZC. (2018)

That is, the response Daniel received did not take into account his feelings of safety (or lack thereof). It was instead understood by COA as a temporary problem that could be 'fixed' by separating Daniel from his aggressor, even if that meant his re-isolation. Furthermore, this script constructs a very particular definition of violence that reaffirms a predetermined image of an intolerant perpetrator rather than addressing the needs and experiences of the victims. The survivors of homophobic and transphobic violence are recognized as worthy of protection only when this violence is legible to the state. Furthermore, this oversimplification of violence and its reduction to concrete and recognizable aggressions does not attend to internalized feelings of unsafety.

This paradigm has at least two consequences. Firstly, it individualizes responsibility, both of the violence and of its denunciation. On the one hand, the victims are responsible for themselves, and the problem of violence becomes individualized and focalized in concrete moments. Secondly, it oversimplifies safety. This paradigm reduces the problem to intermittent moments of violence that can be 'solved' by punishing those who commit such acts. Moreover, the origins and roots of the violence are individualized in the figure of the concrete (demonized) perpetrator. In this regard, Dean Spade's critique appears particularly relevant. Spade (2011: 27) stresses the limits of 'a theory of law reform that aims to punish the "few bad apples" supposedly responsible for racism, sexism, ableism, xenophobia, or transphobia'. According to Spade (2011: 29), the problem with legislative 'fixes' like anti-discrimination policies and hate-crime laws is that they are constructed through a framework that 'seeks remedies that punish individuals who do those harmful things motivated by bias. This analysis misunderstands how power functions and can lead to approaches to law reform that actually expand the reach of violent and harmful systems'. Such approaches do not work to eradicate violence or to construct safer environments. Instead of changing the lives of those who suffer violence, models based on denunciation and punishment may actually perpetuate and particularize its consequences.

CONCLUSION

A growing body of literature on queer migration has analysed the ways in which identity categories and normative sexualities are produced through and in relation to migration. Some of this research has also examined how the nation-state as a heteronormative institution upholds hierarchies of sexuality, race, gender, and class (Luibhéid, 2008; Phelan, 2001; Szulc, in this *Handbook*).

With few exceptions (e.g., Bracke, 2012), the fields of critical security studies and homonationalism have rarely been thought of together. Taking up the case study of safe housing for LGBT refugees and analysing the discourse of 'safety', this chapter has aimed to begin filling that gap by exploring the ways in which the relationship between security and homonationalism can help us understand how concepts like 'safety' and 'protection' are deployed in relation to anti-LGBT violence and discrimination. More broadly, this allows for a nuanced problematization of migration, LGBT rights, and European bordering practices.

As we have illustrated, a broad definition of vulnerability comes to be implicated in the institutional discourse around safe housing for LGBT asylum seekers, according to which the homophobic and transphobic Other represents a threat to national values. As a category, 'LGBT asylum seekers' are reified through the instrumentalization of their pain and suffering, and the complexities of their experiences are not sufficiently attended to. The testimonies we collected help illustrate how the process of defining LGBT asylum seekers as 'particularly vulnerable' is imbricated in understandings of safety, tolerance, and acceptance in the Netherlands.

Fear of strangers or foreigners is often represented as a 'natural' feature of any community. According to Sara Ahmed (2014: 69), fear 'works to restrict some bodies through the movement or expansion of others'. It implements a 'politics of mobility', according to which safety comes to occupy a central role. As Ahmed (2014: 70) rightly argues, '[i]t is the regulation of bodies in space through the uneven distribution of fear which allows spaces to become territories, claimed as rights by some bodies and not others'. Through fear, the (racialized) migrant body is pre-defined as a threat. This anxiety caused by the Other directly refers to the fear of difference and the fear of 'destruction' of a homogenic and fictional idea of Europe, depicted as white, Christian or secular, and LGBT-friendly.

Indeed, there is a strong popular belief that LGBT emancipation has been fully achieved in the Netherlands, which imposes a sort of 'freeze' on a historical self-image where Dutch culture is perceived as tolerant. Nevertheless, this does not reflect the actual stances dominant in Dutch society, which is still characterized by a strong heteronormativity. In this regard, it is not just the fear of terrorism that articulates migration according to a logic of securitization; cultural identity is key to the mobilization of this rhetoric. And in the case of the Netherlands, the 'defence of LGBT rights' is key to the construction of this identity, but it also functions to exclude certain migrants. The debate around safe housing discussed in this chapter serves as an important case study in illustrating how LGBT asylum seekers are framed as in need of protection. The naming of these refugees as 'vulnerable' is not an innocent move, as this notion of vulnerability is not only affective but is also political.

Notes

1 While we recognize the homogenizing effects of the term 'LGBT', we elect to use this term in this chapter because it is most commonly employed in the particular debate we are addressing.

2 Except when attending to the particular requests of an interviewee who referred to themselves as a 'refugee', we have chosen to use the legal term 'asylum seeker' when referring to people in AZCs, as this location implies that they are legally asylum seekers in the process of being recognized as refugees.

3 For an incisive analysis of media coverage of and political discourses around LGBT asylum seekers in the UK context, see Thibaut Raboin's (2017) *Discourses on LGBT asylum in the UK: Constructing a queer haven*.

4 Translations are the authors' own unless otherwise indicated.

5 All names have been changed to pseudonyms in order to protect the anonymity of our informants.

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